

Trauma-Informed Practice policy for Leicestershire County Council



PEOPLE



PROMOTE



PROTECT



PROVIDE



PARTNERSHIP

Delivering good health
and prevention services
Public Health in Leicestershire



Leicestershire
County Council

Position Statement:

Leicestershire County Council is committed to promoting trauma-informed practice across all its departments and services. This policy aims to ensure that individuals who have experienced trauma are treated with compassion, understanding, and sensitivity, and that their needs and rights are recognised and addressed. It sets out what action the organisation needs to take into consideration when becoming trauma informed.

Context

Leicestershire County Council has agreed alongside the Strategic Partnership Board to 'work collaboratively across organisations and with communities to develop a trauma-informed system which simultaneously aims to prevent childhood trauma and mitigate its potential harmful impact across the life-course'. To allow the council opportunities to create a culture of trauma informed practice its vital that the health and wellbeing of the workforce is prioritised, and trauma and its impacts is well understood. Our vision is of a trauma informed and responsive organisation that can recognise where people are affected by trauma and adversity, and that responds in ways that prevent further harm, support recovery, address inequalities and improve life chances.

For the purpose of sustainability and continuity the council has adopted the working definition developed by SAMSHA "Trauma results from an event, series of events or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individuals functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional or spiritual well-being" (SAMHSA, 2014:7)

Goals of LCC's ambition:

1. To create a culture that supports trauma-informed practice at all levels of the organisation.
2. To enhance the understanding and awareness of trauma and its impacts among staff members by fostering a culture of ongoing education, training, and professional development.
3. To ensure that all policies and practices within Leicestershire County Council reflect a trauma-informed approach.
4. To promote collaboration and partnership with community organisations and agencies to offer comprehensive trauma-informed care.
5. Taking a resiliency and strengths-based approach that focuses on an individuals' strengths and abilities to facilitate their healing and growth.

Reviewing this policy

This policy will be reviewed and evaluated on a regular basis to ensure its ongoing relevance and effectiveness. Feedback from staff, individuals served, and external stakeholders will be sought and considered during the review process. Amendments and updates will be made as necessary, based on emerging research, best practices, and community needs.

By adopting this policy, Leicestershire County Council demonstrates its commitment to trauma-informed practice and working towards the well-being of all individuals within our workforce and wider community.

Building a trauma informed workforce

Introduction

Trauma-informed practice is defined as any attempt by an organisation/system to address the symptoms and/or effects of trauma into their policies and practices to actively prevent re-traumatisation. Trauma is everybody's business; most people are likely to know or work with someone who has experienced trauma and adversity in their lives. Many of us have directly experienced trauma in our own lives. When the work we do also brings us into contact with people who are affected by trauma, there is an added responsibility to recognise this, adjust how we work to take account of the impact of trauma, and respond in a way which supports recovery, does no harm and recognises the needs that people have.

Every member of the workforce has a part to play in ensuring that organisations are trauma informed. We hope that training in trauma awareness will develop a shared understanding, language and value system across different teams and organisations. While this is relevant across the workforce, the specific knowledge and skills required varies depending on an individual's role.

The vision of this policy is of a trauma informed and responsive organisation that is capable of recognising where people are affected by trauma and adversity, and respond in ways that prevent further harm, support recovery, address inequalities and improve life chances. The aspiration is that all workers across all service sectors will develop a trauma-informed level of understanding and skill. Workers who have regular contact with children or adults who may be affected by trauma (even if this is not known about) would develop a trauma-skilled level of understanding and skill. Workers who have a specific remit to provide supports and / or interventions or have a job role that specifically brings them into contact with people known to be affected by trauma and are working with people with complex difficulties linked to trauma will have an in depth understanding of complex trauma which is reflected in their practice interventions.

Trauma-informed practice can be implemented in a range of contexts and settings, and thus involves a wide variety of personnel. It is not just practitioners who can be trauma-informed; front of house staff is the first point of contact in services. A terrifying experience, which does traumatise a person, can be navigated better when a member of staff recognises the signs of trauma. They can help make the space safer and begin lifting the mistrust and fear which holds a traumatised person in the conditions of their trauma. In addition, leaders can help staff to value their own passion and the healing power of their relationships—for the families they may work with and for themselves.

Taking a TIP approach requires.

