Adult safeguarding and homelessness:

Trauma-informed and Reflective Practice in safeguarding people experiencing homelessness.

Katy Shorten, Research in Practice
Lydia Guthrie, Change Point Learning & Development, and Research in Practice Associate
lguthrie@changepointlearning.com
Workshop objectives

› Explore how trauma informed approaches and psychologically informed environments apply to work in homelessness and safeguarding

› Explore the value of reflective practice in the context of homelessness and safeguarding

› Provide the opportunity to reflect on how our own perspectives on risks and rights may impact on practice with people

› Identify opportunities for reflective practice with colleagues working across homelessness and safeguarding
What we’ll cover

› Trauma informed approaches and psychologically informed environments
› Break @ 15.45
› Practitioner wellbeing
› Reflective practice

› Please get involved through the Q&A opportunities throughout the session!
Homelessness and trauma

- Trauma is both a likely precedent for and an outcome of homelessness (Buckley et al, 2020)
- Crisis report that 80% of homeless people report having experienced violence, verbal abuse or other anti-social behaviour in the previous year (Sanders and Albernese, 2017)
- Issues of social injustice and oppression may make it more difficult for people who have experience of homelessness to access support in relation to traumatic experiences
Homelessness and Mental Health
Buckley et al, 2020

› People experiencing long-term homelessness are at significantly higher risk of mental health difficulties
› Substance use can be a common means of coping
› This can lead to additional difficulties and make it harder to access support
› Unmet needs are compounded by the lack of accessibility to psychosocial services
An uncomfortable conclusion?

“Most frontline homelessness staff have no clinical training yet support those most in need of psychologically informed help, but least able to access psychological services”

Buckley et al, 2020
How can we think about our role?

The ultimate job of anyone working with people whose lives have been characterised by exclusion is to support them to have a good life. One that ensures their human rights and nourishes their ability to build relationships and skills at deciding their own ways of being safe.

(Finlayson, 2015)
People we’re working with

› What are their experiences?
› What has led them to where they find themselves now?
› What are their strengths?
› What are their goals and aspirations?
› What are their choices?
What is a Psychologically Informed Environment (PIE)

- an environment… “that takes into account the psychological makeup –the thinking, emotions, personalities and past experiences - of its participants in the way that it operates.” (Keats et al, 2012)
- It aims to support staff to better understand the causes of a person’s behaviour, so that they can adjust their responses
- It also considers the psychological needs of staff – to feel supported, to be able to reflect, and to develop skills
Five elements of a Psychologically Informed Environment (Keats et al, 2012)

- Relationships are considered the principal tool for change
- Staff are supported and trained
- The physical environment and social spaces promote safety
- Every part of the system is rooted in a psychological framework
- There is a commitment to evaluation of outcomes
“If relationships are where things go wrong, then relationships are where they are going to be put right.” (Howe, 2011, IX)
Safety  Comfort  Proximity  Predictability
What is the relationship between PIE and TIC?

- A PIE needs to be rooted in and informed by an explicit psychological theory, or combination of theories.
- Each service can select which theory/theories seem the best fit for their clients and staff team.
- There are many different theories which could inform a PIE:
  - Attachment theory
  - Psychodynamic theory
  - Dialectical Behavioural Therapy principles/skills
  - Mentalisation Based
  - Trauma Informed Care
Trauma is...

... 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 individual’s functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual wellbeing.

(Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014)
A trauma informed approach

“is a strengths-based framework that is grounded in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma, that emphasises physical, psychological and emotional safety for both providers and survivors, and that creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.”

(Hopper, Bassuk and Oliver, 2009)
Essential qualities of a trauma informed approach, SAMHSA 2014

› **Realisation** of the extent and impact of trauma

› **Recognition** of the effect of trauma on behaviour

› **Respond** sensitively to the presence of trauma

› **Resist** the re-traumatisation of staff and those who use the service
Principles of a Trauma Informed Approach
SAMHSA, 2014

- Safety
- Trust and transparency
- Careful use of language
- Collaboration and mutuality
- Encourage peer support
- Safe and respectful relationships
- Cultural, historical and gender issues
- Empowerment, voice and choice
- Avoid re-traumatisation
Underpinnings of a Trauma-Informed System

Dr. Karen Treisman

SafeHands ThinkingMinds.co.uk

The Physical Environment
- Design, Building, Space

Leadership & Management
- Empathetic, Compassionate, Supportive, Curious, Committed, Collaborative

Supervision
- Performance, Reviews & Appraisals

Every Interaction is Important

Type & Choice of Language

The Organisation’s Vision, Mission, Values

Evaluation & Monitoring
- Staff Wellness, Well-Being & Self-Care

Training & Continuing Workforce Development

Materials, Brochures, Tools

Types of Services and Approaches
- Offered & Available

Consultation & Decision-Making in ALL Aspects by Those with lived experiences & multiple different voices

Team Meetings, Working Group, Feedback, & Communication Forums

Recruitment Process
- Job Description, Communication, Interview, Feedback, Induction

