



ARC NWC Research Briefing Paper

Title: Developing Trauma Informed Communities- an evaluation of early adopter sites.
Authors: *Koser Khan, Joanna Goldthorpe, Hilary Stewart*

Introduction and Aims

The Lancashire Violence Reduction Network (LVRN) is a network of multi-agency partners and specialists working together to implement a Public Health approach (PHA) to tackle violence and its root causes. The LVRN is made up of team members from health, education, police services, youth offending and probation services, community safety partnerships, local government and social care. All team members are trained in “trauma informed approaches” which encourages professionals to consider the root causes of violent offending

The aim of Trauma Informed practice is to ensure practitioners are skilled in recognising the wide impact of trauma on the causes and effects of violent behaviour. The LVRN trauma-informed (TI) approach involves:

- Recognising how common traumatic stress is;
- Recognising the potential impacts of trauma and;
- Acting to avoid people becoming ‘retraumatised’ or unnecessarily stressed through interactions with professionals and services.

There are currently 4 pilot sites across Lancashire:

Blackburn	TI training for professionals, community organisation representatives and Citizens’s juries to develop recommendations for TI communities
Fleetwood	Development of school-based strategies to communicate messages relating to ACEs’ trauma and vulnerability as well as strategies to support families and children
South West Burnley	School based initiative collaborating with a local community organisation and 2 primary schools, exploring how TI services could be delivered.
Skelmersdale	Working towards establishing an evidence based multi-disciplinary team in a health setting with a focus on proactive and personalised care.

The evaluation was undertaken by ARC-NWC Equitable Place-based Health and Care theme (EPHC) and had three key aims



1. Explore how those working in Lancashire communities understand TI approaches and how this informs and affects their work;
2. Explore how TI approaches support service users, clients and the public;
3. Explore how data collection systems can be developed and improved to support sustainable, long-term evaluation that result in improvements to service delivery within trauma-informed communities.

Methods:



- 3 focus groups & 4 semi structured interviews: conducted with participants who were involved in delivering trauma informed approaches in the 4 pilot sites
- 1 focus group: conducted with community members who had been involved in a citizen’s jury where community members form a panel to make recommendations.
- In total 35 participants took part in the study (11 school staff, 10 local authority staff, 9 community members, 2 health professionals, 3 VCSFE representatives)

Participants were asked to reflect on their understanding of working in TI ways, the use of TI approaches and how such approaches could be evaluated in the future.



Findings

The local legacy of previous community development work, leadership and partnership working influenced the extent to which trauma-informed approaches could be implemented in early adopter sites. The Covid-19 pandemic had also impacted capacity to cascade the trauma-informed training within health and education led services.

TI training was considered to be supporting awareness raising and understanding of TI approaches in the pilot sites. However, there were concerns from health-led services that some aspects of TI training may be incompatible with existing commitments of clinical staff.

TI approaches were reported to encourage those working with traumatised individuals and groups to look beyond presenting issues and behaviours to try and understand factors that might be contributing to an individual's situation.

Participants recognised that TI approaches can impact staff as well and that clinical supervision and psychological support need to be built in.

Participants also expressed concerns about sustainability and the short term nature of funding impacting what can be delivered and outcomes.

Evidencing impacts of TI approaches was considered to be important, particularly demonstrating changes in behaviour of staff as result of training or changes in experiences of service provision from pupils or clients. Participants also felt it important to have a consistent approach to collecting evaluation data on trauma informed training across organisations.

Conclusion

Overall, trauma-informed approaches to community development were acceptable to those who participated in the study. Participants reported that TI approaches encouraged those working with traumatised individuals and groups to look beyond presenting issues and behaviours to try and understand factors that might be contributing to an individual's situation. However; a number of considerations have been highlighted as described in the following section.

Implications for Practice, Policy and research

Sustainability and impact: Longer term funding in early adopter areas may help increase engagement and support the roll out of TI programmes to other areas as well as help to demonstrate impact.

Service Delivery: Approaches to TI training need to be tailored for individuals working in different organisations to improve access and engagement of staff. Shorter and topic-specific sessions that are accessible online would be more acceptable particularly for health led services.

Supervision should be considered for staff to ensure they are appropriately supported to undertake their roles and deal with any arising issues.

Consideration of language: The appropriateness of language used should be considered for different groups. The word "trauma" and language associated with TI approaches may not always be appropriate particularly when used in the context of community development.

Research and evaluation: In order to effectively evaluate TI approaches appropriate resources firstly need to be allocated to support evaluation and data collection. It is important to work with all stakeholders to define meaningful measures and what impacts can realistically be demonstrated and how data can be collected

Public Involvement: Involving communities that are being targeted by TI approaches to shape service delivery and future evaluations can help ensure communities are sensitively engaged.

For further information contact: J.goldthorpe@lancaster.ac.uk

What is ARC North West Coast?

ARC NWC aims to improve outcomes for patients and the public through collaboration working by bringing together academics, health and social care providers, members of the public, universities and local authorities. Its vision is to improve the quality, delivery and efficiency of health and care services; reduce health inequalities and increase the sustainability of the health and care system both locally and nationally. Learn more: <https://arc-nwc.nihr.ac.uk/>

“Really getting people to think about adversities and how that impacts on the adult in that future parenting. It became something that was absolutely embedded across that Family Support Service. The policies, the procedures, the practice, the shared learning, coming together and really sharing those experiences”