



# Trauma Informed Derbyshire

Connecting head, heart and hands

# Introduction

**Our vision is to build a trauma-informed workforce, that is able to recognise the impacts of trauma and respond in ways that promote recovery - overall reduce inequalities and increase the life chances for all who reside and work in Derbyshire.**

We are convinced that together we can do more to support children, young people and adults of all ages who are affected by trauma.

Trauma-informed working is not just about what we do, it is also about the way we think, who we are at work and how we organise and deliver our services. It's about how we, as a workforce, shape our system for the better, at all levels of responsibility. It requires a workforce that is properly supported, resourced and encouraged to practise within trauma-informed environments and systems.

We are seeing the proven potential of trauma-informed approaches to transform the lives of individuals and the effectiveness of our public service systems. Whether that's working with people in the prison system to understand the behaviours that lead to their incarceration; working to prevent adverse experiences in the lives of children; working to heal the trauma caused by racial injustice or addressing the many other challenges that trauma can bring to individuals and communities.

**This handbook summarises the work of the Trauma Informed Derbyshire programme, led by Public Health since January 2023.**

It has been co-produced by practitioners across the system, through workshops, network meetings and many interviews. It acts as a common resource to join us together as a system with a shared understanding and purpose around the benefits of being trauma-informed.

**Why trauma-informed approaches really matter**

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# Trauma shapes lives in ways that are **profound and far-reaching**, reshaping the lives of individuals, families, and communities.

Experiences of violence, abuse, neglect, loss, and adversity don't discriminate—trauma can affect people across all ages, backgrounds, and circumstances. Yet, we know that trauma is particularly concentrated among people in low socio-economic groups, minority communities, and communities of colour where it deepens existing inequalities.

Trauma can fill our mental health units, our drug and alcohol services, our prisons, our excluded pupil provision and our medical wards. For decades, research has illuminated the lasting effects of trauma. These experiences shape how people engage with the world, how they relate to others, and their overall mental and physical health.

Repeated exposure to trauma, whether through individual hardship or collective challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate crisis, economic pressures, global conflicts, social media and rising race-related and social tensions, leads to even worse outcomes and new forms of distress. Trauma can also perpetuate itself, with the coping mechanisms developed in response to trauma echoing through generations.

Additionally, trauma not only affects those seeking support but also the staff providing it. Supporting individuals with trauma histories can be emotionally demanding, leading to secondary trauma, burnout, and effects on staff wellbeing. Many staff also carry their own lived experiences of trauma.