- Getting the basics right: make every point of contact and communication count as a chance to develop respectful, empowering relationships and language that is non blaming and shaming.
- Importance of trust: people need reliable, honest and dependable communication and interactions.
- Early recognition of the impact of trauma: enabling access at the earliest opportunity to effective places, people and responses to support recovery.
- Absolute requirement for collaboration: breaking down barriers across all sectors to enable person-centred, consistent and effective trauma informed systems, networks and responses.

- Commitment to support innovative, multi-disciplinary approaches: challenging and overcoming trauma and adversity related barriers to life chances across all areas of public service.

For an organisation to embrace a trauma-informed practice (TIP) fully, it must have a plan for implementing an agency-wide strategy for workforce development that is in alignment with the values and principles of TIP and the organization's mission statement. Without a fully trained workforce, an organization will not be able to implement the TIP model. However, simply training staff in TIP is not enough. The workforce will not be able to sustain the kind of focus required to adopt and implement a trauma-informed philosophy and services without the ongoing support of Senior Managers and supervisors. It would be the responsibility of each department to understand their training need and secure quality training for their staff.

Principles

All members of the workforce, whether volunteers, administrators, practitioners, managers or strategic leads, should have the opportunity to become trauma aware and responsive. We hope that training in trauma-awareness will create a shared understanding, language and value system across different teams and departments. Trauma-awareness recognises that early adversity occurs within the context of relationships. Positive change can also take place in relationships - relationships between individuals and families; relationships between families, and volunteers and professionals; and relationships between different services and systems. Training the workforce in trauma awareness provides the initial building blocks to the development of adversity and trauma informed services, with emerging evidence showing that these services and systems can have better outcomes for people affected by trauma.

Assessing trauma training Needs

Training for all staff members is essential in creating a trauma-informed organisation. It may seem that training should simply focus on new members of staff on enhancing the skill level of those who have no prior experience in working with trauma, but training should, in fact, be more systematic across the organization to develop fully sustainable trauma-informed services. All employees, including administrative staff members, should receive an orientation and basic education about the prevalence of trauma and its potential impact on the people who access our services. To ensure safety and reduction of harm, training should cover dynamics of traumatization and how practice can mimic original experiences, trigger trauma responses, and cause further harm to the person. Training for all employees must also educate them about the impacts of culture, race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, and socioeconomic status on individuals' experiences of trauma.

Committing to learning from those with lived experience

A central pillar of trauma-informed approaches is that learning, and development should be informed by the experiences of people who have lived experience of abuse, trauma and adversity. High quality trauma training should therefore look to involve experts by experience as coproduction partners in the development and, where appropriate, the delivery of training.

Trauma Informed Recruitment and Retention

Building a trauma-informed workplace is crucial to creating a positive workplace culture and helps improve the happiness, engagement, and retention of your employees. Support, understanding, and respect are key practices to ensure a talented worker thrives in the

organisation. Psychological trauma in the workplace can affect employee attendance, cooperation, performance, engagement, and retention. It is important to foster a workplace culture that values empathy, inclusivity, and understanding, where team members are encouraged to be considerate of one another's potential trauma experiences.

Recruitment, interview and induction when done through a trauma informed lens acknowledges that many people coming into work have their own trauma and adversity and understands that there is a multi-layered impact on staff of working in a trauma focused, highly stressful environment and context. This is addition to the fact that most people find interviews an anxiety provoking, high pressure situation which can evoke and resurface anxieties and feelings about being judged, not being good enough etc. Moreover interviews by there very nature involve a power dynamic and a position of privilege. With this in mind we know that fear and being in survival mode restricts and constricts thinking and exploration. In order to get the best out of people it is in our best interests to make the process collaborative, communicative and transparent to support people to feel safe, listened to, valued, engaged and welcomed.

Handling the effects of trauma can be challenging for an employer because often the traumatic experience may not be shared with or known by them. A basic philosophy change could be as simple as assuming every employee wants to be a high performer and working through whatever barriers that exist is one step toward having a trauma informed human resource and performance management system. A trauma informed organization is able to fully realize the prevalence of trauma, recognize the effects of trauma, and respond with trauma informed policies and practices. HR departments are essential in helping an organization make the shift to being trauma informed as seamless and normative as possible. Many HR practices already incorporate the 6 Key Principles of Trauma informed practice however, there may not always be a conscious connection between effective HR and trauma informed practices.

