

## Supporting schools to become Trauma Informed

### Introduction

The Children's Trust is seeking through Our Way of Working to develop a common and consistent approach to how we work with children and families across the partnership. This way of working draws on Trauma Informed Practice and Motivational Interviewing and two frameworks for multi-agency review, reflection and decision making: Multi Agency Group Supervision and Learning Conversations.

Schools are integral partners to this vision. We want to use our emerging shared language and understanding of the impact of trauma to start to shape and develop practice, systems and process. To find out more about Our Way of Working and our shared language: <https://westcheshirechildrenstrust.co.uk/>

During Covid-19 the multi-agency partnership has researched and built upon Our Way of Working to develop a Covid-19 Recovery approach to support all front line workers including schools. To access the guide and find out how this can support you in your work with children and families: <https://westcheshirechildrenstrust.co.uk/our-way-of-working/recovery-model/>

This document reflects how Our Way of Working can be developed and applied within a school context. It considers key principles which underpin Trauma Informed Practice, approaches which are aligned with Trauma Informed Practice, as well as training which is available to schools in Cheshire West and Chester (CW&C).

### 1. What is trauma?

Trauma can be described as a distressing experience, or pattern of experiences, that threatens a person's actual or perceived sense of felt safety and overwhelms their ability to cope. Traumatic experiences can evoke feelings of intense fear, helplessness, sense of loss in self, orientation and control. Such experiences can physically alter the way in which our bodies develop and respond to stress (Porges, Polyvagal Theory, 2011). When a child or young person lives with trauma their biology changes. Their 'alarm system' that alerts them of danger becomes hypersensitive (Bombèr, 2020). The slightest threat, or perceived threat, in their environment can elicit a defensive response – it overwhelms, and it negatively impacts upon their ability to regulate their emotions. Traumatic experiences may include life threatening disasters, a pandemic (COVID19), severe accidents, abuse and neglect, loss / separation from a loved one, bullying or living in chronically chaotic environments with a lack of available resources to meet basic needs, including a lack of secure early attachment relationship.

Trauma and adverse experiences in childhood (ACEs) can significantly impact upon a child / young person's development and wider functioning and have longer term effects on their overall health and wellbeing. Children and families who have experienced early trauma and adversity may find it difficult to feel safe and to trust others - they need positive relationships, support and safety to begin to recover.

## 2. Trauma Informed Practice

Trauma Informed Practice **recognises** the prevalence of trauma and the affect it can have on children and families, staff / supporting adults, as well as wider communities. A trauma informed **response** fully integrates knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures and practices, to help children and young people to heal and to **build resilience** and seeks to **avoid** re-traumatisation to prevent further harm.

Key principles of **safety, trust, choice, collaboration, equity** and **empowerment** must be embedded throughout our practices. Our vision is to promote trauma-informed and compassionate school environments, which nurture positive relationships and help to build resilience for children and families. To help achieve this, we need all children and young people (Alexander, 2019):

- **to feel safe** (physically and emotionally)
- **to be able to regulate / self-regulate** (emotional / sensory needs)
- **to be connected** (positive and attuned relationships)
- so that they can **be ready to learn** (skill building and resiliency).

*Appendix 1, provides more detail on the principles of Trauma Informed Practice and how this could be applied within a school.*

Being Trauma Informed is not a quick fix solution but a gradual way of working that *reflects a 'profound paradigm shift in knowledge, perspectives, attitudes and skills over a period of time'* (Missouri Education, 2019) requiring a 'whole school' approach. It can be understood as a continuum of implementation where schools and wider partnership organisations move through different stages to achieve a Trauma Informed workforce (Missouri, Education, 2019). It involves a change in culture with respect to policies, procedures and practices, and will shape how we work with children and families to promote positive mental health, emotional wellbeing, build resilience and improve future outcomes.

## 3. What is Motivational Interviewing?

Motivational Interviewing (MI) is a collaborative and purposeful conversation to strengthen the motivation of people who feel unable to or are struggling to make changes in their lives. It is a positive and strengths-based way of working with people to help them understand their own need for change. Research has shown that by gaining rapport, expressing empathy, an understanding and focusing on self-determination, change is more likely to occur (Miller and

Rollnick, 2013). We can use MI in all our conversations with colleagues as well as with children and families. It can be part of your way of working towards a Trauma Informed Approach in your setting.

