

# An exploration of the trauma-informed terminology and approaches being used by significant projects, programmes and interventions in Wales

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## Background

The main focus in Wales has been on preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), but services cannot ignore the need to provide sympathetic responses and trauma informed support to those who have already been impacted by ACEs (Welsh Government, 2021).

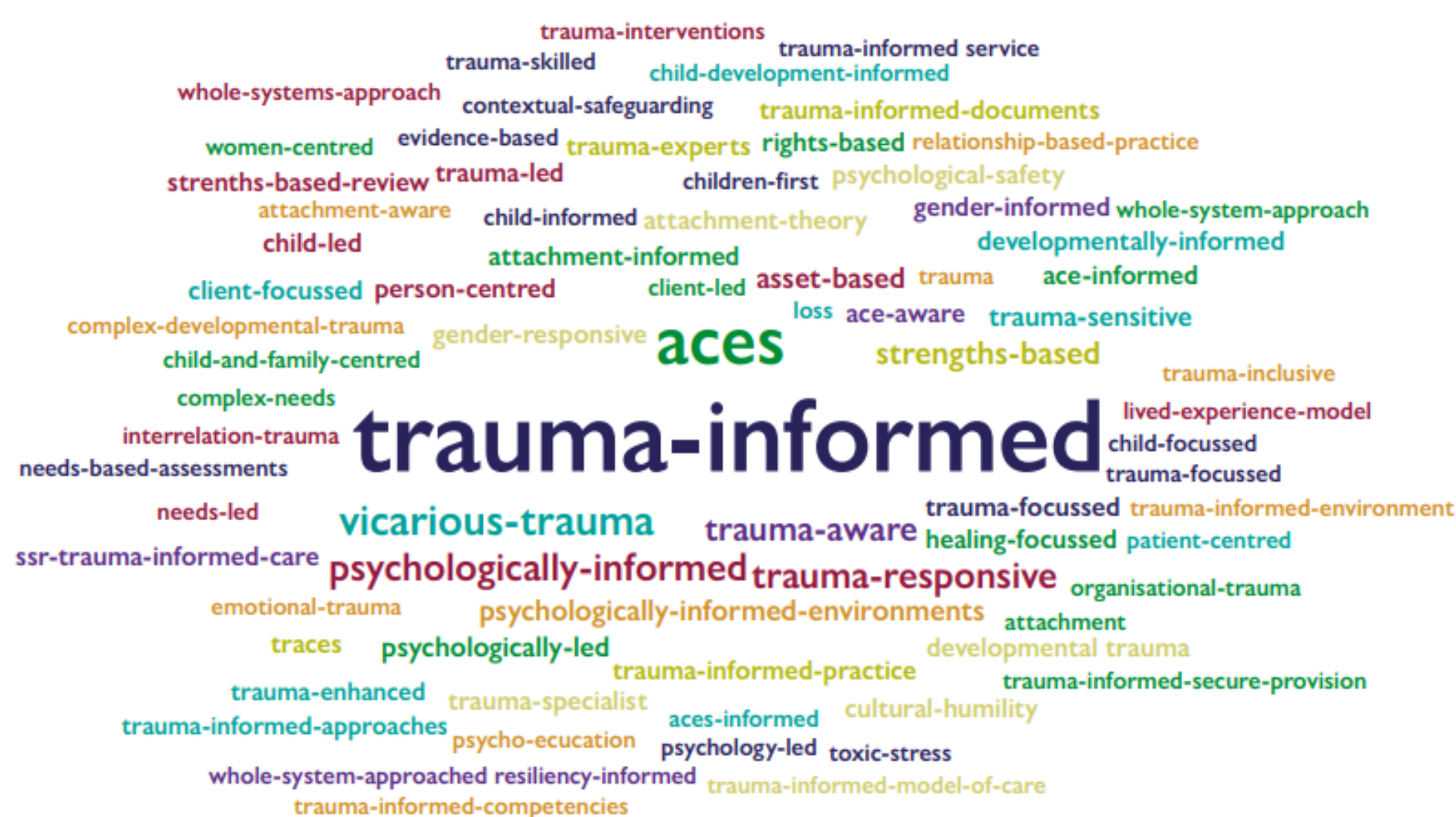
Despite the push for trauma informed support throughout Wales, Welsh Government's 'Review of Adverse Childhood Experiences Policy' report (2021) shows that there is a lack of clarity regarding the language and definitions being used within the ACEs frameworks.

