

Developing a knowledge and skills framework for a trauma informed and responsive justice workforce: Questions for the trauma informed workforce committee

The current proposed objectives of the trauma informed workforce workstream include developing a clear understanding of the workforce in the justice system, and a framework for the knowledge and skills they need to enable them to support them to do no harm (minimise re-traumatisation), support recovery, gain and interpret best evidence, and make best decisions based on this evidence for victims.

The process of developing and subsequently publishing the Transforming Psychological Trauma Knowledge and Skills Framework (“K&S Framework”) for the Scottish workforce has been an underpinning factor in developing and sustaining momentum behind commitments to a trauma informed and responsive workforce across Scotland, hence it has been selected as a key element of a trauma informed justice workforce. The K&S Framework has played a key role in ensuring that across stakeholders there is a shared language and understanding around what a trauma informed and responsive workforce looks like, including what we need to know and are able to do. This has allowed training to be developed consistently across organisations titrated to the need of individual staff groups, depending on role and responsibilities in relation to their contact with people affected by trauma .

Helpfully it provides a useful starting point for the development of a trauma informed justice workforce in terms of identifying the general knowledge and skills required to understand the impact of psychological trauma, to prevent re-traumatisation and trauma related barriers to accessing services, and to support recovery. What the original framework does not address are the specific knowledge and skills required in justice settings – for example in situations where evidential or system demands can especially risk re-traumatisation, or where they directly compete with a trauma informed and responsive approach. It also does not address the knowledge and skills required to recognise and respond to the impact of psychological trauma on evidence that witnesses provide, and on their perceived credibility. This has implications for the knowledge and skills of those who, in a legal context collect, interpret and/ or make decisions based on evidence from witnesses who may be affected by traumatic events.

The original K&S framework was developed through review and synthesis of empirical evidence and literature review, and interviews and consultation with key informants (those with lived experience of trauma, & key stakeholders and leaders across the workforce) about the knowledge and skills required to prevent barriers to accessing services and prevent re-traumatisation and to support recovery. This served the dual purpose of ensuring a thoroughly evidence based background for the published K&S framework, and of engaging key stakeholders in its construction. This led to an ultimately evidence based collaborative effort that has been widely accepted across workforce organisations.

For these reasons, a similar process is proposed for the development of the Justice K&S framework outlined above. This would involve soliciting information from key informants about the key elements of a trauma informed justice system, and the knowledge and skills that staff require to have to support this. Key informants will include justice leaders, people with lived experience of trauma and the justice process as a victims and/ or witness, and subject experts in the area of trauma and trauma informed practice and the law. For methodological and time constraint reasons, it is proposed that a maximum of 30 informants be contacted – this can be via interview or submission of written response.