

# TRAUMA-INFORMED WORKFORCE AND SERVICES

Scotland has paved the way in creating a vision of a trauma-informed workforce and services, ensuring that services and care are delivered in ways that:

- are informed by people with lived experience
- recognise the importance of wellbeing in the workforce
- recognise where people are affected by trauma and adversity
- respond in ways that prevent further harm
- support recovery
- can address inequalities and improve life chances

The [National Trauma Transformation Programme](#) is a major and long-term change programme, supported by the Scottish Government and COSLA, which aims to support this vision.

## This vision is framed within the overarching context of:

The First Minister's [Priorities for Scotland and Programme for Government](#), setting out four main priorities:

- eradicating child poverty
- growing our economy
- tackling the climate emergency
- improving public services

and the [Verity House Agreement](#)

and

Our work to [prevent and reduce the negative impact of psychological trauma and adversity](#), including adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

The Scottish Government is committed to preventing psychological trauma and adversity and supporting those of us who have been negatively affected throughout our lives, whether as children, young people or adults. We are working in partnership with a wide range of sectors and services to help prevent psychological trauma and adversity and mitigate their impacts, focusing on:

- providing intergenerational support to children, parents/carers, families and adults to better prevent psychological trauma and adversity
- providing effective support to children, young people or adults affected by psychological trauma and adversity
- developing trauma-informed and trauma-responsive workforce and services
- raising societal awareness about psychological trauma and adversity, and supporting local actions across communities

## And is framed in the wider landscape of:

The social and economic circumstances in which people live, taking into account recovery from the Covid pandemic and the cost of living crisis.

We know that social inequalities, such as poverty, discrimination, barriers to access and progression in the labour market, lack of adequate housing, and lack of social and cultural opportunities, can influence levels of psychological trauma and adversity. They can also affect how we respond to these experiences.

## A number of national strategies, action plans and programmes of work, aimed at tackling inequalities and improving outcomes for all, impact on or are impacted by our vision. These include:

The [Best Start, Bright Futures: tackling child poverty delivery plan](#) recognises that families need access to holistic, person-centred, trauma-informed services in order to thrive. Research shows a very clear relationship between the socioeconomic circumstances in which children are raised and their risk of trauma and adversity, with children living in poverty more likely to experience psychological trauma and adversity and less likely to have access to resources that help reduce the negative impacts.

Under the [Child Poverty \(Scotland\) Act 2017](#), Local Authorities and health boards are also required to prepare annual [Local Child Poverty Action Reports](#) setting out what they are doing to tackle child poverty.

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[The National Carers Strategy](#) highlights the impact of psychological trauma and adversity in particular in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the potential impact on mental and physical health. It references the impact on carers' health and wellbeing if they don't have access to trauma-informed support.

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[The Drug Deaths Taskforce Response: A Cross Government Approach](#) highlights that traumatic and adverse experiences, particularly those experienced in childhood, can have devastating and long-lasting effects on people's lives and can lead to people developing self-coping strategies including substance use. This can be compounded by trauma experienced in later life as a result of substance use. It notes that we will continue to work with partners across government to ensure that people affected by substance use are meaningfully involved in a trauma-informed way.

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The [Ending Homelessness Together \(Updated\) Action Plan \(October 2020\)](#) highlights that the most effective services should be trauma-informed, person-centred and tailored to reflect individual needs and circumstances. This means understanding the ways in which adverse and traumatic experiences in childhood and later life contribute to homelessness. It also notes that building on the work in the Hard Edges report, we are making sure our responses take into account the compounded impact of multiple factors, including trauma.

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[The Fair Work Strategy and Action Plan](#) highlights the links between racism and trauma and the potential impact on health and wellbeing, and the need for trauma-informed approaches to be embedded throughout the workplace.

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Prevention and early intervention is a central tenet of [Public Service Reform](#). Scotland's public services should pursue all reasonable opportunities for prevention and early intervention, both in their own work and in partnership (such as through community planning), wherever it can strengthen their ability to improve outcomes and reduce inequalities, now and sustainably in future. This focus on early intervention is central to trauma-informed workforces, systems and services. Their work helps to improve safety for adults and children affected by psychological trauma and adversity, reduces long-term service demand and costs, and helps to reduce the impact on people's long-term outcomes.