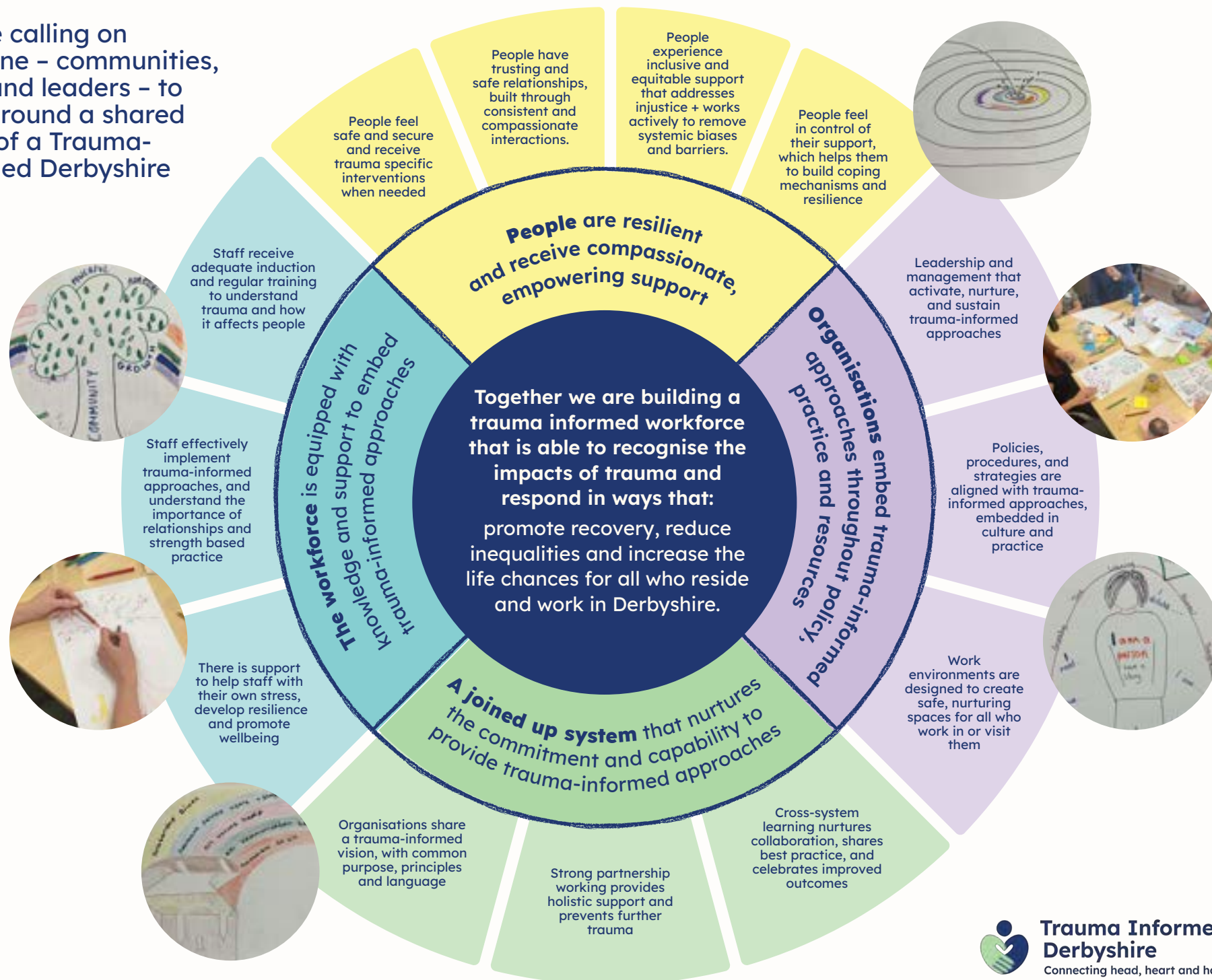
That's why trauma-informed approaches are essential to reducing inequalities and increasing the life chances for all who reside and work in Derbyshire. An important task for all services is to examine the extent to which they build an understanding and awareness of trauma into all their practices. It means recognising the prevalence of trauma, understanding its effects, and taking action to prevent further harm.

Trauma-informed approaches aren't a quick fix— they underpin a compassionate, multi-agency system where people recover, staff thrive, and communities are strengthened. Being trauma-informed supports us to work and live at our best, it enables everyone to feel heard, respected and supported.

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**Trauma not only affects those seeking support but also the staff providing it.**

We are calling on everyone – communities, staff, and leaders – to unite around a shared vision of a Trauma-Informed Derbyshire



**Trauma Informed Derbyshire**  
 Connecting head, heart and hands

# Our Guiding Framework

## Connecting head, heart and hands

All of our work is rooted in the understanding that to be truly trauma-informed we need to connect the **head, heart and hands**.



### Head

In order to be truly impactful, trauma-informed work must be underpinned by a good understanding of trauma—its impact on health, wellbeing, and behaviour, as well as the ways we can support those affected and promote recovery.



### Heart

At the heart of trauma-informed approaches is how we nurture and strengthen compassion, self-care and kindness for all people and organisations at all levels. Truly trauma-informed approaches support and protect the wellbeing of both staff and the people they serve.



### Hands

Being trauma-informed involves re-evaluating, and possibly innovating, policies, procedures, and processes. We need to consider the culture of our workplaces and how to create safe environments for everyone who uses and works within them.