Studies have shown the positive effects of employee satisfaction and increased productivity when employees feel valued, understood, and supported. The 6 key Principles may increase employees' sense of security and support. A trauma informed organization understands the need to be responsive to staff who work in highly stressful situations on a daily basis and has support mechanisms in place.

HR activities can be divided into 4 stages of employment: pre-employment, induction/onboarding, ongoing employment/retainment, offboarding/ exiting the organisation. Each stage offers opportunities for employees to experience a trauma informed culture. The following chapter offers trauma informed considerations and questions for each stage of employment. The information is based on the 6 Key Principles.

For the purposes of this policy on Recruitment and Retention, Trauma Informed Practice requires all people in services recognise how a person's history of trauma can affect their:

- Experience, engagement, and receptiveness to the organisation's services and supports
- Functioning in the community
- Interactions with staff and other people including their children and family
- Sensitivity to guidelines and interventions

Organisations need to acknowledge the trauma staff and providers themselves experience, either as part of their own personal lives or secondary to working with users of services who share first hand details about their trauma.

Policy & Guidance:

A trauma-informed recruitment and retention policy is designed to create a supportive and understanding environment for employees who may have experienced trauma or experience stress through their work. It involves integrating trauma-sensitive practices into various stages of the hiring process, such as interview questions and onboarding procedures, and maintaining a workplace culture that is empathetic and accommodating to individuals' needs. This approach can help employees feel valued, safe, and they more likely to stay with the organisation.

Staff recruitment:

Diversity and Inclusion

Having a diverse and inclusive workforce has many benefits for the organisation, a diverse workplace allows for more ideas and processes. A diverse workforce brings a wide variety of people with different experiences, skills, perspectives and insights together to find solutions. Diversity increases innovation, creativity and strategic thinking because teams of people who come from different backgrounds can draw upon their unique experiences and a wider range of knowledge to spark new, innovative ideas. By expanding your hiring practices to attract more candidates from diverse backgrounds, you can enhance the way the organisation functions and make more appealing to applicants.

We acknowledge the importance of a diverse and inclusive workforce in creating a safe and supportive environment for the workforce. In our recruitment process, we will actively seek individuals from various backgrounds, cultures, and communities, aiming to build a team that reflects the diversity of the populations we serve. Acknowledge Anti-Racism practice in thinking about individual experiences and the impact on individual's different from one person to another. How these manifests in stressful situations will mean interview situations can be difficult for individuals who have experienced trauma to bring the best out of themselves in these situations. Therefore, how the interview is structured, and the methods used will allow individuals to bring their true best self.

Trauma from the experience of discrimination in or out of the work environment is unique to the individual and can have a profound and pervasive impact on their well-being. Discrimination can coincide with feelings of dissatisfaction and exclusion – or not being respected, recognised or valued at work. Employee experience can have a direct effect the organisations success discrimination remains a threat to organisational culture, “draining” employees’ motivation, commitment to the service and level of engagement. Such a negative experience can undo the gains made by workplace leaders in the area of diversity and inclusion and it is important that there are safe mechanisms in place for employees to share their experiences.

Pre Employment

Pre-employment is everything before the employee's actual start date. This includes advertising, recruitment, job descriptions, interviews, confirmation of employment and any pre-employment activities used by the organisation. Trauma informed practices at this stage take into consideration the importance of communication at every step of the process, understanding the level of anxiety that any applicant may experience and how important the environment is in allowing the applicant to be focused and calm enough to explain their unique knowledge, skills, and attitude.

Onboarding and Induction

This stage of employment is defined as the time between start date and initial proficiency on the job as defined by job expectations and performance reviews. Although there are many good onboarding and induction practices that inherently support the 6 Key Principles, thoughtful application may decrease time to proficiency and increase employee understanding and engagement. The Principles guide the development and review of onboarding and induction policies and activities.

Ongoing employment

This stage of employment is defined as the time following onboarding and induction. Using the Principles in this stage compliments good HR practices by supporting ongoing retention and engagement as well as mitigating the risk of vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue. The Principles guide the development and review of policies and activities for ongoing employment.