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[Scotland's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#) recognises that at some point in our lives, many of us experience psychological trauma or adversity which can impact on our mental health and wellbeing, as well as our access to universal life chances such as education, health, housing and employment. It promotes the importance of good relationships and trauma-informed approaches from the earliest years of life.

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[The Creating Hope Together: suicide prevention strategy](#) recognises the impact of psychological trauma or adversity through a whole of government and society approach which is focused on addressing the social determinants of suicide. Supporting the mental health of the workforce through targeted support and the development of resources will help to ensure they it can effectively deliver person-centred, trauma-informed, rights-based, compassionate care and services that promote better population mental health and wellbeing outcomes.

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[The Vision for Justice in Scotland](#) acknowledges that many of the issues that bring people to the justice system are very traumatic and that one of the four key principles that will help deliver the vision is to 'embed person-centred and trauma-informed practices', ensuring the processes within the system minimise further trauma or re-traumatisation. It also notes that we must 'ensure children's rights providing access to trauma-informed recovery, support and justice'.

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[Bairns' Hoose - Scottish Barnahus: vision, values and approach](#) notes that Bairns' Hoose provides Scotland with an opportunity to provide a child-centred approach to delivering justice, care and recovery for children who have experienced trauma. Our 2023 Programme for Government committed to 'Launch Bairns' Hoose Pathfinders in autumn 2023, a key action in our Keeping The Promise Implementation Plan and Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan, enabling a whole-system approach for child victims and witnesses of abuse and harm'.

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[Justice for children and young people - a rights-respecting approach: vision and priorities](#) notes that evidence shows clear links between experiencing psychological trauma or adversity in childhood and victimisation and criminalisation later in life and that supporting children who are impacted is important for preventing offending and re-offending.

It highlights a priority of 'Relationships are built and access to services to address adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), trauma and other challenging experiences is improved through the delivery of trauma-informed approaches, youth work, gender-based approaches and effective multi-agency partnerships.'

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[Cashback for Communities](#) delivers a range of trauma-informed and person-centred services and activities for young people between the ages of 10-25, including support for young people, parents and families impacted by ACEs and trauma.

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[Equally Safe](#) is Scotland's Strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls (VAWG), and it recognises the long-term impact of psychological trauma caused by all forms of VAWG.

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### **It is reinforced within a range of national policy and practice guidance, including:**

[Getting it right for every child \(GIRFEC\) policy statement](#), which notes that addressing multiple and overlapping inequalities is key to preventing long-term psychological trauma and adversity, and recognises that having safe, supportive relationships with trusted adults helps children and young people to address and overcome psychological trauma and adversity, and go on to reach their full potential.

[Children's Services Planning Statutory Guidance \(2020\) on duties set out in Pt 3 Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act \(2014\)](#) A Children's Services Plan is the description of how public bodies and their partners will work together to plan and deliver services which are organised and equipped to deliver high-quality, joined-up, trauma-informed and responsive, and, where possible, preventative support to children and families. The guidance states that the aims of Children's Services Plans must articulate how various services will work together to: safeguard, support and promote the wellbeing of all children in the area concerned (as well as those with specific types of need); ensure that any action to meet needs is taken at the earliest appropriate time and that, where appropriate, action is taken to prevent needs arising; is experienced as integrated from the point of view of recipients; and constitute the best use of available resources (workforce, budgets, assets). It must also ensure that 'related services' in the area (for example community-based services and those provided to an adult who is a parent/carer) are also provided in such a way as to safeguard, support and promote the wellbeing of children in the area concerned.

[National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland](#) notes that practitioners involved in child protection must be trauma-informed in their approach. Early recognition of and response to the impact of trauma is required, alongside a collaborative response between adult and children's services when a multi-agency plan is needed to protect a child from significant harm.

## All of this is underpinned by:

Our [National Performance Framework](#), which articulates a shared vision for Scotland, based on a core set of values which includes treating people with kindness, dignity and compassion. Our work on developing a trauma-informed workforce and services will contribute towards the National Outcomes, in particular:

- We grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential
- We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination
- We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe
- We are healthy and active