# Trauma-Informed Approaches

Trauma-informed approaches can be implemented in any type of service setting, organisation, or system and are distinct from trauma-specific interventions or treatments that are designed specifically to address the consequences of trauma and facilitate recovery.

**In Derbyshire our system wide collaboration has resulted in a set of five co-produced principles:**



**Inclusive and Universal**



**Behaviour is Communication**



**Empowering and Strengths Based**



**Safety and choice**



**Relationships Matter**

# The practical actions we can all take

**We have collaborated with partners across the system to explore practical actions that staff, managers, and leaders can take to support the growth and implementation of a Trauma Informed Derbyshire.**

The following suggestions are intended as starting points that staff, managers, and leaders can pursue. We recognise that each organisation will differ in terms of what is needed for their workforce and delivery model. We hope this provides inspiration for the actions you can take to support this important work.

# As a volunteer or staff member

wanting to grow my trauma-informed understanding and practice, I could:

Wherever you sit in the system, you have an **important role to play**—compassion, kindness and facilitating support has a genuine impact.

Recognise potential **signs of trauma**, **being curious about behaviours** and not making judgements

Stay informed about **trauma theory** and its implications in service delivery, recognising that **traumatic experiences may be common** amongst people and colleagues

Take time to grow **trusting and consistent relationships**, ensuring that every interaction fosters a sense of safety and support

Implement a **person-centred, needs-led approach** that provides individualised support in **a language people can understand**

Ensure people are **supported to make their own decisions**; for example, encourage people to self author their care plans

Actively work with **stakeholders to provide coordinated support**, where people don't have to tell their stories again and again

Recognise when **trauma specific interventions may be helpful** and support people in accessing them.

Adopt a **“no wrong door” approach**, never turning people away. Instead, introduce them to someone who can help and carry out sensitive handovers where needed.

Support **resilience and positive coping strategies** while understanding the root causes of negative coping behaviours

Grow personal support systems, that enable people to **establish trusting and healthy relationships** within families, communities, and peer networks

Encourage **participation in positive experiences** that promote future health and wellbeing, ensuring that individuals also have opportunities for fun.

Be aware of **personal and cultural biases**, showing sensitivity to the cultural identities that are important to individuals

Endeavour to offer **environments that are physically and psychologically safe**, allowing individuals to choose where to meet or providing calming spaces when needed.

What other ideas do you have for growing **your** trauma-informed understanding and practice?

Learn more about trauma and trauma-informed approaches by reading the full report

# As a manager

wanting to support my staff to embed trauma-informed practice, I could:

**Provide an induction and training** that equips the workforce with practical skills and confidence in trauma-informed practice and responding to trauma related issues effectively

**Foster a continuous learning environment** where staff can reflect, learn from colleagues, feel safe to make mistakes, identify challenges, and improve trauma-informed approaches.

**Ensure staff know where to find information** to signpost those affected by trauma to the right services, and that those services can respond effectively when accessed

**Help staff understand their role** in trauma support, empowering them to provide assistance even if they cannot resolve the trauma itself

**Provide practical tools** like “crib sheets” with useful trauma-informed approaches to use when working with people

**Foster strength-based and person-centred practice** through effective induction, management, role-modelling and focusing regularly on trauma-informed approaches in team briefings and meetings

**Encourage staff to put people in control of their support**, by modelling a collaborative approach, ensuring support plans are person-led and actively reinforce co-production practices

**Implement practices that support staff wellbeing**, such as regular supervision, peer support programmes, regular breaks, encouraging self-care and prioritising wellbeing in practice meetings and personal development reviews

**Recognise the effects of vicarious traumatisation** and ensure staff receive consistent support to manage it, including access to wellbeing resources

**Ensure that trauma-informed HR policies are in place**, including considerations for staff recruitment and working conditions that account for the impacts of trauma on staff.

