

Project brief: Embedding trauma informed care and practice, November 2023

About Better Chances Forum

Better Chances Forum (BCF) is a collaboration supporting better chances for children, young people, their families and communities to lead safe, healthy and happy lives. We focus on early intervention and prevention to keep families together. We bring together people from organisations and groups across the Northern Rivers region of NSW to:

- connect, reflect and build our practice
- share information and build relationships
- act to work more supportively alongside children, young people, their families and communities
- create space for storytelling to explore what's working and not working in our service systems – to understand challenges, gaps and opportunities – and communicate these stories to decision-makers.

BCF has of over 400 members and is guided by the BCF Practice Leadership Group.

Focusing on trauma informed care and practice

In 2019 Better Chances Forum (BCF) began exploring opportunities to enhance and strengthen trauma responsive support. While there is strong commitment to trauma informed service delivery across the human services sector and there are opportunities for training, BCF members continue to share about challenges they face delivering genuinely trauma informed care.

When organisations implement trauma informed systems, they see lower staff turn-over, better outcomes for clients and a stronger bottom line.¹ This brief outlines BCF and related activities supporting trauma informed care and trauma responsive practice from 2019 to 2023, and proposed further activities for 2023–24.

Reflective practice workshops – strengthening trauma responsive support 2019 to 2021

In 2019 BCF held four reflective practice workshops and asked 90 managers and workers from 33 organisations what they need to be more responsive to trauma. Workshop findings, along with supporting evidence and resources, were included in an executive brief. The themes identified and explored in the brief include:

¹ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation 2015, *Healing Informed Organisations*, <https://healingfoundation.org.au/app/uploads/2017/02/Healing-Informed-Organisations-FINAL-SCREEN-INTERACTIVE.pdf> (accessed 2023).



We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land where we live and work and their continuing connection to land, water, sea and community. We pay respects to Australia's First Peoples, to their unique and diverse cultures, and to Elders past, present and future.

- give us time when working with people with experience of trauma
- focus on healing through positive relationships
- provide universal training and support practice
- cultural fitness and understanding
- sharing and acknowledging stories
- connected, coordinated and collaborative services
- support accountability
- value lived experience.

Find more information in the brief here: <https://socialfutures.org.au/strengthening-trauma-responsive-support/>. An additional workshop was held in 2021 to discuss the findings with executives and board members from early intervention and BCF member organisations, facilitated by Social Futures, We AI-li and FAMS (Family Services NSW).

In 2021 a further three reflective practice workshops were held continuing to support BCF members to build their practice and identify the support they need to be more responsive to trauma in their work. Themes discussed included:

- stopping and listening deeply. Holding space
- creating and maintaining safety
- knowing the supports available in the community
- using supervision and reflective practice in our teams
- acknowledging our own trauma, having space to reflect on this, so we can support others.

A total of 42 early intervention professionals participated in the 2021 reflective practice workshops.

Cultural trauma informed care training – 2021 to 2023

Social Futures commissioned ten cultural trauma informed care training workshops with Professor Derek Chong² in 2021, 2022 and 2023. Over 150 workers and managers from early intervention services participated, including many BCF members. These workshops were specifically funded by NSW Department of Communities and Justice for Targeted Earlier Intervention program providers and Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, groups and community-led projects. These workshops included focus on:

- trauma informed care principles; and recognising and responding to phases of trauma.
- trauma and the nervous system; impacts of invasion and colonisation – transgenerational trauma and healing; and practice recognising and responding to phases of trauma.
- the science behind Indigenous cultural resilience; epigenetics and transgenerational trauma; and practice mindfulness.
- confirming our learning – strategies for your own practice in trauma informed care.

Workshop results for 2023 show self-rated understanding of Trauma Informed Care improved by 75 per cent (from an average of 4.8/10 at the start of the session to 8.4/10 at the end).

² Derek is psychiatrist with maternal connections from the Wongaburra, Mullenjarli (Yuggerah Nation) people who lived in the Beaudesert/Gold Coast Hinterland regions, and the Walkamin, Kunjun are his Father's people who lived in the Tate and Kowanyama regions/Mareeba Mission.

Strengthening days for First Nations workers

BCF has been hosting Strengthening Days for First Nations family support and early childhood workers since 2019. These workshops provide an opportunity just for First Nations workers to come together for healing, support and connection, build their practice together and then report back to the wider sector. Sharing and understanding strategies for supporting people and families with experience of trauma has been an important part of the workshops.

Some examples of feedback from participants are provided below.

- Acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's knowledge, tools, internal strength and power. We are patient and listen deeply.
- We have been protecting jarjums and keeping them safe for over 60,000 years within kinship systems, using cultural frameworks.
- We are committed to strengthening a supportive, integrated service approach and nurturing the community of care and practice – working together with community and across services.
- We need to create safe spaces for the conversations needed to collectively heal, regular opportunities in work hours for First Nations workers to connect, and also to come together with the wider sector. Finding and connecting the healers within the community.
- Regular sustainable healing and yarning circles.

Read more information about the BCF Strengthening Days and longer feedback from participants here: <https://socialfutures.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/20210903-BCF-Strengthening-Days-Feedback-Brief.pdf>.

Strengthening Days have been supported by Social Futures, YWCA Communities for Children and NSW Department of Communities and Justice, and facilitated by We AI-li.

So where are we now?

BCF Practice Leadership Group has been discussing how we support trauma informed care and practice. In 2023-24, it is a time to go back, reflect and share if and how we have embedded trauma informed care and practice in our organisations and programs. Workshops are planned for early 2024. Questions and themes we may explore include:

- consolidate what we know about trauma informed care and practice (what we have learned)
- share stories and strategies about how you and your organisation are supporting trauma responsive practice
- learnings from responses to recent disasters (services and community)
- strengthening and embedding strategies within our organisations and ways of working
- further support we need
- how we know our practice (TIC) is supporting better chances for children, young people, their families and communities.

Resources and links (accessed 2023)

- a. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation 2015, *Healing Informed Organisations*, <https://healingfoundation.org.au/app/uploads/2017/02/Healing-Informed-Organisations-FINAL-SCREEN-INTERACTIVE.pdf>
- b. Blue Knot Foundation 2020, *Organisational Guidelines for Trauma informed Service Delivery (Updated 2020)* Authors: Kezelman C.A. Stavropoulos P.A <https://blueknot.org.au/product/organisational-guidelines-for-trauma-informed-service-delivery-digital-download/>
- c. Blue Knot Foundation, *Fact sheet for managers: Trauma informed service delivery*, https://blueknot.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Fact_Sheet_Managers.pdf
- d. Blue Knot Foundation, Fact Sheet: Having conversations about trauma – services, https://blueknot.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/26_BK_FS_TalkingAboutTrauma_GeneralPublic_JULY21.pdf
- e. Fox, S., Southwell, A., Stafford, N., Goodhue, R., Jackson, D. and Smith, C. (2015). Better Systems, Better Chances: A Review of Research and Practice for Prevention and Early Intervention. Canberra: Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY). https://www.aracy.org.au/publications-resources/command/download_file/id/274/filename/Better-systems-better-chances.pdf
- f. Kezelman C, Stavropoulos P. (2012) *Practice Guidelines for Treatment of Complex Trauma and Trauma Informed Care and Service Delivery Adults Surviving Child Abuse* 2012. <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/IND.0521.001.0001.pdf>
- g. Mental Health Coordinating Council 2018, *Trauma -Informed Care and Practice Organisational Toolkit (TICPOT): An Organisational Change Process Resource, Stage 1 – Planning and Audit*, Authors: Henderson, C (MHCC), Everett, M. Isobel S (Sydney LHD), <https://www.mhcc.org.au/resource/ticpot-stage-1-2-3>
- h. Social Futures 2013, *Lived Experience Project Report*, https://socialfutures.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/LivedExperienceProject_prototype.pdf
- i. Ward, T. 2016, *Recovery takes place within a "relational home"*, <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/2016/08/24/recovery-trauma-takes-place-within-relational-home>
- j. We Al-li 2019, *Culturally Informed Trauma Integrated Healing Approach framework* <https://www.wealli.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Generic-We-Al-li-info-sheet-one-CITIHA-1.pdf>
- k. Wellways 2019, *Wellways Peer Workforce Framework*, https://media.wellways.org/inline-files/ww535_PeerWorkforceFramework.pdf
- l. Trauma Informed Care & Practice Checklist, Community Housing Industry Association NSW <https://communityhousing.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Sec3Resource1-TraumaInformedCarePracticeChecklist.pdf>
- m. Trauma-Responsive Organization Checklist, FPWA https://www.fpwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Trauma-Responsive-Organization-Checklist_FINAL.pdf
- n. Measure and communicate your social impact <https://for-purpose.org/>
- o. Integrating voice in program design and evaluation <https://professionals.childhood.org.au/prosody/2023/01/making-feedback-meaningful/>
- p. Recording of session at FAMS conference 2023 – Evaluation and outcomes <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=koD8grNEjLk>
- q. Cultural Safety in Trauma-Informed Practice from a First Nations Perspective: Billabongs of Knowledge. Springer International Publishing AG. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-13138-7>

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<https://socialfutures.org.au/sectorsupport/better-chances-forum/>

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