#### 4. Covid-19 Recovery

The Recovery guide and approach is a way of working that has been developed to support children and adults and has a strong focus on prevention of need and risk. It includes the core elements of Our Way of Working, Trauma Informed Practice and Motivational Interviewing to build resilience and celebrate success, as well as PACE: playfulness, acceptance, curiosity, empathy (Hughes, 2009) to help structure conversations and build positive relationships with children. Many CW&C Schools are familiar with PACE and have this model embedded into their practice. The Recovery approach is a model and guide that can be used by all schools and multi-agency partners and is based on: **Recognise, Respond, Link**. It supports schools in **recognising** the impact of Covid-19 for children, their parents and carers, identifies ways in which you can **respond**, and how to **link** to other resources and local services. <https://westcheshirechildrenstrust.co.uk/our-way-of-working/recovery-model/>

#### 5. Aim of the Trauma Informed Continuum:

- Informative document which reflects a continuum approach to understanding and supporting a whole school approach to Trauma Informed Practice.
- Provides a framework and reflective tool for schools to self-evaluate and consider how they can become trauma informed.
- Identifies approaches, strategies / interventions to support becoming a trauma informed school.
- Supports embedding a common and consistent approach to how we work with children and families across the continuum, building on our shared language, Motivational Interviewing and Trauma Informed framework.

#### 6. Who is this for?

- All Schools and Governors within Cheshire West and Chester
- Education Service
- Partners who work with schools, for example, Health, *Police, Youth Offending Service, Early Help and Prevention, Children's Social Care, Young Carers, Youth Service, Fire and Rescue.*



## 7. Applying the tools:

In this document, there are two tools which will help schools to begin to establish how their setting is currently implementing Trauma Informed Practice.

- **Trauma Informed Continuum** – a colour coded continuum of practice (see *figure i*). Use this to reflect and evaluate where your setting is currently at.
- **School Audit** (see Appendix 2) – to analyse in more detail how your school and staff are implementing Trauma Informed Practice.

Used together, these tools can help schools to determine a starting point to utilise within their school development plan.

## 8. Developing 'Our Way of Working' through creating Trauma Informed Schools

Each school within Cheshire West and Chester has a unique culture and approach. Reflecting this, we recognise that each school is at a different and individual point in their understanding, development and implementation of Trauma Informed Practice.

The table below researched by Missouri Education 2019, outlines a summary of five different phases across a continuum which reflect the process of change to becoming Trauma Informed and adopting the principles, approaches and values of Our Way of Working.

**Figure (i) Trauma Informed Continuum**

| Pre-Trauma Aware                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Trauma Aware                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Trauma Sensitive                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Trauma Responsive                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Trauma Informed                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
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| <p><b>Unaware of trauma</b> and the impact of trauma for children in all aspects of their lives.</p> <p>Have not considered accessing Our Way of Working and not aware of Motivational Interviewing/Covid-19 Recovery</p> | <p><b>Aware of trauma:</b> it's prevalence and beginning to consider how it impacts on children and their families</p> <p><b>School Leaders:</b> seek to understand more about Trauma Informed Practice and Motivational Interviewing to shape practice and culture within school, for staff and pupils</p> <p><b>Have accessed/signed up:</b> Our Way of Working Training/Covid-19 Recovery Briefings and viewed the guide</p> | <p><b>Starting to consider:</b> how to become Trauma Informed and identifying what needs to change and be adopted within school</p> <p><b>School Leaders and Staff:</b> attended Our Way of Working training/Covid-19 Recovery Briefings. Drawing on 90 day action plan to develop their approach and consider ways to implement Motivational Interviewing techniques</p> <p><b>Disseminated key learning:</b> to staff and process of organisational change is put in place</p> <p><b>Staff know:</b> what trauma is and have knowledge on the impact of trauma for pupils in their behaviour and what this is communicating</p> | <p><b>Changes in practice,</b> policy and procedure are being put in place to support the culture change at all levels across the school</p> <p><b>Formal plan:</b> of training and development for whole school in place (Inset days/ briefings/ departmental meetings, team meetings, regular agenda item)</p> <p><b>Interventions and approaches</b> are beginning to be put in place that demonstrate change in culture across the school and align with principles of Trauma Informed Practice and Motivational Interviewing skills / techniques. Covid-19 recovery guide is embedded into practice and informs decision making.</p> <p><b>Shared Language:</b> School has identified changes in their language to be trauma informed and are putting this into practice</p> | <p><b>Whole school approach:</b> values, ethos and principles are Trauma Informed and fully embedded throughout whole school practice. Motivational Interviewing skills / techniques are well established and regularly used by all. Impact of Covid-19 is recognised and responded to for all children and the recovery guide embedded into practice and decision making by all staff.</p> <p><b>Established practice norm:</b> no longer requires a few leaders to drive the approach</p> <p><b>Strengthening community relationships:</b> and drawing on expertise of partners in embedding trauma informed approaches through collaboration and integration – establishing communities of Trauma Informed Practice</p> <p><b>Evidenced through:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy and Procedure</li> <li>• Teaching and Learning</li> <li>• Mental health and wellbeing of children / young people and staff</li> <li>• Behaviour and Pastoral Care</li> <li>• School building and environment</li> </ul> |