**Nurture teams to support one another** through regular spaces for peer support, space for staff to check in on their wellbeing and create teams where risk is shared and safely contained

**Promote a culture of recognition and thanks**, encouraging positive feedback like thank you cards, praise logs, and forums for sharing best practices

**Give permission for staff to use their judgement**, empowering them to grow and implement trauma-informed approaches

**Ensure consistency** in trauma-informed practices across departments and teams.

**Seek feedback**, and ensure staff can safely share the realities of their work environment and experiences without negative consequence

**What other ideas do you have for growing your trauma-informed understanding and practice?**

Learn more about trauma and trauma-informed approaches by reading the full report

# As a leader

wanting to embed trauma-informed practice across my organisation or system, I could:

**Co-develop a trauma-informed strategy**, identify opportunities to promote trauma-informed approaches across areas of influence, and ensure alignment with strategic priorities.

**Develop, enforce, and review policies that prioritise safety and wellbeing** for individuals and staff, reflecting trauma-informed principles throughout the organisation and embedding these practices into daily operations.

**Invest in ongoing training for staff on trauma-informed approaches** focusing on the importance of safety and understanding the potential impact of trauma on individuals and communities.

**Establish well-defined policies and guidance to facilitate support** for staff, providing enhanced support for those affected by trauma when needed.

**Uphold trauma-informed approaches** by walking the floor, listening to staff and individuals' experiences, celebrating successes, being present at trauma-informed practice meetings, partnership meetings, and training sessions.

**Implement the four practices of attuning, wondering, following and holding**

**Ensure there are cross-agency partnership working agreements** with other support agencies and staff are working actively to grow strong relationships with communities. Ensure Trauma Informed Derbyshire is a regular item on partnership agendas.

**Ensure outcomes frameworks are trauma focused** and there are regular feedback mechanisms that use qualitative and quantitative data, to gather insights and ensure both people and staff have a strong voice in decision making.

**Create regular spaces to consider the organisation's/system's role in preventing, mitigating, and addressing trauma**, encouraging continuous reflection on culture, practice, and processes while identifying opportunities to develop and implement trauma-informed approaches.

**Understand the impact of discrimination and inequality as barriers to accessing and engaging with services**, and act to remove and mitigate these barriers. Implement practices to move beyond cultural stereotypes and biases.

**Develop clear plans for how staff and individuals with greater needs will be supported**, how behaviour will be understood, and how situations will be de-escalated. Use scenario planning to ensure these plans meet trauma-informed principles.

**Ensure there are trauma-informed environments** for delivering services by paying attention to locations, entrances, waiting areas, decor, and available reading materials.

**Ensure that support and engagement materials are trauma-informed**, including conversation templates, care plans, leaflets, websites, case notes, and meeting minutes.

**Implement trauma-informed HR policies** including considerations for staff recruitment and working conditions that account for the impacts of trauma on staff

**Encourage departments to conduct trauma-informed audits and assessments**, evaluating policies, practices, environments, paperwork, and staff wellbeing.

**What other ideas do you have for growing your trauma-informed understanding and practice?**

# Now it's time to act

Shifting the system's focus to trauma-informed approaches will improve outcomes for children, young people, adults, and families, helping them recover from trauma and develop the resilience they need to thrive.

We hope that everyone will commit to making trauma-informed approaches the standard, not the exception. We encourage every leader, manager, volunteer, and practitioner to step forward, collaborate, and ensure that Derbyshire's trauma-informed principles are embedded across all organisations. By connecting our head, hands, and heart, we can provide the right care and support, empowering people of all ages to tap into their resilience to live well and thrive.

You may be doing this work already, you may be doing it under a different name, or you might want to further develop your understanding or practice. Whatever stage of the trauma-informed journey, we'd love to have you join us.

## Special thanks to:

- Lizzie Watt, Trauma Informed Derbyshire Public Health Strategic Lead
- The Trauma Informed Derbyshire steering group
- The Community of Practice (Public Health)
- The Trauma Informed Derbyshire Network
- The case study authors
- The many people interviewed and everyone who contributed

## Join the movement!

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