

TRAUMA INFORMED CARE

A guiding tool to discussing sexual health with young people who may have experienced trauma.

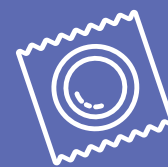


Acknowledgement of Country

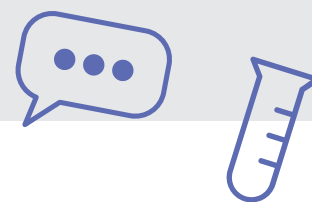
NSW Health acknowledges Aboriginal people as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters on which we work, live and learn. We recognise the incredible richness, strength and resilience of the world's oldest living cultures, including cultural practices, languages and connection to Country.

NSW Health acknowledges the people of the many traditional countries and language groups of New South Wales. NSW Health acknowledges the wisdom of Elders past and present, and pays respect to all Aboriginal communities of today.

TRAUMA INFORMED CARE



A Guiding Handbook



Introduction

Young people's health is important. As part of a young person's holistic health, we need to consider all areas of health, including physical health, mental health and sexual health.

Young people experience physical, emotional, cognitive and social change throughout adolescence and early adulthood which influences their behaviours, feelings, impulses, sense of self, relationships and resilience.⁽¹⁾ Often, these changes are influenced by experiences which may be positive or negative.

For the purpose of this booklet, young people are defined as being 15-29 years old in line with the NSW STI Strategy 2022-2026.⁽²⁾

Young people experience poorer sexual health and wellbeing outcomes than their older counterparts.⁽³⁾ Additionally, some young people are at an increased risk of various types of harm, and as a result, may have more complex needs than other young people particularly when it comes to accessing health services.

Young people who may experience poorer sexual health outcomes include those who are vulnerable and/or have experiences of trauma through poverty, neglect, violence, abuse including sexual abuse, homelessness, family breakdown, exposure to alcohol or substance abuse, time in out of home care, low levels of education and literacy, those with caring responsibilities, experiences of the justice system or young people with refugee status.

Good sexual health is broader than just being free from sexually transmissible infections (STIs). Rather, it is defined as experiencing sexuality that is satisfying, positive, and respectful, as well as being free from exploitation and violence. The World Health Organization's definition of sexual health highlights how an individual's sexual health is a function of complex and interconnecting biological, psychological, and social factors and experiences.

While this definition is a sex positive approach to sexual health, not everyone's experience of sex and sexual health is positive. This can be particularly true of individuals who have experienced trauma. It is important that the diversity of young people (including gender, culture and sexuality) and their experiences is also recognised.

With support, education, and psychological guidance, individuals who have experienced trauma can have positive, fulfilling, meaningful lives, including positive experiences of sexuality and sexual health.

We all have a responsibility to keep young people safe. This is achieved through education and providing young people with the skills and resources they need to make safer choices when it comes to their sexual health.

This resource aims to assist you in having discussions about sexual health with young people through a trauma-informed lens. Use of trauma informed practice will reduce re-traumatisation of young people and foster positive outcomes for all.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines sexual health as:

"A state of physical, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality. It requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. For sexual health to be attained and maintained, the sexual rights of all persons must be respected, protected and fulfilled."⁽⁴⁾



What is Trauma?

Blue Knot Foundation, Australian leaders in trauma informed care, define trauma as:

“A state of high arousal. It is an event or events in which a person is threatened or feels threatened. The experience of trauma overwhelms the person’s capacity to cope. Trauma also describes the impacts of the event or events.”⁽⁵⁾

Trauma may include, but is not limited to, experiences that are severely impactful, such as significant family changes, having an injury or illness, feelings of isolation, assault, including sexual assault, domestic violence, abuse, neglect, or experiencing a natural disaster.

Trauma in early childhood can be especially harmful and have significant impacts on a child’s health as they grow and develop. Early childhood trauma generally means trauma that is experienced from birth to the age of six. Young children are very dependent on their caregivers for care, nurture and protection which can make them particularly vulnerable to trauma.

Complex trauma is repeated, ongoing, and often extreme interpersonal trauma (between people). For example, violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation experienced as a child, young person and adult.

