

This is a peer-reviewed, author's accepted manuscript of the following conference abstract: Cogan, N., Tse, D., Stergiou, C., Finlayson, M., Lawley, S., Black, J., Hewitson, R., MacIntyre, G., & Aziz, S. (2023). *Implementing trauma informed practice in a stressed out system: exploring the narratives of staff working in justice settings*. Abstract from Trinity Health and Education International Research Conference 2023 (THEconf2023): 'Back to normal or forward to better? ', Dublin, United Kingdom.

Abstract

Aim and objective/s of the study: There is a high risk of re-traumatisation for survivors of trauma who engage with justice services, as they are likely to encounter situations that trigger traumatic responses. While a growing body of research has explored the experience of trauma informed practice (TIP) from service user perspectives, little research has incorporated the views and experiences of practitioners working in justice services in terms of the barriers and enablers to implementing TIP in their service setting.

Method: An exploratory, qualitative research design based on semi-structured, in-depth interviews. **Method:** One to one, online interviews were conducted with senior social work practitioners (n =22) who had undertaken TIP training. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and analysed using an inductive thematic approach. Ethical approval was sought and granted from the University Ethics Committee.

Findings: The themes identified as barriers were: (1) physical environment not conducive to TIP, (2) limited resources and infrastructure to support TIP and (3) resistance to change. Themes which related to enablers were: (4) recognition and validation of the importance of TIP through training (5) Focus on staff wellbeing and emotional support as priority, (6) flexible and creative ways of working with contextual restraints.

Conclusion and impact: The implications of these findings are discussed at the service user, provider and organisational level, emphasising the importance of implementing a strengths-based, non-pathologising approach to TIP service delivery within justice services that avoids re-traumatisation to service users and providers. Emphasis is placed on the importance of overcoming barriers to implementing TIP through adopting a whole systems approach to TIP staff training, support for staff wellbeing, access to reflective supervision and resources to establish a safe and therapeutic working environment.