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|  |  | <p><b>Tools and strategies:</b> identified to support how to respond to trauma as a school, pastorally and in the classroom; this includes the Covid-19 Recovery guide.</p> <p><b>Shared language</b> is being introduced and drawn on across school</p> | <p><b>Impact of trauma:</b> for children /young people and families is recognised and consistently responded to in a trauma informed way, drawing upon key principles and shared language</p> <p><b>Impact of trauma</b> on staff is recognised and responded to, including secondary and vicarious trauma, through the development of policy, procedure and appropriate support</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Skilled trauma informed workforce</li><li>• HR policies and procedures</li><li>• Recruitment of staff</li><li>• Support and interventions in place to identify and respond to secondary and vicarious trauma</li><li>• Strengthened Partnership Working.</li></ul> <p><b>Impact for child:</b> able to demonstrate measurable improvement in holistic outcomes for children / young people in school.</p> |
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## References

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- [Porges, S. \(2011\). \*The Polyvagal Theory: Neurophysiological foundations of emotions, attachment, communication and self-regulation\*. USA: WW Norton](#)
- [Rogers, Carl \(1956\). \*Client-Centered Therapy \(3 ed.\)\* Boston: Houghton-Mifflin](#)
- SAMSHA (2014). *SAMSHA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma – Informed Approach*. Rockville MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

## Further reading and useful websites

- Our Way of Working: includes trauma informed and MI resource \_ <https://westcheshirechildrenstrust.co.uk/our-way-of-working/>
- Beacon House: lots of useful trauma informed resources [www.beaconhouse.org.uk](http://www.beaconhouse.org.uk)
- Nurture UK: an inclusive education for all - Principles of Nurture, assessment and intervention, training [www.nurtureuk.org](http://www.nurtureuk.org)
- Trauma Informed Schools UK: training courses, assessment / intervention tool, resource [www.traumainformedschools.co.uk](http://www.traumainformedschools.co.uk)
- Trauma Informed Education: training for schools (Attachment, Theraplay and DDP approaches [www.traumainformededucation.org.uk](http://www.traumainformededucation.org.uk)

## Appendix 1

### Key Principles of Trauma Informed Practice

Examples of Trauma Informed Principles in practice – examples given may relate to multiple principles.

| Principles                                                                                                                         | Examples in practice...                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
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| <b>Safety:</b> to ensure children and families feel safe, emotionally and physically                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear and high expectations with 'flexible consistency'</li> <li>• 6 Principles of Nurture embedded within school / every classroom (Nurture UK)</li> <li>• Identified 'Safe Base' for children to access as needed</li> <li>• Language of safety is used with children / young people</li> <li>• All communication happens through a 'trauma informed lens' - it is compassionate and curious: holding in mind 'What happened to you?'; noticing and wondering language; no 'naming and shaming'.</li> <li>• Identified compassionate Key Adult/s - attuned and responsive to the needs of the child / young person to help them to feel safe in school. May provide a 'meet and greet' and regular 'check ins' across the day.</li> <li>• Physical layout / organisation and positioning within the classroom is considered from the child's perspective to ensure feeling of safety.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Trust and Relationships:</b> to help children and families be connected; developing positive, attuned and trusted relationships | <p><i>'Relationships matter - every interaction with someone who has experienced adversity and trauma can be an opportunity for healing and growth' (adapted from Perry)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 Principles of Nurture embedded within school / every classroom (Nurture UK)</li> <li>• Identified compassionate Key Adult/s - attuned and responsive to the needs of the child / young person (may include a small 'Team of Adults' to provide consistent support)</li> <li>• Following the 4 Rs (Bomber, 2020): Regulate, Relate, Reason and Repair ('Connection before correction', Golding, 2015)</li> <li>• Relationship and Stress Regulation Policy</li> <li>• Restorative conversations / approaches which focus upon repair of hurt / harm</li> <li>• Adults use PACE (Hughes, 2009) when communicating and interacting with children / young people, which also helps them to feel safe.</li> </ul>    |