People experience trauma differently. Certain experiences are traumatic for some people and not for others. The impacts of trauma can often depend on age, previous experiences of trauma, how long the trauma lasts, how often it happens and how extreme it is. Responses to trauma may also be influenced by culture, background and the social context of a person’s life.⁽⁵⁾

Research has consistently shown that people who have experienced trauma have higher rates of ill-health, including mental illness, risk of suicide, substance abuse and poor physical health.⁽⁵⁾

Blue Knot Foundation

Blue Knot Foundation provides information and support for anyone who is affected by complex trauma.

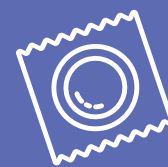
Anyone who has had an experience of trauma and is wanting support can phone Blue Knot Foundation’s Helpline and Redress Support Service on 1300 657 380.

This service provides short term trauma phone counselling, support, information and referrals for childhood trauma survivors, their personal and professional supporters.

blueknot.org.au



TRAUMA INFORMED CARE



A Guiding Handbook



What is Trauma Informed Care?

Trauma informed care is a systems-level initiative where organisations are oriented towards understanding, recognising and responding to trauma. It is based on knowledge and understanding of trauma, how it affects people's lives, their service needs as well as how people might present to services.

“Trauma informed care is a strengths-based framework that is grounded in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma. It emphasises physical, psychological, and emotional safety for everyone, and creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.”⁽⁶⁾

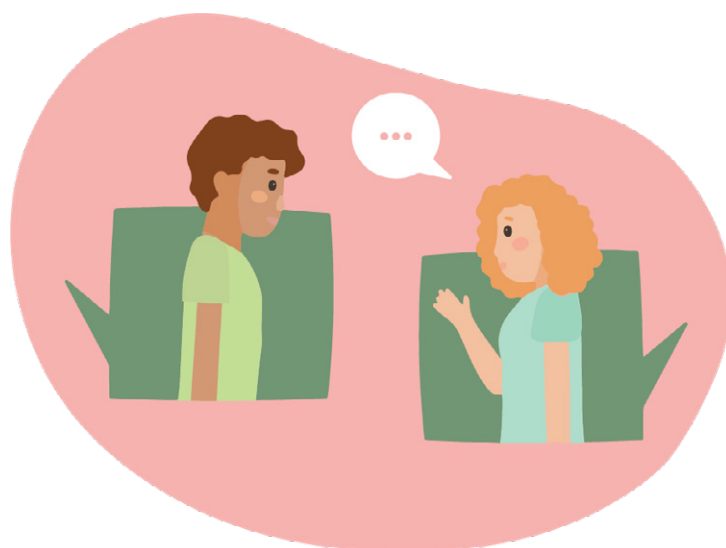
Trauma informed care aims to mitigate the impacts of trauma, avoid exacerbating trauma, and promote healing by considering how care is provided and creating a collaborative therapeutic environment.

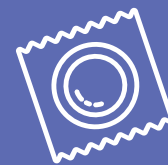
The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) identify four assumptions that underpin trauma informed care.⁽⁷⁾ These can be referred to as the 'four Rs' and apply to all areas of an organisation.

- **Realise** the impact trauma can have on families, carers, organisations, communities and individual.
- **Recognise** the signs of trauma, that relationships can be the basis for healing, and that the service-delivery setting plays a role in facilitating the foundation for trauma-informed care.
- **Respond** appropriately and effectively by applying the principles of trauma informed care.
- Seek to prevent **re-traumatisation** of young people.

Trauma & Out of Home Care

Children and young people in out of home care are at higher risk of having experienced trauma through abuse, neglect and are often faced with severe adversity before being placed in care. They may have also suffered additional trauma as a result of separation from their families or others close to them. This may lead to poor outcomes later in life such as developmental, behavioural or mental health issues.⁽⁸⁾





Principles of Trauma Informed Care

While members of the sector may define trauma informed care differently, the principles of trauma informed care have universal meaning and importance.

[The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#)⁽⁷⁾ identify the principles of trauma informed care as:

Safety

Service providers should work with young people to ensure they feel physically, culturally, religiously, socially and psychologically safe. It's important to let young people know that your service is a safe space and give them permission to open up and talk with you, whilst being mindful of mandatory reporting requirements.

