



Hyb ACE Cymru
ACE Hub Wales

A practical guide to creating a Trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (TrACE) Statement of Commitment

To support the Governance and
Leadership domain area

About this Guide

Please note: this guide assumes a basic awareness and understanding of adversity and trauma and the impact it may have. This guidance document aims to offer support for organisations working to become Trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (TrACE) informed. The document addresses issues broadly, recognising that each individual organisation will have varying structures and needs. This guide is informed by [Trauma-Informed Wales: A Societal Approach to Understanding, Preventing and Supporting the Impacts of Trauma-Informed Wales Framework](#) and is a key resource of ACE Hub Wales' [Trauma and ACE \(TrACE\) Informed Organisations Toolkit](#).

The TrACE toolkit supports organisations to review where they are on the TrACE journey using a set of six domain areas to aid this reflection as part of their self-assessment. This guide is a key resource to support the 'Governance & Leadership' domain area of the toolkit and has been co-produced with organisations already on their own TrACE journey.

This domain relates to the overall support for and investment in implementing and sustaining a trauma-informed approach, and in the self-assessment specifically references the development of a Statement of Commitment as part of the consideration of this work.

Governance, Leadership and Organisational Culture

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The purpose of this guide is to aid organisations to create their own Statement of Commitment. This is a key step in co-creating a shared understanding, common purpose and responsibility for leadership at all levels, which informs and engages with everyone in the organisation. A well-crafted Statement of Commitment can help communicate the intention and prioritisation to becoming a TrACE-informed organisation to staff, service users and wider stakeholders.

This guide uses the term Statement of Commitment however we acknowledge that there are many other ways that can and should be used to demonstrate a public commitment to becoming a TrACE-informed organisation. A Statement of Commitment is not prescriptive, or a template. It conveys a strong commitment to a vision, mission cause, principle, or set of values, determined by, and aligned to, the distinct character and culture of the organisation; and using language and emphasis that reflects that.

The Statement of Commitment provides an opportunity to think about how values can be observed in practice through the activities encouraged through the TrACE Toolkit. Brené Brown, American professor, social worker and author focussing on shame, vulnerability and leadership, reminds us that:

“We can’t live into values that we can’t name, AND living into values requires moving from lofty aspirations to specific, observable behaviours”

(Brené Brown, author of Dare to Lead)¹

In essence, Brown is stressing that to truly live our values, we need a clear understanding of what our values are, what this means for us in practice, and how that practice is delivered through tangible actions. Otherwise, our values remain abstract and unattainable.

1 [Operationalizing Your Organization’s Values - Dare to Lead Hub | Brené Brown \(brenebrown.com\)](#)

Introduction

A Statement of Commitment is a formal declaration by an organisation expressing dedication to an approach. It sets a clear direction for the organisation, highlighting the importance of addressing trauma and creating a supportive environment for all who experience the organisation. It helps ensure alignment within an organisation, promoting consistency in practices, which is crucial for delivering effective, coordinated, and supportive services.

A Statement of Commitment can be a powerful communication tool. It conveys the organisation's commitment to staff, service users, stakeholders, partners, and the wider public, promoting trust, transparency, understanding and accountability.

Creating a Statement of Commitment demonstrates leadership and a proactive approach to accountability. It can inspire others to follow suit and contribute to a culture of shared values and responsibilities. It is a purposeful declaration of intent that can guide actions and decisions over time.

Why create a TrACE Statement of Commitment:

Creating a Statement of Commitment around the TrACE journey sends an important message that can benefit the organisation as it begins developing its own. Below are some of the potential benefits to organisations when choosing to create a Statement of Commitment for TrACE, based on the experience of organisations that have already done so:

- **Clarification of Intentions:**

Creating a Statement of Commitment is an opportunity to articulate and clarify organisational values. A clear signal is sent of what is important to your organisation and how, through practice, the actions of individuals contribute to the organisational commitment to, and enactment of these values in everything it does. This can be particularly important when integrating TrACE-informed practice into various aspects of your organisation; organisational change and growth is sustained by the shared understanding of the purpose, intention and values and a responsibility to adhere to them. This is a process that needs to be trusted; clear intentions from the start helps build that trust between people and promotes alignment with the organisation. This relationship further supports engagement with the change process.

- **Creating Accountability:**

A formal Statement of Commitment holds the organisation accountable for its promises. It signals to staff, service users, and the community that the organisation is committed to implementing TrACE in practice, and that this commitment will be monitored and evaluated. Therefore, an organisation needs to think about how this Statement of Commitment is made visible and integrated into how it operates. The statement could go on the organisational website, and clearly aligned to organisational values and integrity also hosted there, easily accessible for existing staff and service users. It might be included in a staff induction pack, email signatures and employee support information. The statement must also be accompanied by clear information about what happens if these commitments are not met, and where that accountability lies, which must be top down and bottom up.

