

## COMMUNITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP 22 MARCH 2022

### MID DEVON AS A TRAUMA INFORMED COUNCIL

**Cabinet Member(s):** Cllr Dennis Knowles  
**Responsible Officer:** Simon Newcombe, Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing

**Reason for Report and Recommendation:** To provide an outline to members about becoming a Trauma Informed Council, with a trained trauma aware workforce, as requested by the Community Policy Development Group (PDG) held on 16 November 2021. This follows a recommendation of the PDG Working Group on Community Safety made at the meeting that the PDG investigate adopting this informal status and strategic approach as a Council.

#### **Recommendation:**

1. **That the PDG note in principle the impact that trauma has on the wider population, how it impacts on behaviour, health and life opportunities and that this is recognised within public sector activities and interventions. Therefore, agree in principle to explore further the potential benefits, challenges and implications of Mid Devon District Council becoming a Trauma Informed Council**
2. **Subject to Recommendation 1, that a further report is received by August 2022 in respect of the following specific considerations:**
  - **wider synergy with the Council's Corporate Plan and priorities**
  - **other strategy, policy and/or equality implications**
  - **improving interaction and service provision to our customers**
  - **links with updated statutory Modern Slavery provisions as a public sector organisation and the Devon & Torbay Modern Slavery Adult Victims Protocol and Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)**
  - **links with the East and Mid Devon Community Safety Partnership Action Plan**
  - **staff and member understanding, awareness raising and training**
  - **financial costs (one-off and ongoing)**
  - **potential timelines, priority areas and staggered or phased adoption**

**Financial Implications:** There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report. However if the Council approves the notion to become a Trauma Informed Council there will be initial staff awareness and some more targeted training costs which is estimated to be around £5,000. There is potentially capacity within the existing L&D budget to include this. In addition there would be the resource costs to revisit our front line service delivery to ensure processes are responsive to user needs and embrace of the Trauma Informed approach. These costs will need to be defined and will form part of the further report set out in recommendation 2.

**Budget and Policy Framework:** There are on-going budget implications with regard to adaptations to the TI approach for frontline services, plus refresher courses for staff.

**Legal Implications:** None directly arising from this report.

**Risk Assessment:** There is a risk that if this approach is not approved that MDDC services do not suitably and satisfactorily accommodate the needs of our service users. Risks can be explored further as part of the recommended further report (recommendation 2).

**Equality Impact Assessment:** To become Trauma Informed (TI) across the Council would require detailed analysis of our service provision to ensure that all customer interactions are mindful of the needs of our customers. Each service area would be required to consider service provision and complete a revised EIA for any revision to policy and processes.

**Relationship to Corporate Plan:** Adoption of a TI approach meets with the desire to be a progressive council that is committed to providing a high quality and sustainable service. This modification to a TI service delivery links closely with the promise for local engagement and participation, supporting good health (because of improved understanding of barriers), promotes equality of service, and supports the values that are important to the council.

**Impact on Climate Change:** None directly arising from the report.

## 1.0 Introduction/Background

1.1 As a key, statutory partner in the East & Mid Devon Community Safety Partnership (CSP) officers have become more aware of the impact that trauma can have on individuals, families and communities. Virtually all community safety issues can be linked back to some form of trauma and there is a continuous thread that connects trauma to many of the current CSP priority areas. This includes sexual violence, domestic violence and abuse, substance (including alcohol) misuse, violent crime, exploitation, mental health and vulnerability.

1.2 Often there is a cycle of trauma within families and those that have experienced higher levels of trauma as children are more likely to be at risk of addiction, unhealthy relationships, criminal activity, or vulnerable to exploitation.

## 2.0 The results of trauma

2.1 When trauma is experienced then behaviour is often based on responses to the trigger from the past trauma, with actions and behaviour that the individual has learnt in order to best 'protect themselves'. When individuals are on a heightened state of alert, already in 'fight or flight' mode, their behaviour is often not the same as others without trauma. They may experience issues communicating effectively, concentrating or planning/controlling their life.

2.2 Children that grow up with trauma, such as abusive parents, domestic abuse, substance misuse or sexual exploitation are often unable to communicate well and brain development can be seriously impacted as the trauma is overriding in their life during key growth periods. As they grow they carry that trauma and lack of personal development into adulthood and this is where we may see behavioural issues playing out in schools, or as anti-social behaviour in communities.

## 3.0 Being Trauma Informed

3.1 Despite large numbers of people being affected by trauma, including our customers and staff, many of us don't automatically think of the possibility that someone we

meet, speak with or support, may have experienced trauma. This makes us less likely to recognise it. Keeping the possibility of trauma and the sensitivities and vulnerabilities of people who may be trauma survivors in our assessment focus is therefore the first step towards informed practice.

3.2 Having a basic understanding of how stress can affect an individual is important. Knowing this will make us less likely to fuel other peoples stress levels. This means paying attention to 'how' we engage with other people, as well as 'what' we do. It also means thinking about what may have happened to someone, rather than judging what is 'wrong' with them.

3.4 Positive interactions, even routine, should not be underestimated and can be therapeutic and validating. Positive experiences of relationships are central to trauma recovery, whilst negative experiences in relationships can exacerbate emotional and psychological impacts.

