

2023 Leeds Trauma Informed Charter

Version 1.1

This document aims to ‘set the scene’ in Leeds around what’s generally called ‘trauma-informed care’.

It originated in the Leeds Visible Project, which seeks to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse, though is aimed much more widely – right at the whole population of the city.

The Charter gives organisations a foundation to build on, in terms of implementing trauma-informed care.

Our Ambition:

That Leeds will be a ‘compassionate and mentally healthy city for everyone’. Part of this ambition means recognising the effects that psychological trauma can have on babies, children, young people and adults. All of us, from all ages and backgrounds, can be physically and emotionally harmed, or traumatised, by things like:

- Childhood sexual abuse
- Emotional neglect in childhood
- Bullying
- Domestic or sexual violence
- Poverty
- Racism and discrimination
- Combat experiences in the army

Anyone can potentially experience a traumatic event and be affected by it, though this can be in very different ways – some people may not even recognise that they have been ‘traumatised’. Sometimes, babies, children and adults experience traumatic events over long periods of time – this can lead to especially serious and life-long issues. We recognise that some issues linked to trauma are:

- Having overwhelming feelings – feeling sad, upset, scared, angry or out-of-control
- Feeling suicidal and/or wanting to self-harm
- Finding it hard or impossible to trust other people
- Feeling worthless
- Finding that day-to-day experiences ‘trigger’ really distressing flashbacks and memories
- Dissociation – ‘zoning out’ or disconnecting from painful experiences
- Problems with physical health

We believe that all of these are normal responses to horrible things that can happen to us. Our intention is that families and individuals; physical and mental health services; schools, colleges and universities; workplaces; criminal justice systems; sports and religious institutions; all have a good understanding of what trauma is and of the many ways it can affect people.

Our commitment is to always:

- Work to reduce the chances of trauma happening, whether by raising awareness or challenging inequalities.
- Give children and adults with lived experience of trauma a say in how we describe and respond to trauma.
- Offer compassion whenever a child or adult says that they have been abused or harmed, even if they disclose this many years after the abuse happened.
- Be non-judgemental towards anyone who's experienced trauma, no matter how they have been affected by it; and not 'blame' or 'shame' them.
- Accept that believing people who've experienced trauma, particularly childhood sexual abuse, is really important and can in itself be healing.
- Offer effective, specialist support to those who need it; while recognising that not all people who've experienced trauma will want or need services.
- Not insist that people have to talk about what happened to them in order to get help.
- Hold hope that people of all ages and from all backgrounds can heal and recover from trauma, recognising the strength in individuals, families and communities.

Agree to the commitments described in the Charter?

How to sign up:

Any organisation can sign up via Visible. Signing up means that they agree to make the commitments described in the Charter; and that they will communicate this to service-users in a meaningful way. The Charter is also important for people who've experienced trauma, as it gives them a clear outline of what they can expect in the city; and is also valuable to all, in that it gives easily understandable insights into what is meant by 'trauma'.

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Thank you

We hope you found this document useful.

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