Trustworthiness and transparency

Service providers should be transparent, and seek to build and maintain trust among young people. Building trust can take time, but is crucial to trauma informed care. It requires trust with not just the young person, but also their families and communities. Transparency and honesty are also crucial, this means following through on actions and never "promising" anything that cannot be achieved.

Peer support

Peers are those with lived experience of trauma. Using peers can help to develop trust, safety and a sense of mutual self-help. Peer workers are common in the fields of mental health and the drug and alcohol sector, however, need to be considered in all areas of health and community work.

Collaboration and mutuality

Collaboration and mutuality aims to balance the power of those making decisions, and recognises that healing occurs in relationships where there is shared power in the decision making process. This can help to return the control that trauma likely removed from the individual.

Empowerment, voice and choice

The strengths and agency of children and young people, and their families, carers and significant others need to be recognised, built upon, and validated both in direct service provision and organisational management. Educating young people about sexual health leads to empowerment, and empowerment leads to awareness, higher self-value, and choice. Choice and control over one's own behaviours are crucial when it comes to sexual health.

Culture, gender, history and identity

Services must be responsive to a young person's culture, gender, religious background, sexual orientation and ability, and recognise and address historical trauma, genocide and institutional racism. Services should also leverage the healing value of traditional cultural connections.

Most services offer a culturally safe and gender sensitive service, however, it is always a good idea to re-visit this. Does your service display posters of a welcoming nature for a diverse range of young people? Are all staff using appropriate language and terms?

For more information on trauma informed care when working with young people please visit: pro.playsafe.health.nsw.gov.au/tools/sexual-health-promotion-for-young-people-with-an-experience-of-trauma



TRAUMA INFORMED CARE



A Guiding Handbook



Trauma and Sexual Health Education

A trauma informed approach provides sexual health information to young people in a way that takes into consideration adverse life experiences and their potential influence on sexual decision making. The goal of a trauma informed approach to sexual health education, is to encourage healthy relationships and decision making, and to prevent sexual harm, unplanned pregnancy, and STIs.

No two people's response to trauma will be the same. Some things to consider when having sexual health discussions with a young person are:

- make them feel as safe as possible by setting up a safe and supportive environment. Ideally, this means being empowered and knowledgeable around sexual consent and safer sex (sex with a condom/dam) and having conversations in neutral settings that young people feel comfortable in.
- inform professionals working with the young person that you intend on having these conversations. This can help to ensure you are all on the same page and are supporting each other throughout the discussions.
- ensure you are equipped with up to date sexual health knowledge. There are great resources available at Play Safe Pro to help you get up to date.

Positive experiences of sexual health and sexuality is a human right as is access to education, including sexual health education.⁽⁹⁾

It is important that we engage young people who have experienced trauma in education in a way that promotes positive outcomes. We all have a role to play in ensuring young people experience positive sexual health education, both within and outside of schools.

Because You Care

There is a free, trauma informed online learning module titled *Because You Care* which also provides practical ways you can begin a conversation around sexual and reproductive health with a young person.

This can be found at pro.playsafe.health.nsw.gov.au/training





A Guiding Handbook



Trauma and Diverse Groups of Young People

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and trauma

Trauma is generally understood as a person's response to a major event that is so overwhelming it leaves that person unable to come to terms with it. Trauma can also be experienced by a community or group of people. When this trauma is carried as a part of the community or groups collective memory and impacts on future generations, this is known as intergenerational trauma.

Intergenerational trauma is the psychological effects that the collective trauma experienced by a group of people has on subsequent generations in that group. Collective trauma is the effect of psychological trauma experienced by communities and identity groups and carried as part of the group's collective memory and shared sense of identity.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience ongoing trauma as a result of colonisation, including the associated violence and loss of culture, language and land, as well as subsequent policies such as the forced removal of children. In many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities, this trauma continues to be experienced within multiple generations with devastating effects.

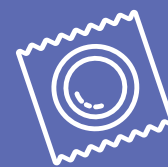
There are many strengths and protective factors that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people hold. These include strong cultural identity and belief systems, extensive kinship systems, strong community bonds, cultural and spiritual strengths including connection to country and ways of learning. It is important to identify how these strengths can be supported and utilised to enhance the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to take control of their own health and wellbeing.