- **Cultural Shift:**

Developing a culture that supports a TrACE-informed organisation can be a significant shift in it operates. A Statement of Commitment can help initiate and sustain this cultural change, by setting out the vision and mission and start from a place of shared understanding. Cultural shift takes time, and people experience change in different ways and at different speeds. Reflecting on why you are embarking on the journey, and re-visiting that throughout, can help to maintain clarity of what you are trying to achieve and why you are doing it. For example, reminding staff that a TrACE-informed organisation, with kindness and compassion at the heart, will benefit them as individuals and the service they provide to others. The shift should be seen as a positive one from the start.

- **Resilience and Well-being:**

A strengths-based approach to trauma and adversity focusses on resilience and wellbeing. Communicating this through the Statement of Commitment is important so that everyone experiencing the organisation can feel assured that recovery and healing from experiences of adversity or trauma are prioritised and well-being is consistently promoted through the organisation.

- **Continuous Improvement:**

Alongside the self-assessment and action planning processes of the TrACE Toolkit, the Statement of Commitment can be a great reference point to review progress against the TrACE journey. The Statement of Commitment can also evolve over time - the TrACE journey should be a reflective and inclusive approach that seeks to continually learn and develop knowledge and wisdom as the work progresses. The statement, and its development, will also reflect the learning and progress made, and align to other related organisational commitments to improving equality and diversity for example, or access to support for health and wellbeing.

Developing your own TrACE Statement of Commitment

The [‘Trauma-Informed Wales: A Societal Approach to Understanding, Preventing and Supporting the Impacts of Trauma and Adversity’ Framework](#) is underpinned by a set of five practice principles (see Diagram 1) and it is important to consider how these can be included when creating a Statement of Commitment.

Diagram 1: Five Practice Principles



Who needs to be involved?

As referenced in the [Implementation Readiness Review](#), you should at this stage have formed a TrACE internal steering group with a range of people in a cross section of roles and responsibilities working collaboratively with you on the TrACE journey. This group can help shape and guide the development of the Statement of Commitment.

The Statement of Commitment is an objective in the Leadership and Governance domain of the TrACE Toolkit and will need to reflect the strategic commitment of decision makers and change makers in coproduction with those who experience the organisation. The Statement of Commitment should be a shared agreement co-created and developed in collaboration with staff, service users, and where appropriate the wider community. This would be an invaluable strategy to ensure the commitment is both relevant and adds value to your organisations work. This collaborative approach not only adheres to best co-production practices but also aligns with the five practice principles (see diagram 1). The TrACE internal steering group is a mechanism you can use to drive forward the development of this work.

How to create a TrACE Statement of Commitment

Below are five areas for organisations to consider when initiating the development of a Statement of Commitment, and articulating what a TrACE approach means to you (this list is not exhaustive and can be tailored to suit the context of which the organisation works):

1. Introduction:

Commence by providing a concise introduction that demonstrates why your organisation is embarking upon this journey. You should demonstrate an awareness of the widespread occurrence and potential consequences of trauma and wider adversities and show an understanding of what TrACE means in the context in which your organisation works.

Emphasise the significance of creating a supportive environment and openly acknowledge that trauma and adversity can happen to anyone, recognising it can have a profound impact on both individuals and communities, if the right support is not in place or accessible. This should be linked to the values of the organisations – why are you embarking on this journey and what does this mean? This will be informed by the conversations you have to develop this vision and mission.

2. Empathy and Understanding:

The tone of the statement should demonstrate kindness, empathy and compassion for anyone who experiences the organisation. In becoming a TrACE-informed organisation you are committing to ensuring a safe and inclusive environment where individuals feel acknowledged, valued, and supported.

3. Continuous Improvement:

Commit the organisation to engaging in ongoing reflection and learning, acknowledging the importance of growing knowledge about what the organisation is doing well and areas that require more focus. Give assurance that workforce development and support are central to the approach and there is a commitment to working together to embed the Trauma-Informed Wales Framework's Five Practice Principles. As part of this, policies and practices, as well as any training needs, will be reviewed. The development of success indicators will also be considered to demonstrate how this approach will positively impact everyone in the organisation. Additionally, there will be ongoing monitoring and evaluation of these achievements.

4. Collaboration, Resilience and Healing:

Highlight your commitment to advancing resilience and healing, underscoring the significance of cultivating positive environments that enable co-production activities with everyone who experiences the organisation.

Convey your readiness to collaborate wider than your organisation with individuals, organisations, and communities in a collective effort to prevent, address and mitigate the impact of trauma and adversity.

Co-production values everyone's expertise and experiences, and power dynamics are levelled to ensure that all voices are heard and considered. This approach acknowledges that those who use services often have invaluable insights into their effectiveness and areas for improvement. Meaningful collaboration and co-production strive to create services and solutions that are more responsive, inclusive, and effective, ultimately leading to better outcomes for all involved which can be reflected in the Statement of Commitment.

5. Conclusion:

Conclude with a call to action to encourage others to join in the journey to become a TrACE-informed organisation providing information as to how to get involved.