Off-boarding

Off-boarding is a strategic process for transitioning employees out of an organisation such as retirement, pursuing a new position or involuntary separation. It provides another opportunity for the entire organization, not just HR, to practice the Principles. Creating a safe and trusting off boarding process is ideal, as the idea of moving away from a job can be stressful for the employee. It is important to consider the potential impact on the remaining employees during off-boarding. Using the Principles during off-boarding also benefits the employer; given the experience will likely influence future recommendations of former and current employees.

Trauma informed supervision

A trauma lens informs our understanding of supervision in several ways. Supervision should be structured in a way for staff to gain support, debrief about their work, and advance their skills and knowledge. When operating from a trauma lens, supervisors should also support professional growth and encourage learning opportunities. It is crucial for organizations to create safe spaces for meaningful and sometimes difficult conversations, and to mitigate the impacts of vicarious trauma.

Leicestershire County Council aims to create a safe and supportive environment for everyone who accesses their services and the staff we employ, research has shown that trauma both primary and secondary can negatively impact an individual and how they respond to situations and others if not recognised, supported and work through.

Within supervision trauma – informed practice is an intervention and organisational approach that focuses on how trauma may affect an individual's life and their responses to supervision. Supervisors are able through supporting individuals influence a work culture and continue to embed a trauma informed approach within the local authority.

A trauma informed supervision policy is designed to create safe protected spaces for employees to talk and reflect on subjects related to personal and professional influences that are impacting both positively and negatively on them. Supervisions, the Annual Performance Review process and ad hoc de briefings should actively support this work.

The benefits of a trauma informed supervision include enhances staff wellbeing, space to explore vicarious trauma, decreases burn out and staff turnover, promotes staff retention and improves service provided to our service users.

Supervising staff from diverse backgrounds

While the protected characteristics give us a framework to think about diversity and identify some of the communities who experience discrimination, it is important to also consider individual identity and how this might impact on their experience as a worker. Supervisees may fall into many of the 9 protected characteristics protected from discrimination under the Equality Act 2010 or identify more strongly with some than others, increasing their exposure to potential discrimination.

Spending some time, particularly at the start of the supervisory relationship to talk about the supervisee as a person and not just in terms of their work is hugely helpful. It can result in more awareness about their background and whether they may need support.

Intersectionality is a term that was coined by Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. It refers to the interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class, and gender, and how they apply to a given individual or group in creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. Supervisors should be aware that their supervisees may face multiple disadvantages because of their identities and should be open in attempting to understand how their supervisee are managing these sometimes interrelated, but also sometimes distinct, considerations.

Microaggressions are defined as “everyday verbal or non-verbal slights, indignities, put downs or insults that people of colour, women, LGBTQ+ populations or those who are marginalised experience in their day to-day interactions with people. Microaggressions work to perpetuate the marginalisation of groups using hostile, derogatory, or negative messages. Microaggressions marginalise, other and exclude by perpetuating existing racist stereotypes.

Microaggressions can be experienced by any supervisee who has any protected characteristic as part of their identity – they are not solely racial. They can often be perpetuated by allies in the response to racism or complaints from BAME workers – sometimes unintentionally undermining or playing down the concern. As a supervisor, it is important that you understand this if you are dealing with complaints or concerns.

As a supervisor you may not know if a supervisee identifies as part of the LGBTQ+ community. It is always good practice not to make assumptions around anyone’s identity, including if they are LGBTQ+ but instead create a welcoming and supportive environment for all backgrounds and identities. An understanding of gender, sexuality, pronouns and identity will aid in providing the best support to all supervisees.

Trauma-informed supervision is one critical tool that helps to reduce burnout, secondary trauma, and compassion fatigue among your supervisees. Trauma-informed supervision helps buffers the impacts of employees’ painful experiences within their home or work life by offering workers empathy, support, and care.

The importance of selfcare

Working with children and families with a long and complex history of trauma and overtime this can have a negative impact on the worker. In addition, we all come to the work with our own histories and experiences and as a result may find some work situations/issues triggering and difficult to deal with. Stress and anxiety can impact on a workers health, personal life, their work and can contribute to feelings of burnout and lead to absence from work. Exposure to trauma and other stressors is unavoidable in our work, however

supervision has been identified as a primary strategy that supports resiliency in workers and mitigates against the impact of these stressors.

What is 'secondary (or vicarious) trauma'?