As of 2022, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people accounted for 44.7% of all children and young people in out of home care.⁽¹⁰⁾ When working with young Aboriginal people, we need to provide ongoing, culturally competent support, including sexual health

information and education, to enable them to achieve positive health outcomes.

As people working with, caring for or supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, we can:

- be highly proactive and aware of cultural customs, sensitivities and traditions when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.
- give careful thought to the physical, spiritual, cultural, emotional and social wellbeing, the capacity of the community and governance practices when providing sexual health services or information.
- be aware of how ongoing intergenerational trauma impacts Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.
- empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people toward their Individual right to self determination and participate in decisions that affect their lives.
- work alongside and partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and services to support all needs of young people, including developing rapport and trust.
- engage community Elders in the support you provide to young people, including in health-related conversations.
- understand the contemporary risk and protective factors, and social determinants and how they apply to young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- take time to understand the context and stressors that may be present in the families of the young people you work with.
- understand that young people's behaviours may be a result of the impact of many factors that they are coping with.
- seek to offer support to families and engage with them by using the cultural supports available to you, such as Aboriginal liaison officers.



Trauma and Diverse Groups of Young People

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and trauma

- resist-re traumatising when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. Considering elements to engagement like culturally safe spaces and accessible language.
- promote safety and ensure cultural competence by upskilling yourself. [The Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council](#) and [AbSec](#) have excellent online and face to face trainings available.

For further information and considerations on sexual and reproductive health promotion with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, please visit: pro.playsafe.health.nsw.gov.au/tools/sexual-health-promotion-with-aboriginal-young-people

The Healing Foundation

The Healing Foundation is a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation that provides a platform to amplify the voices and lived experience of Stolen Generations survivors and their families.

The Healing Foundation works with communities to create a place of safety, providing an environment for Stolen Generations survivors and their families to speak for themselves, tell their own stories, and be in charge of their own healing.

The Foundation promotes trauma-aware, healing-informed practice to help government, policymakers, and workforces understand their role in intergenerational healing.

healingfoundation.org.au

AbSec

AbSec – NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation, or commonly referred to as AbSec, is a not-for-profit incorporated Aboriginal controlled organisation. They are the peak organisation for Aboriginal children and families in NSW. AbSec works to empower Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities impacted by the child protection system, as well as support a quality Aboriginal community-controlled child and family sector to deliver needed supports in Aboriginal communities across the state.

AbSec provides child protection and out-of-home care policy advice on issues affecting Aboriginal children, young people, families and carers, and we are informed by our membership base and community to ensure that Aboriginal perspectives are included in government policy and reform directions.

Carers can call the AbSec Carer Support Service on 1800 888 698.

absec.org.au



A Guiding Handbook



Trauma and Diverse Groups of Young People

Culturally diverse young people and trauma

Culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Australia encompass over 200 different language groups with unique identifies, cultural values and beliefs. This means that what may be appropriate for one person or community may not be appropriate for another. Engaging with culturally and linguistically diverse young people around the topic of sexual health poses unique challenges. Sexual health can also be a very sensitive topic for many cultures.

People of diverse cultural backgrounds may have suffered historical trauma and continue to contend with the trauma and stress of discrimination. For example, refugees and people from refugee-like backgrounds may have been through many traumatic experiences. Experiences may include, but are not limited to or experienced by all people:

- being forced to flee their homes.
- being deprived of food, shelter or health care.
- the loss of family, friends, community, safety, home, possessions, routine, schooling or employment.
- being deprived of control over their lives.

Alongside navigating the typical developmental processes of adolescence, young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds may also experience unique challenges such as a lack of social supports, a sense of displacement, isolation, recovery from torture and trauma, discrimination and migration stress.

Young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have considerable strength, resilience and resourcefulness.⁽¹¹⁾

When working with young culturally and linguistically diverse people, we need to work to understand the protective factors that lead to resilience such as kinship, cultural identity and hopefulness and celebrate these factors.