Once developed, it is important, as set out above, to consider the best methods to communicate the Statement of Commitment so that the whole organisation is aware this has been made. *We have included an example of an organisation who have created a Statement of Commitment as part of their journey to embedding TrACE-informed practice (see appendix 1).*

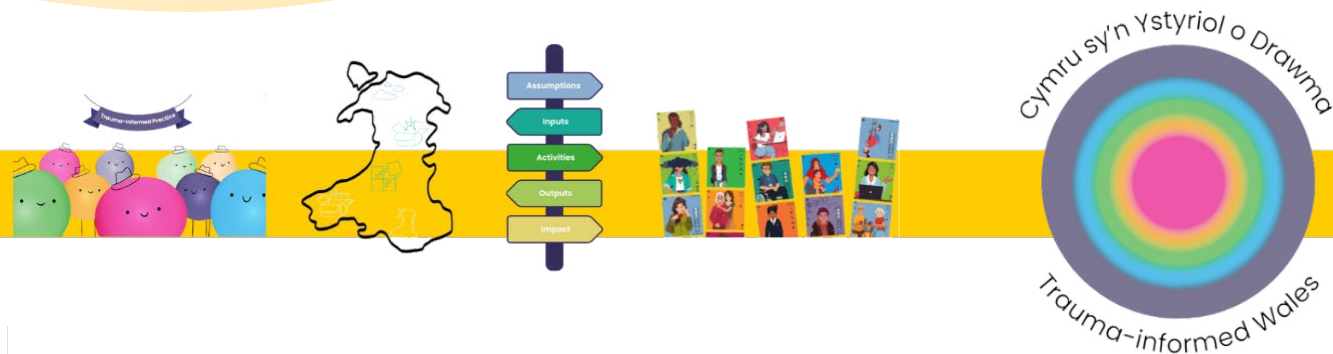
Summary

Incorporating a Statement of Commitment is a valuable tool on the journey to become a TrACE-informed organisation. It allows for a defined path and promotes accountability.

Using co-production to create the Statement of Commitment enhances co-ownership with all that experience the organisation as it encourages involvement with service users, staff and wider stakeholders.

It is important to assess how the Statement of Commitment aligns with the Trauma-Informed Wales Framework's Five Practice Principles, while also reflecting the organisation's unique values and core objectives. To ensure that the commitment is meaningful and successful, it must be authentic and ensure it effectively communicates the relevance to everyone's role in an organisation.

Appendix 1



Aberystwyth University – A Case Study

The team at Aberystwyth University have reflected on where we are on our journey to becoming TrACE informed, and where we need to focus effort. We have led awareness-raising conferences and hosted targeted conversations around key areas. Most recently, these have included 'community conversations' to engage, listen and to hear how people in our community experience leadership and governance, policies and procedures and service provision. We also used them to think about how we communicate, monitor and evaluate. The conversations showed that we are committed to building on what is already working, celebrating that, and to making positive change. We identified the need to communicate that to make this everybody's business, and to develop an action plan to take it forward.

Using the information, conversations, and input across all the different engagement events, and with the expertise of our Advisory and Expert groups supporting the development of this work, we have co-created a joint statement with Undeb Aberystwyth that sets out our Statement of Commitment to TrACE as Aberystwyth University. This will then inform next steps, to communicate this is truly a collective approach that embodies the principles of what we want to achieve, and how we do it.

The statement is:

Aberystwyth University: A Trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (TrACE) informed Community

Wales has an ambition to become a trauma-informed nation, and as part of that, our community has come together in conversation to understand what that means for us at Aberystwyth University. Over several sessions, students, professional service practitioners, academics, senior leaders and Undeb Aberystwyth, have co-created a shared understanding that is inclusive, and connects us and our values. Aberystwyth University believes that everyone has the right to learn and work in a transformational and inclusive environment and as a community:

We believe that everyone's experiences of what happens in their lives is valid.

The strengths in individuals and our community will support us to navigate experiences that may affect our individual and collective health and wellbeing through community connection, kindness, and compassion.

We believe that every voice matters and that we should all be able to access support that is appropriate to and meets our needs.

Through co-creation, connectivity and working together we can use our strengths, mindful of who we are as individuals, to drive collective positive change.

To support us on our journey, we are working with ACE Hub Wales to implement the TrACE toolkit, an organisational resource that helps us to collectively reflect on our understanding of adversity and trauma in all areas of our community – from leadership and governance, policy and procedures, our environment and culture, and how we deliver our services, to how we gather evidence on what works. We will connect the work we are doing that is striving to promote equality and safety and promote inclusive learning and working environments in a way that demonstrates that we value lived experiences and use our collective voice for change.

We are all partners in our community, and we are all part of this journey. To find out more about what we are doing, and how we can all contribute to the vision please contact trace@aber.ac.uk.

The statement has been officially signed and endorsed by:

- Aberystwyth University Vice Chancellor, Professor Jon Timmis
- Undeb Aberystwyth (Students' Union) President, Bayanda Vundamina.

We would like to thank the TrACE Community of Practice 'Task and Finish Group' for helping us to co-develop this resource.

For further information please contact ACE Hub Wales

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