This project aims to:

1. Map, as far as possible, interventions/projects/programmes (PPIs) publically using trauma informed terminology or approaches in Wales.
2. Identify what terminology the PPIs are using, where their chosen terminology originates and what definitions they are attributing to their work (either from published/programme documentation, or from conversations with programme leads).
3. Identify the approaches being used by the PPIs (either from published/programme documentation, or from conversations with programme leads).
4. Develop a matrix of terminology and how it is interpreted.

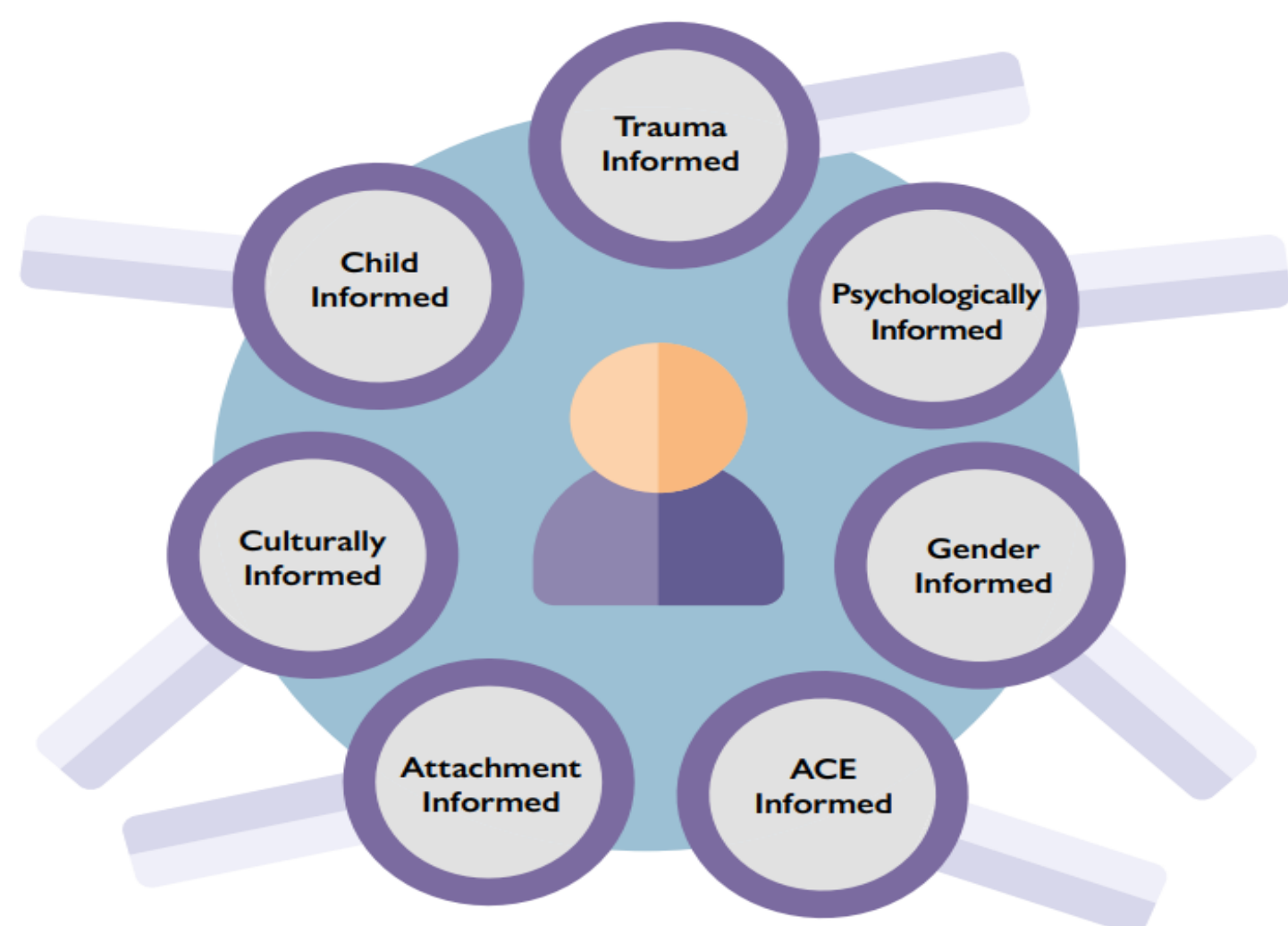
**73** projects, programmes or interventions were identified across Wales who were using trauma informed terminology and/or approaches during the 4 month duration of this project.