As people working with, caring for or supporting culturally and linguistically diverse young people, we can:

- take time to understand the context and stressors that may be present in the families of the children and young people you work with.
- ensure access to interpreters, particularly when discussing medical information. Interpreters can be accessed through the [National Translation and Interpreting Service](#).
- understand that young people's behaviours may be a result of the impact of many factors that they are coping with.
- seek to offer support to young people and their families and engage with them by using the cultural supports available to you, such as cultural support workers and multicultural health workers.
- engage community leaders in the support you provide young people, including in health-related conversations.
- promote safety and ensure cultural competence by upskilling yourself. [STARTTS](#) have excellent online trainings available.

For further information and considerations when working with culturally and linguistically diverse communities please visit: pro.playsafe.health.nsw.gov.au/tools/sexual-health-promotion-with-culturally-linguistically-diverse-young-people



Trauma and Diverse Groups of Young People

Culturally diverse young people and trauma

For more information, guidance, or assistance, please contact:

NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS)

STARTTS is a specialist, not-for-profit organisation that provides culturally relevant psychological treatment and support, and community interventions, to help people and communities heal the scars of torture and refugee trauma and rebuild their lives in Australia. STARTTS also fosters a positive recovery environment through the provision of training to services, advocacy and policy work.

startts.org.au





A Guiding Handbook



Trauma and Diverse Groups of Young People

Sexuality and gender diverse young people and trauma

Sexuality refers to a person's choice of sexual partner and how they identify sexually, in terms of attraction to another person. Gender diversity refers to how someone identifies themselves and the extent to which their gender identity, role, or expression differs from the cultural norms prescribed for people of a particular biological sex.

For more information on sexuality, gender and sex, head to [Minus18](#).

When working with young people, it is important to have an understanding of sexuality and gender diversity. The language, terms and pronouns used are of particular importance for young people who identify as sexuality or gender diverse. Using correct terms and language acknowledges that you see the young person for who they are and accept them.

Intersex or intersex variation are terms you may also hear. Intersex people have innate sex characteristics that don't fit medical and social norms for female or male bodies. Sex characteristics are physical features relating to sex, including chromosomes, genitals, gonads, hormones, and other reproductive anatomy, and secondary features that emerge from puberty. Young people who have intersex variations may experience trauma based around bodily differences and forced surgeries to alter their sex characteristics to align with a given gender.

For more information on intersex, head to [Intersex Human Rights Australia](#).

Safety is an important concern for sexuality and gender diverse young people. Sexuality and gender diverse young people may have, or are currently facing discrimination from their families, communities, and/or schools.

Some sexuality and gender diverse young people may experience higher rates of trauma due to family rejection, bullying or violence. Homophobic, biphobic or transphobic abuse is often experienced through verbal, physical, sexual, or emotional abuse. These experiences may be microaggressions overtime and will not always appear as evident as physical abuse. This abuse often leads to health and social disparities.

It is important to be mindful of the history of diverse sexual orientations. In the past, gender identity disorder has been listed as a mental health disorder in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manuals (DSM). This is the manual used by health providers to make mental health diagnosis. While there has been significant changes to the DSM in time, the most recent version still lists the term Gender Dysphoria and this can have a large impact on how an individual views themselves.

When working with young sexuality and gender diverse people, we need to work to make them feel safe, accepted, included and seen, particularly when it comes to delivering sexual health information and education. These programs are often heteronormative (not inclusive of sexuality and gender diverse people) and can unknowingly exclude those who do not identify in such a way.

Educational spaces may be the only space where young people are able to explore and learn about sexual orientation and gender identity, it is therefore important that it discussed and visibly represented as well as accepted.



A Guiding Handbook



Trauma and Diverse Groups of Young People

Sexuality and gender diverse young people and trauma

As people working with, caring for or supporting sexuality and gender diverse young people, we can:

- take time to understand the context and stressors that may be present in the families of the children and young people you work with.
- introduce ourselves with our names and pronouns.
- ask for and use young people's pronouns.
- never assume a young person's sexuality or gender.
- establish links with organisations that support young sexuality and gender diverse people, including [Twenty10](#), [Minus18](#), and [ACON](#).
- use inclusive and neutral language when communicating with young people.
- create and maintain safe settings by displaying welcoming signs such as the rainbow flag.
- understand that young people's behaviours may be a result of the impact of many factors that they are coping with.

