

Trauma informed practice



As many schools are beginning to welcome more children back, we have been thinking about how best to support those who may be experiencing trauma.

Read our guide on **trauma informed practice** with six principles that we encourage you to consider for when your pupils return to school.

There are three sections:

Principle

A trauma-informed school

Things to think about

The six principles include:

Prepared

Aware

Flexible

Safe and responsible

Collaborative and enhancing

Integrated



Trauma informed practice



Principle: Prepared

A trauma-informed school anticipates that...

some children will have experienced trauma, directly due to the impact of COVID-19.

some children will have previous experience of trauma triggered by COVID-19.

these experiences may manifest in behaviours in the classroom.

children and staff may have recent experiences of bereavement and will be grieving.

Things to think about:

- Consider the different children you have in your class or school. What might their range of experiences be during lockdown? (e.g. parents working full time, no outdoor space, crowded living circumstances.)
- Some children will be yearning for a return to normal. They will want the previous school routine and time to spend with their friends. Others will not have the capacity to learn at the moment. They will need reassurance and safety. Some children may be extremely anxious about being in a group.
- As schools we need to take a pro-active approach to how we will balance these needs within our school community. Having a whole-school approach to responding to these needs will help staff and children feel safer during this transition.

Trauma informed practice



Principle: **Aware**

A trauma-informed school has...

a process in place to explore how young people are differently impacted by COVID-19.

a process in place that identifies how this information will be shared and with who.

Things to think about:

- Consider what the “contexts of adversity” are in your school and how you understand what these are for different children. For more information go to the [Pyramid of Need](#) on our website.
- Children already living with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) before COVID-19 may be particularly impacted and their circumstances may have become more challenging. Find out more about ACES and their potential impact in our [Addressing Adversity Book](#).
- Consider how the school will support children and staff who are grieving due to the loss of loved ones to COVID-19.

Trauma informed practice



Principle: **Flexible**

A trauma-informed school provides...

a school environment that explores how different children's needs might be met.

an environment where children identified as being particularly affected by school closures and COVID-19 are given appropriate support for their mental health.

acceptances that behaviour is communication, and looks to explore what children are communicating about their experiences, rather than a punitive response.

Things to think about:

- Recovery from trauma is not a straight line. There will be days when children feel ok and times when they are struggling. As adults, we may need to adapt our responses to reflect this. A child we thought was coping may suddenly seem extremely angry. A child who usually talks to us about how they are feeling may now be very withdrawn.
- The rules that you had in your classroom might need to be very different during the transition back to school, particularly for those affected by trauma.
- Children process trauma differently. Some might need to talk through their experiences but others may need to play. Others may need to sit with the friend that they feel safest with, who knows them the best and can help them to feel grounded.
- Consider how the school or classroom may be adapted to take these needs into account. Could you have space in each room for children to sit quietly and read or draw? Could there be a "talking" space and time allocated where each child can speak to a trusted adult?

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Principle: **Safe and responsible**

A trauma-informed school ensures...

that staff have training about how to respond to children who are grieving and who have experienced trauma.

that staff receive the support that they need around their mental health, in order for them to support children.

that all safeguarding procedures are mindful of the exceptional circumstances in which some children and families have been living and interventions are supportive and recovery focused in their response.

Things to think about:

- Lockdown and school closures may have a significant impact on stresses within the home and we need to be aware that we might be the first adults outside the home that children have seen. Consider how you can ensure that children know that their safety is paramount and that you want to understand what home life has been like for them.
- Remind them of the structures that the school has always had in place to make them safe. Re-iterate that these are still there and that adults want to help and support them. **The Resilient Classroom** has activities around promoting and exploring safety with children.
- Accept that all staff will be affected by COVID-19 and may also need time and space to process their experiences. Consider what systems of support have worked previously. Do staff need a check in at the beginning and end of the day?
- Staff who are experiencing trauma, including bereavement, will need extra consideration. It might not be possible for them to support children at this time which will have considerable resource implications for the school. However, it's vital to ensure that staff can express their needs and recognise their limitations when supporting children.

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Principle: Collaborative and enhancing

A trauma-informed school has...

meaningful engagement
with children about what
they need from adults who
are supporting them.

a resilience-based approach
to explore what has worked in
the past and what may still
work in supporting children's
emotional wellbeing.

Things to think about:

- We need to create an environment where children are able to tell us about their changing needs and know that we will not judge them or question their insight.
- Consider the processes that you have in place for participation within your school. Is there an opportunity for a morning check in with all pupils? How do your pupils want to express their needs? Encouraging a culture of participation will help to share the needs of pupils.

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Principle: **Integrated**

A trauma-informed school recognises...

that children may have different people and organisations supporting them. Care should be co-ordinated so that children do not have to keep retelling their story and there is an understanding of who the best person is to support the child and the best way in which to do this.

Things to think about:

- The lockdown period has impacted most organisations. This means that staff and roles may have altered and services may have adapted their support to reflect lockdown and social distancing. Ensure that SENCOs, LAC designated teachers and DSLs have up to date information about who they should be speaking to about children in the school.
- Contact your Virtual School, Local Safeguarding Team, Children in Care Team and other relevant people to ensure that support is coordinated and that you are updated on any changes that may have taken place.
- Be aware that placements may have been particularly fragile during the lockdown period and look out for how this might have affected looked after children. This is a time when attachment needs may well be magnified within placements.