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| <p><b>Choice and Collaboration:</b> facilitating informed choices, respect and collaboration with children and families</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupil Voice is valued, regularly elicited through appropriate tools and authentically listened to</li> <li>• Person Centred Planning tools and approaches are used eg. One Page Profiles, Person Centred Reviews</li> <li>• Effective partnership working and creating plans <b>with</b> children and families (not 'done to')</li> <li>• Ensuring children and families are provided clear and appropriate messages about their rights and responsibilities eg. The Pledge, CiC Council</li> <li>• Maintaining positive communication which is respectful and honest</li> <li>• Unconditional Positive Regard (Rogers, 1956) is shown – accepting and respecting children and families as they are, without judgement</li> <li>• Motivational Interviewing skills / techniques underpin conversations with children and families.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Equity:</b> promoting fair and equal opportunities; respecting cultural difference and diversity.</p>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policies and practice promote inclusion, diversity and equal opportunities for all children and young people</li> <li>• Effective safeguarding policies and procedures, staff training and resources, to ensure all children and young people are safe and feel safe in school eg Anti -Bullying and prevention against online bullying (Anti-Bullying Alliance, NSPCC, Diana Award)</li> <li>• PSHE curriculum programmes and resources which promote healthy development and teach children and young people how to keep safe eg. online safety, relationships and sex education, drugs and alcohol</li> <li>• Curriculum topics and events / experiences which celebrate cultural diversity and difference for all children, young people and their respective communities</li> </ul>                                                      |
| <p><b>Empowerment:</b> developing emotional regulation, key skills for learning and building resiliency.</p>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holistic assessments identify strengths and needs, inform SMART targets, targeted interventions and strategies eg. social emotional skills, learning, executive functioning skills, mental health and well-being</li> <li>• Regulation breaks embedded throughout the day, as needed eg. Regulation Station, Zones of Regulation, Calm Box, sensory activities</li> <li>• Emotion Coaching scripts used by Key Adults to support regulation</li> <li>• Use of PACE (Hughes, 2009) in communications and work with children / young people to help them gain skills to better understand and regulate their emotions</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planned programmes of ELSA intervention, with clear outcomes – strategies shared with teachers to help generalise target skills outside of intervention context</li> <li>School Counsellor or other appropriately trained practitioner/ therapist eg. Mental Health Practitioner</li> </ul> |
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## Appendix 2

### Training and development available in Cheshire West and Chester:

Different training courses are available to schools across Cheshire West and Chester which are considered to align with Our Way of Working and the principles of Trauma Informed Practice:

- Our Way of Working, Leaders & Core Programme:** <https://westcheshirechildrenstrust.co.uk/our-way-of-working/training-for-you/>
- Covid-19 Recovery:** <https://westcheshirechildrenstrust.co.uk/our-way-of-working/training-for-you/>
- Attachment Friendly Award:** Please contact The Virtual School, Cheshire West and Chester to find out more: Chris Vohora ,(Virtual School), [Christine.Vohora@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:Christine.Vohora@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)
- Motivational Interviewing for School Based Staff:** i-learn modules (link to be included when launched)
- Person Centred Planning:** Including one Page profiles and Child Centre Reviews.
  - To find out further information: <https://www.scie.org.uk/e-learning/one-page-profilev>
  - HSA offer a range of free materials and some chargeable: <http://helensandersonassociates.co.uk/person-centred-practice/one-page-profiles/>
  - <http://helensandersonassociates.co.uk/person-centred-practice/one-page-profiles/one-page-profiles-education/>
- For further information and to book the following courses delivered by the *Child and Educational Psychology Service* , please search via eCWIP: <https://www.ecwip.education/>
  - Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA)**
  - Emotion Coaching**
  - Mental Health First Aid**
  - Emotionally Based School Non-attendance**



### Appendix 3

#### School and Settings Audit – adapted from Health Education Partnership.com

[https://www.healtheducationpartnership.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Attachment\\_Aware\\_Schools\\_audit.pdf](https://www.healtheducationpartnership.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Attachment_Aware_Schools_audit.pdf)

- The Audit tool is for schools and settings to determine how your setting is currently implementing Trauma Informed Practice.
  - It is to be used as a guide only and is intended to support school's journey to become a Trauma Informed Setting.
  - Schools may wish to use the outcomes from the Audit to support their School Improvement Plan.
- See attachments below:

| Blank copy of Trauma Informed Schools and Settings Audit                                                                    | Example of completed audit for your support                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <br>Trauma%20Informed<br>%20Schools%20and% | <br>Trauma%20Informed<br>%20Schools%20and% |