- promote safety and ensure cultural competence by upskilling yourself. [Twenty10](#), [ACON](#) and [Minus18](#) have excellent resources and trainings available.

For further information and considerations when working with sexuality and gender diverse people please visit: pro.playsafe.health.nsw.gov.au/tools/sexual-health-promotion-with-young-people-of-diverse-gender-and-sexuality.

For more information, guidance, or assistance, please contact:

Twenty10

Twenty10 is a Sydney based services working across New South Wales, providing a broad range of specialised services for young people aged 12-25 including housing, mental health, counselling and social support.

twenty10.org.au

QLife

QLife is a telephone and webchat peer support for LGBTIQ+ folks and their families/communities from 3pm to midnight
qlife.org.au

BlaQ Aboriginal Corporation

BlaQ Aboriginal Corporation is committed to empowering the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTQ+ community through innovation, inclusion, understanding and advocacy.

blaq.org.au



A Guiding Handbook



Trauma and Diverse Groups of Young People

Young people with disability and trauma

Many young people experience a form of disability, with an estimated 10% of school students in Australia reporting a form of disability.⁽¹²⁾ The United Nations identifies people with disability as *“those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”*⁽¹³⁾

Often, young people with disability, particularly intellectual disability, are seen as non-sexual, which is not true. Young people with disabilities experience sexual feelings, needs, and desires, and have a right to access sexual health education and information.⁽¹³⁾ Young people with disabilities are more vulnerable to sexual abuse than their peers, especially if they have an intellectual disability.⁽¹⁴⁾

It is important when working with young people, we are aware and know about any traumatic experiences that may have occurred in someone's life. For someone with an intellectual disability, this may include multiple caregivers, institutionalisation, loss of a carer and sudden changes to environment or routine. Young people with a disability may have specific care needs when it comes to their experiences of trauma. For many of these young people, they have a different way of processing and responding to trauma.

As workers, we can help by ensuring that residential homes and other environments are safe, predictable and promote opportunities for the individual to develop and learn, particularly when it comes to sexual health education, as this is a gap that often exists for these young people.

We have a responsibility to ensure young people with disability receive evidence-based and accessible sexual health information.

As people working with, caring for or supporting young people with disability, we can:

- identify the young person's level of knowledge and understanding of sexual health and use appropriate communication techniques and check in with them to see if they have understood the information you have provided.
- never assume a young person's sexuality, gender identity or sexual experiences based on their ability. Humans are sexual beings with sexual thoughts, feelings and desires and supporting this in a safe way is important.
- provide health information in a broad-ranging approach that respectfully includes experiences of disability.
- create and maintain safe and accessible settings by displaying welcoming and inclusive signs such as diverse health promotion material, including posters.
- understand that young people's behaviours may be a result of the impact of many factors that they are coping with.
- promote safety and ensure cultural competence by upskilling yourself. [Family Planning NSW](#) and [Children and Young People with Disability Australia](#) have excellent resources and trainings available.

For further information and considerations when working with a person with a disability, please visit: pro.playsafe.health.nsw.gov.au/tools/sexual-health-promotion-with-young-people-with-a-disability/



Trauma and Diverse Groups of Young People

Young people with disability and trauma

For more information, guidance, or assistance, please contact:

Children and Young People with Disability Australia

Children and Young People with Disability Australia is the national peak body which represents children and young people (aged 0-25) with disability.

cyda.org.au

Australian Childhood Foundation

The Australian Childhood Foundation is a national not-for-profit organisation dedicated to supporting children and families devastated by abuse, family violence and neglect.

childhood.org.au

If you are living with a disability (or are a family member of or caring or advocating for a person with disability) and have experienced abuse, neglect, violence, or exploitation; are currently experiencing abuse, neglect, violence, or exploitation; are distressed or anxious, you can call the National Counselling and Referral Service on 1800 421 468.



A Guiding Handbook



Trauma and Diverse Groups of Young People

Young People Exhibiting Problematic or Harmful Sexualised Behaviours

Problematic or harmful sexual behaviours include behaviours that are outside of the expected range of sexual behaviour for a child or young person's level of development. This places young people at greater risk of harm. This risk of harm may be to the child or young person themselves, another child or young person, or in some instances both.⁽¹⁵⁾

These behaviours may include:

- forced, compulsive or coercive penetrative and non-penetrative sexual acts.
- violation of privacy.
- exposure to sexual acts and materials.

