

Trauma-informed: Identifying key language and terminology through a review of the literature

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Background

Over the past decades, the concept of a trauma-informed approach has gained momentum however, the terminology and components of trauma-related approaches and practices studied by researchers and used by practitioners are less clearly and consistently presented.

Study Aims

The aim of this study was to explore the terminology and language in use around the concept of trauma-informed addressing three research questions:

- How is Trauma, Trauma-Informed and related concepts defined in the literature and how has this definition changed over time?
- How has a Trauma-Informed approach been operationalised across different settings?
- What are the criteria for an adherence to a Trauma-Informed approach?

Methods

A scoping review, undertaken in two stages was used to identify the relevant literature.

- Stage One was a wide-ranging search of the literature relating to the definitions of Trauma and Trauma-informed and to explore how these definitions have changed over time and to identify key models.
- Stage Two was a 'review of reviews' consisting of a supplementary search of the international published literature to identify systematic reviews of literature related to trauma-informed approaches and interventions. Searches were undertaken in October 2021.

Findings: Defining Trauma

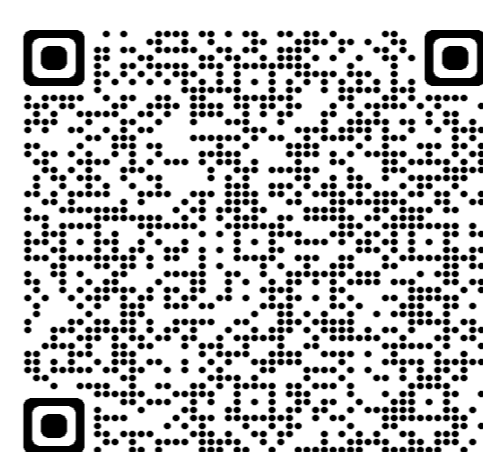
"Trauma-informed organisation is aware of the prevalence and impact of trauma and engages in universal precaution for re-traumatization by anchoring in the five guiding values and principles (safety, trust, collaboration, empowerment and choice). A Trauma Sensitive organisation deliberately looks at all levels of operation/ functioning in order to respond to others in a way that is sensitive potential trauma histories. A Trauma Specific organisation offers evidence-based, trauma treatments interventions specifically designed to treat and help individuals heal from trauma"

(The Institute of Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care, 2020)

Implications for Police and Practice

- The lack of consensus on the definition has been identified as a barrier to creating trauma informed systems.
- Trauma informed approaches are implemented differently across settings and there is a need for consensus on the components of trauma informed care.
- The lack of consistent definition impacts on the ability to evaluate the effectiveness of such approaches since measurement use diverse and nonstandard measures.

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