Vicarious trauma is the process of change that happens because you care about other people who have been hurt and feel committed or responsible to help them. Over time this process can lead to changes in your psychological, physical, and spiritual well-being.

Secondary trauma has been described as a form of traumatic stress, compassion fatigue, and burnout, and affects people who work directly and indirectly with human trauma or suffering.

Wellbeing plan

The purpose of a wellbeing plan is to identify possible stressors within your life or at work, and helpful ways to approach these. This personal wellbeing plan, although it belongs to you, is a tool to help you and your manager have open conversations about things that are important for your health and wellbeing. It can help you look at things that you can do or change to help you feel well and also helps your manager know if there are things, they can support you with that could improve your wellbeing. You can use it to aid discussions about those areas which are important to you and that may impact on your health and wellbeing.

It may be something that you do for yourself and refer to as you need it. It may be something that you create and share with your manager, or a close friend at work.

If you feel that your work, it is impacting on how you feel it is important to talk this over with your manager about access to support services.

Support Available

Health Safety & Wellbeing Information & Guidance Stress Management in the Workplace.

https://leics.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/peopleservices/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B661C5A10-8171-47CC-BDA0-146352A2062C%7D&file=stress-management-in-the-workplace-information-and-guidance.docx&action=default&mobileredirect=true&DefaultItemOpen=1

Support with mental health

<https://leics.sharepoint.com/sites/peopleservices/SitePages/support-with-mental-health.aspx>

Managers guide on mental health and supporting employees

https://leics.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/peopleservices/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B6F7DBDD5-87BB-44BC-8046-A4F198D451A8%7D&file=managers-guide-on-mental-health-and-supporting-employees.doc&action=default&mobileredirect=true&DefaultItemOpen=1

Access to work mental health support

<https://leics.sharepoint.com/sites/whatsnew/SitePages/access-to-work-mental-health-support.aspx>

Depression in the workplace

<https://leics.sharepoint.com/sites/peopleservices/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2Fpeopleservices%2FShared%20Documents%2Fdepression%2Din%2Dthe%2Dworkplace%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2Fpeopleservices%2FShared%20Documents>

Supporting an employee through bereavement

<https://leics.sharepoint.com/sites/peopleservices/SitePages/support-an-employee-through-a-bereavement.aspx>

Support with substance misuse

<https://leics.sharepoint.com/sites/peopleservices/SitePages/support-with-substance-misuse.aspx>

Domestic Abuse Policy

https://leics.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/peopleservices/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B577A18B3-2E6D-43BC-8A01-B05CBBE965FF%7D&file=domestic-abuse-policy-and-guidance.doc&action=default&mobileredirect=true&DefaultItemOpen=1

Health, Safety & Wellbeing Information & Guidance Violence and Abuse at Work

https://leics.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/peopleservices/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B3D8A22AA-2A5A-48D7-8B47-B85E1E7DBD11%7D&file=violence-at-work.doc&action=default&mobileredirect=true&DefaultItemOpen=1

Supporting Disabled Colleagues

<https://leics.sharepoint.com/sites/peopleservices/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2Fpeopleservices%2FShared%20Documents%2Fsupporting%2Ddisabled%2DEmployees%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2Fpeopleservices%2FShared%20Documents>

Disabled workers group

<https://leics.sharepoint.com/sites/peopleservices/SitePages/disabled-workers-group.aspx>

Diversity Champions

<https://leics.sharepoint.com/sites/peopleservices/SitePages/diversity-champions.aspx>

Black, Asian and Multi Ethnic (BAME) network

<https://leics.sharepoint.com/sites/peopleservices/SitePages/bame-network.aspx>

Hate Support Toolkit

Children and Family Services (CFS) are providing a Hate support toolkit to help staff and managers record and report hate motivated incidents, threatening language or behaviours which occur whilst on duty.

<https://leics.sharepoint.com/sites/childrenandfamilyservices/SitePages/hate-support-toolkit.aspx>

LGBTQ+ staff network

<https://leics.sharepoint.com/sites/peopleservices/SitePages/lgbt-staff-network.aspx>

The Violence Reduction Network

The violence reduction network have a number of tools and resources to support Trauma informed Practice which can be access via the flowline link [Trauma Informed Partnership | LeicsVRN \(violencereductionnetwork.co.uk\)](https://violencereductionnetwork.co.uk)