These behaviours are often with other individuals who the child or young person has power over by virtue of age, emotional maturity, gender, physical strength, or intellect and where the victim in this relationship has suffered a betrayal of trust. For children aged ten years and older, some of these behaviours may constitute a crime.

This is a specialised area, though one we all need to be aware of. If you are working with a child or young person who exhibits some of these behaviours, or behaviours you have concerns or are unsure about, please refer to [New Street Services](#) for guidance and assistance.

As people working with, caring for or supporting young people who display problematic or harmful sexualised behaviours, we can:

- be mindful of the language used. Terms such as offender or perpetrator can further distance a young person or family from accessing much needed support.
- access professional support networks to discuss individual presentations as needed.

- identify the young person's level of knowledge and understanding of sexual health and use appropriate communication techniques and check in with them to see if they have understood the information you have provided.
- never assume a young person's sexuality, gender identity or sexual experiences based on their ability. Humans are sexual beings with sexual thoughts, feelings and desires and supporting this in a safe way is important.
- understand that young people's behaviours may be a result of the impact of many factors that they are coping with.

For more information, guidance, or assistance, please contact:

New Street Services

New Street Services provide therapeutic services for children and young people aged 10 to 17 years who have engaged in harmful sexual behaviours towards others, and their families and caregivers.

health.nsw.gov.au/parvan/hsb/Pages/new-street-services.aspx



Vicarious Trauma and Self-Care

Vicarious trauma is:

“The negative transformation in the helper that results (across time) from empathic engagement with trauma survivors and their traumatic material, combined with a commitment or responsibility to help them.”⁽¹⁵⁾

The greater the exposure to traumatic material, the greater the risk of vicarious trauma.

People who work in services at which young people with traumatic histories may present seeking help, or who work with traumatic material, are at particular risk. This includes but is not limited to people working in health, mental health, housing, law enforcement, legal, emergency services and family services.

Anyone working with young people affected by trauma or with traumatic material can benefit from understanding more about vicarious trauma, how to recognise the risks early and manage them.

Practicing good self-care is essential in any field where you are helping others. Self-care is not selfish. You cannot give to others with full empathy if you yourself are burnt out or low on energy.

There are many ways to practice self-care and it doesn't need to be time-consuming or expensive. Listening to a favourite song, cooking a nutritious meal, going for a swim, or doing some form of exercise to clear the mind are all examples of fast, effective self-care.

In a professional sense, one of the best forms of self-care and ways to avoid burnout and/or vicarious trauma is to participate in professional supervision and/or debriefing. This is particularly important in counselling or therapeutic helping roles, but indeed important across all helping professions. Regular sessions with a supervisor provide a chance to debrief, discuss complex clients and any concerns you have about your own well-being. Sessions may be conducted with a supervisor from within your organisation, but more commonly this is done from an external provider who can remain neutral to work based situations.





Trauma Informed Care and Workers: a summary

Staff who are working with young people who have a lived experience of trauma can be:

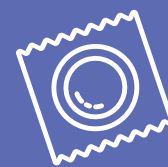
- anxious about talking with youth about sexual health.
- uncomfortable discussing sexuality.
- may use shaming and/or focus on the negatives.

It may be hard for staff to acknowledge and accept that these young people have often experienced abuse, sex trafficking/prostitution, early sexual activity, a history of previous STIs, unprotected sex, sex with multiple partners, sex under the influence of drugs and alcohol and/or unplanned pregnancy.

As workers, it is crucial for us to develop genuine working relationships with these young people. The relationship is to be honest and free of judgement or discrimination. We need to address the young person as a whole individual, not just someone who has been a victim of trauma.

For more information on trauma informed care, please visit NSW Health's Framework: [Integrated Trauma-Informed Care Framework: My story, my health, my future. \(health.nsw.gov.au/patients/trauma/Pages/itic-framework.aspx\)](https://health.nsw.gov.au/patients/trauma/Pages/itic-framework.aspx)





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