## Terminology



## Different Lenses

Figure 2: Interrelation "lenses"



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## Definition

- Recognising the **impact** that **life experiences** can have on a person.
- Appreciating that **anyone** could have experienced trauma and treating people as **individuals**.
- **Understanding** that many things can traumatise a person (ACEs, physical injury, psychological trauma, racism, disability, trafficking, cultural, race and gender exclusion).
- Working in a way to **prevent re-traumatising** a person by making them feel **safe**, giving them **choices** and **empowering** them to make their own decisions. This includes being **kind, non-judgemental** and **compassionate**.
- Looking **past** the presenting behaviours at the underlying causes, and **understanding** how these traumas are manifesting into the person's behaviours.
- Identifying a person's triggers and working to mitigate these through **stabilisation** techniques.
- **Understanding** what matters to an **individual**. Promoting opportunities for **wellbeing**, healing and **recovery** with everyone having a role (**collaboration**). Encouraging **resilience** building through wellbeing opportunities.

### Spectrum of the operationalisation of trauma informed approaches

**Core level**

**Suggested title: trauma sensitive**

This is the most basic level of trauma informed approaches. At this level, people are working in such a way as to be sensitive to the possible presence of trauma within another person. It is not necessary to know if a person definitely has experienced trauma to be functioning at this core level of trauma informed. All staff within an organisation should be working at least to this most basic level, from cleaning and security staff through to those at a managerial level. This could be achieved by working in a compassionate, kind, positive and sensitive way.

**Suggested title: trauma aware**

At this level, people are aware that those they interact with may have experienced trauma, but do not necessarily know what that specific trauma is. For example, Welsh Women's Aid know that people coming into the service are likely to be survivors of domestic violence and abuse, but they do not necessarily require the person to disclose it. This level builds on the core level, but requires staff to additionally be aware of additional services should the person disclose any trauma.

**Suggested title: trauma informed**

At this level, people are informed of the presence of trauma, but do not need to know the details of the trauma. For example, Action for Children are aware that they work with children who have experienced trauma, but do not need the child to talk about their trauma for them to access the services offered. When the person is ready to talk about their trauma, the organisation may have to signpost to alternative sources of support for the individual. This level builds on the levels that come before, but additionally introduces activities to help the person build resilience, coping mechanisms and life skills. At this level, staff may need to be supported to overcome vicarious trauma.

**Suggested title: trauma responsive**

At this level, people are working in a way as to respond to the symptoms of the trauma experienced, but do not directly address the root trauma. For example, NPSCC's "Building Blocks" programme helps parents identify their triggers and teaches them how to overcome them. This may take the form of grounding exercises - breathing techniques, mindfulness and emotional regulation. Further, at this level, psychoeducation is used to normalise the individual's response to their trauma. These exercises are likely to be evidence-based. At this level, staff will be supported to overcome vicarious trauma.

**Suggested title: trauma focussed**

At this level, people are working in a way that focusses directly on tackling the root trauma. For example, Wales Veterans' Service primarily work with veterans who have PTSD from their military service history (e.g. war zones). Support at this level may require specialist services from professionals, such as psychologists or psychiatrists. The interventions and support offered at this level will be evidence-based and require specific training. Staff will be supported to deal with vicarious trauma at this level of trauma informed.

**Specialist level**

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Find the report here:

