



FUTURE  
PATHWAYS

# Trauma-Informed Practice

A short guide for individuals and services

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## Introduction

At Future Pathways, we take a trauma-informed approach in our work with people. We know from feedback that people value this approach. People tell us it is important that they:

- feel safe
- can trust a service or provider
- have choices about what support looks like
- can work alongside a service
- can influence their own support

So, we encourage services we work with to have a trauma-informed approach too.

## What a trauma-informed approach looks like

How you make your work trauma-informed will depend on you and the kind of work you do. In this short guide, we highlight how we can all work in a trauma-informed way. It is based on what people tell us is important to them.

## Cultural consideration

When we work with people, we must take into consideration the potential specific needs of people who have experienced Scottish care settings.

In the past, some organisations that were tasked with looking after children who were in care did not protect them, or were complicit in the abuse or neglect of children. As these children grew up, they may have developed a mistrust in people and / or feel that they will not be protected now.

It is important to remember and consider this, to make sure that our service responds to the needs of the people we support.

### Things to consider

- A person's previous experience of not being protected may cause them to feel that they will not be protected now.
- A person may develop a mistrust of people, organisations or authority figures.
- We can reduce the likelihood of potential harm by following the principles of trauma-informed practice (safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, empowerment)



**I knew that we had to slowly build trust with one another.**

(Support Coordinator)

## Safety

If you are meeting a Future Pathways' client and you plan to do this with another person, please let the Future Pathway's client know of this in advance. If there are any last minute changes please contact the person to inform them of this and to check if they would like to proceed or reschedule.

Check in advance if a suggested meeting place is suitable for someone. There are many reasons why people don't always feel safe in particular environments. If you are planning to visit a new setting with someone, it is always best to talk this through with them and make sure they know what to expect. Sometimes it can be difficult for people to manage being in a new environment. New environments can feel unpredictable, frightening, and trigger past trauma even if there are no obvious links to the person's past. People might also prefer that others are not aware they are accessing your service.

### Things to consider

- The person might prefer to meet in a neutral space.
- They might prefer to meet in a public place before they meet you in their home.
- The person may not always wish to give you their name. Letting the person introduce themselves when they are ready and using their preferred name can help people feel more comfortable.



**I feel validated and seen. I have assurance that the support is there, and you are approachable.**

(Person supported by Future Pathways)

## Trustworthiness

It can be difficult for anyone to let a new person into their personal space, so being consistent and doing what has been agreed is important. If you can't make an appointment, give the person as much notice as possible.

People we support tell us it is important to stick to times and appointments and to be kept updated about their support. For example, if plans change then we would let them know. People tell us that it can take time to build trust and that it's important to go at the person's own pace.

### Things to consider

- Trust is gained over time, so it is important to take time for trust to grow.
- Being predictable can build trust.
- Keeping people updated about their support and letting them know when plans change helps build trust.
- If someone has agreed to something on one occasion that does not mean that they may agree to it in future so please check with the person in advance.



We show people, “You can trust me enough to tell me when I’ve done something wrong.”

(Support Coordinator)

## Choice

People tell us that choice helps them feel in control of the support they are accessing, so we give people as much choice as we can. People tell us how valuable it is that their wishes and needs are listened to. People tell us that choice – for example, about where, how and how often we meet – is vital.

No one likes it when people make assumptions about what might be best for another person. Many people we support have had negative experiences of being made to fit into services. Future Pathways' approach is to fit support to the person. Our work together is about what the person wants to achieve and how the person wants to go about this.

### Things to consider

- Sometimes people need more information or encouragement to make their own choices.
- Respecting decisions is an important part of building trust.
- Sharing information about people's rights and support they can access can help people make choices.



Whichever options are explored, we always look at a variety of options and allow and encourage someone to explore and make the choice.

(Support Coordinator)

## Collaboration

Collaboration is about working alongside the people we support. We actively encourage those we support to help us develop and improve Future Pathways and we endeavour to make sure that their voices are represented in other services they may use. We ask people what they need, and we work together to consider how these needs can be met.

People tell us that listening to their feedback and suggestions helps them feel heard and valued. We ask people for their help to improve our support. We ask questions like “can you help me understand this?” and “what could we do differently next time?” We are genuinely interested in what people tell us and we make changes to improve the service.

### Things to consider

- Asking for the person’s opinion and listening to their answer can help people feel involved in their own support.
- Taking the time to go through plans or decisions with someone gives them the chance to ask questions. Sometimes people may need more time to consider those plans before they can make a decision.
- Asking the person for their feedback is a way you can learn and improve together.



**It has given me a lot of confidence. My life experiences are what I bring to the table.**

(Person supported by Future Pathways)

## Empowerment

It is important that people feel they have a voice and are heard. This includes understanding what is important to the person and taking on board their views. People are the experts in their own life.

People share with us that they often experience power dynamics when they work with other services, such as feeling weaker, submissive or that they have less of a voice than before. People can feel like that even if the service has included the person or worked in a professional manner. Having strength-based conversations that focus on people's attributes, skills and resources can help reduce the power dynamics people experience. For instance, we might ask 'What could be put into place that might make it easier for you to do that?' or 'When you did that in the past, what helped you do it?' People we support share that it is important for them to feel that they are in charge of their own support.

### Things to consider

- Exploring people's options and rights to different kinds of support can help people feel more confident when making decisions about what is right for them.
- It can be useful to remind the person that they are in control of what we work on, and they will not be told what to do.
- Empowerment means different things to different people. For some it might look like managing their support independently. For others it can mean making choices and their choices being respected.



From the start he (my Support Coordinator) had such a nice way about him. He let me lead the discussion.  
(Person supported by Future Pathways)

## Queries or concerns

If someone expresses confusion or dissatisfaction with the work taking place, please contact Future Pathways as soon as possible to discuss this. You can contact the Support Coordinator directly or email us at [engagement@future-pathways.co.uk](mailto:engagement@future-pathways.co.uk)

## Further resources

If you want to find out more about working in a trauma-informed way, please see the following resources:

### Adopting a Trauma-Informed Approach

Improvement Service

[www.improvementservice.org.uk](http://www.improvementservice.org.uk)

### Trauma-Informed Practice Toolkit

Scottish Government

[www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot)

### Truth Project report

Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse

[Truth Project | IICSA Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse](#)



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