Research in Practice
Misconceptions about Trauma Informed Approaches (Sweeney and Taggart, 2018)

- Trauma-informed approaches claim that everyone experiencing psychological distress has experienced trauma.
- Trauma-informed approaches ‘treat’ people who have experienced trauma.
- The shift from asking ‘what’s wrong with you’, to considering ‘what happened to you’, is a literal one.
- Trauma-informed approaches are purely conceptual.
- Trauma-informed approaches are implemented by individual practitioners.
- This happens already.
Relational trauma requires relational repair (Treisman, 2016)

- Safe relationships are crucial in understanding how we can help people with complex trauma.
- Sometimes, interpersonal difficulties between people and professionals/carers get in the way of help; for example, when people make steps towards safe relationships, then pull away, or ‘dis-engage’ altogether.
Trauma Informed Approaches

Build relationships that:

› are non-judgemental, empathic, warm & safe.
› use straightforward language of human experience
› don’t try to fix or rescue people
› move beyond ‘helping’ to mutuality & power sharing
› Consider hidden forms of power – size, age, gender, race, education
Essential characteristics for staff working with trauma survivors (Trauma informed Toolkit)

› Empathy
› Compassion
› Able to talk openly
› Self aware
› Self care and wellness
› Flexible
› Comfortable with the unknown
› Willing to learn from clients
› Willingness to connect emotionally with clients
› Willingness to try to see the world as the client does
› Able to regulate own emotions
› Ability to listen
Working in homelessness and safeguarding

Working in these sectors can be challenging for a lot of different reasons...

› Varied knowledge, partnerships, and skills required
› We’re not in it for the money! (Martin et al, 2012)
› Values vs. resources (Watson et al, 2019)
› Emotional impact (Stevens, 2018)
Rule one of resilience: Secure your oxygen first.
Why your wellbeing is important, and how can reflective practice contribute

Maybe reflective practices offer us a way of trying to make sense of the uncertainty in our workplaces and the courage to work competently and ethically at the edge of order and chaos ...

(Ghaye 2000)
Reflection opportunity

› What do you find helps keep you well?

Is there anything you would like to share that happens in your
› Organisation
› Team
› Personally
The contexts in which decisions are made

- Human Behaviour
- Personal identity and values
- Professional cultures
- Social Context
- Legal framework
Four levels of Reflection

- **Technical**: pragmatic; compares performance with ‘what should be done’
- **Practical**: reflection on how we are making sense of situations
- **Critical**: includes focus on power relations and social contexts
- **Process**: explores conscious and unconscious aspects of practice including emotions and how these shape decisions

(Ruch 2005)
Reflective supervision

- Group
- Individual
- Ad hoc

Morrison’s 4x4x4 Model (2005)
Reflexive, emotionally literate and collaborative leaders/managers.

High quality support and supervision provided.

Reflexive, emotionally literate & confident staff.

Confident positive relationship based work with children, adults and families.

A relationship-based resilient system.

Making a positive difference for children, adults and families.

---

*Setting an example is not the main means of influencing another, it is the only means.*

(Albert Einstein)
research in practice

(Kolb, 1984)

Experience (engaging and observing)
The story - what happened?

Plan and act (preparing for action, trying things out)
What next?

Analysis (seeking to understand, hypothesising)
Asking why, what does this mean?

Reflection (investigating experience)
What was it like?
Enablers to reflective supervision

- permission
- attention to relationship
- consistency
- continuity
- accountability
- space and time
- contract
- clear purpose
- model
- facilitation
Reflective practice – experiences from homelessness and safeguarding

- Awareness – honest exploration of challenges and time to think about emotional responses
- Support – flexible, informal and compassionate support
- Safety – space to explore
- Perspective – time out to see the bigger picture
- Learning, growth and development
- Developing a holistic picture

"When I talk with others, I partly talk with the others, partly with myself."

(Andersen, 1992)

Do you have supervision?

Where you do your best reflecting?

And who with?

What would support more reflection?
Resources

› Post Qualifying Standards for Practice Supervisors in Adult Social Care, the open access Supervisor Development Programme website features tools and learning resources that could be transferable across the homelessness sector https://adultsdp.researchinpractice.org.uk/.

› Social Work Organisational Resilience Diagnostic (SWORD) has been developed and designed for the social care sector in order to support the move away from individual responsibility for resilience to one of the organisation. https://sword.researchinpractice.org.uk/
Resources

Trauma and the Brain
9 minute clip, made for Police Scotland
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4-tcKYx24aA

Written "self-help" guides
A very helpful, free, guide for people who are experiencing PTSD is available here:
http://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/posttrauma.asp

MIND has many useful information sheets: https://www.mind.org.uk/

The NHS website has more information about PTSD here:
Useful books


Howe, D (2011) Forward to: Attachment Based Practice with Adults (Baim, C and Morrison T)


References


Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) (2014) TIP57: Trauma informed care in behavioral health services. Rockville, MD: SAMHSA.


research in practice

www.researchinpractice.org.uk

ask@researchinpractice.org.uk

@researchIP

Thank you