3.5 Trauma often affects the way people approach potentially helpful relationships. This is because many survivors feel unsafe, lack trust or live with anxiety. Becoming trauma informed is about supporting people to feel safe enough in their interaction with services to build trust, and to help people overcome any barriers to an effective, helping relationship.

3.6 Impact of trauma is now recognised by health and social care services worldwide as there is a solid body of research that now exists to show that many mental and physical illnesses, and general emotional distress, are associated with unprocessed traumatic experiences.

3.7 In the wake of the COVID-19 global pandemic the impact of trauma has seldom been more evident, with many organisations increasingly seeing the need to address trauma as an essential component of service delivery.

3.8 Other local authorities in Devon are also considering this opportunity to review service delivery and Mid Devon staff are leading a working group to explore countywide recognition and adoption of trauma informed working methods. This could potentially mean shared working practices and savings in training requirements.

3.9 The Scottish Government have produced a Trauma Informed Practice Tool Kit which now forms part of a national trauma training programme.

#### 4.0 **The Plymouth City Model**

4.1 The City of Plymouth has become the first city in the UK to become a Trauma Informed City. Becoming trauma informed is an on-going process. Plymouth have worked through a programme of change in four stages:-

- **Trauma Aware:** Staff understand trauma, its effects and survivor adaptations
- **Trauma Sensitive:** The agency integrates some concepts of trauma informed approach into operational ethos.
- **Trauma Responsive:** Individuals and the agency recognise and respond to trauma, enabling changes in behaviour and strengthening resilience and protective factors.
- **Trauma Informed:** The culture of the whole system, including all work practices and settings reflects a trauma informed approach.

#### 5.0 **Mid Devon as a potential Trauma Informed Council**

5.1 It is possible that a Council, such as Mid Devon, can adopt this same approach as the City of Plymouth, for the benefit of our residents and the communities we serve.

5.2 We could develop our own ‘trauma lens’ which may include the following:

<p><b>Collaborative</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ With people using our services</li> <li>○ With communities</li> <li>○ With colleagues</li> <li>○ With partners</li> <li>○ We learn effectively</li> </ul>	<p><b>Safe</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ We aim to reduce harm</li> <li>○ We create safe spaces</li> <li>○ We build confidence</li> <li>○ We build trusted relationships</li> <li>○ We understand trauma</li> </ul>
<p><b>Person Centred</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ My experience matters</li> <li>○ My strengths count</li> <li>○ My choices are important</li> <li>○ My outcomes are first</li> <li>○ My voice is heard</li> </ul>	<p><b>Kind</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ We stay out of judgement</li> <li>○ We have compassion</li> <li>○ We seek connection</li> <li>○ We are emotionally aware</li> <li>○ We look to address underlying causes</li> </ul>
<p><b>Empowerment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ We make a difference</li> <li>○ We embrace cultural change</li> <li>○ We are transparent</li> <li>○ We take responsibility</li> <li>○ We innovate</li> </ul>	

## 6.0 The benefits to Mid Devon and our community

6.1 The potential benefits of a trauma informed organisation are:

- the individual and communities that we serve will feel that they are being listened to
- positive relationships will be formed and the Council/individuals are trusted
- people feel safe and supported
- problems or issues can be addressed before they escalate
- trauma cycles within families are reduced
- neighbourhood disputes and anti-social behaviour are reduced
- reduced tenancy breaches
- barriers to support services are minimalised
- the workforce is trauma informed and aware of the role of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- we support a preventative approach
- the organisation culture changes and adapts to being trauma informed
- leadership is based upon kind relationships that are safe and collaborative
- acknowledgement that this is about ‘all of us’

6.2 Council areas most likely to benefit from Trauma Informed training and adopting a TI approach include:

- Senior and strategic management (Leadership and Corporate Management Teams)
- Mid Devon Housing
- Benefits
- Council Tax
- Public Health
- Customer First
- Member Policy Development Groups and Cabinet

## 7.0 Recommendations

7.1 The first recommendation is that members consider further the benefits of becoming a Trauma Informed Council and the potential adoption of a TI approach across the whole Council through a greater understanding of the benefits, challenges and implications. The second recommendation sets out the detail and outline scope of a further report in order to inform this, to be received for the August 2022 PDG meeting.

**Contact for more Information:** Simon Newcombe, Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing [snewcombe@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:snewcombe@middevon.gov.uk) or Julia Ryder, Specialist Lead - Community Safety & Emergency Planning [jryder@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:jryder@middevon.gov.uk)

**Circulation of the Report:**

Cabinet Member for Community Well Being (Cllr Dennis Knowles)  
Members of the Community Policy Development Group  
All Leadership Team  
All Corporate Management Team  
All Operations Managers

**List of Background Papers and web-links:**

Scottish Government tool-kit

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/trauma-informed-practice-toolkit-scotland/>

Plymouth City Council 2019 Cabinet paper

<https://democracy.plymouth.gov.uk/documents/s96851/2019%2006%2011%20-%20Trauma%20informed%20city%20cover%20sheet.pdf>

Plymouth Trauma Informed Network – Plymouth City Council Health & Wellbeing board paper 2021

[Trauma Informed Plymouth Update for HWB board 002.pdf](#)