



Mayor and Cabinet

Response to the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on adopting a trauma-informed approach to delivery services.

Date: 23 August 2024

Key decision: No

Class: Part 1

Ward(s) affected: All

Contributors: Director of People and Organisation Development; Head of Organisation Development

Outline and recommendations

This report provides Mayor and Cabinet with a response to the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on adopting a trauma-informed approach to delivery of services, which were referred to Mayor and Cabinet on 18 March 2024.

It is recommended that Mayor and Cabinet note the recommendations of the committee and approve the response and additional plans outlined below.

1. Summary

- 1.1. On 18 March 2024 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a report from officers titled, Taking a trauma informed approach to delivering services. Keith Cohen, Head of Youth Justice Service presented to the Committee an overview of the work being done across his service area which particularly focused on the impact of trauma for ethnic groups within the Youth Justice system. People and Organisation Development also attended the committee as guests and provided some contribution to training and development activities currently offered by the Council in this subject area. Following questions to officers, the Committee agreed to refer its recommendations that the Council considers adopting a Trauma Informed Approach across the organisation to Mayor and Cabinet.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. That Mayor and Cabinet note the officer response to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's referral, as set out below.
- 2.2. Note that Mayor and Cabinet's decision, and the officer comments set out below, will be reported back to the Committee.

3. Policy Context

- 3.1. This report aligns with Lewisham's Corporate Priorities, as set out in the Council's [Corporate Strategy \(2022-2026\)](#):
- 3.2. This report is aligned to the following priorities: Health and Wellbeing, Quality Housing, Children and Young People, Safer Communities and Open Lewisham. This is because the principles of trauma-informed practice cover a broad spectrum of resident and staff experiences requiring a holistic approach. This includes:
 - Creating a safe, supportive environment for all residents, recognising the potential impact of trauma on service interactions.
 - Providing staff with the tools and training needed to manage trauma-sensitive interactions effectively.
 - Cultivating an organisational culture that understands trauma's impact on both employees and service users.
 - Collaborating with external partners and contractors to ensure a unified approach to trauma-informed service delivery.

4. Overview and Scrutiny Committee's recommendations to be considered by Mayor & Cabinet

- 4.1. Strategy - That the Council should establish a high-level, corporate level, trauma-informed approach to delivering its services, linked to the developing People and Organisational Development Strategy and translated locally into operational policies and procedures, which builds on existing practice. This should give specific consideration to:
 - Experience of residents
 - Experience of resident facing staff
 - Overall workforce
 - Partners and contractors
- 4.2. Training – That (a) appropriate training be rolled out to all staff and its effectiveness evaluated after 6 months and (b) the council's partners (via the Local Strategic Partnership) and contractors be encouraged to offer trauma informed training to their staff.
- 4.3. Language and behaviours – That frontline services review the language they use in interactions with residents so that it is relatable, humane, inclusive, clear and transparent, and avoids unintentional re-traumatisation and takes a person-centred approach, including listening to service users.
- 4.4. Support - That the wellbeing of staff and elected members who regularly interact with distressed and traumatised residents is prioritised and supported, with the support that is available communicated clearly.

5. Officer response to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 5.1. In an era of rapid change and ever-evolving societal needs, our role in local government has never been more vital. From ensuring the delivery of essential services to fostering community cohesion and driving economic growth, our responsibilities are multifaceted and demanding. As is set out in the Corporate Strategy, despite the financial challenges currently faced by all councils, it is important that we remain ambitious for Lewisham and compassionate for the people we serve. We must retain our focus on delivering high quality services that make life better for people.
- 5.2. This report outlines a high-level strategy for the Council to establish a trauma-informed approach to service delivery. By integrating trauma-informed practices, Lewisham aims to enhance the experiences of residents, support the well-being of resident-facing staff, improve the overall workforce environment, and strengthen relationships with partners and contractors.

5.3. Definitions and context

5.3.1. Trauma-informed approaches are principally found in the health and social care sector and have become increasingly cited in policy and adopted in practice as a means for reducing the negative impact of trauma experiences and supporting mental and physical health outcomes. However, there has been a lack of consensus within these sectors on how trauma-informed practice is defined, what its key principles are and how it can be built into services and systems.

5.3.2. For this reason, the Office for Health Improvement & Disparities has provided a working definition of trauma-informed practice for practitioners working in the health and care sector (*shown below*).

Trauma

5.3.3. *Trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as harmful or life threatening. While unique to the individual, generally the experience of trauma can cause lasting adverse effects, limiting the ability to function and achieve mental, physical, social, emotional or spiritual well-being.*

Working definition of trauma-informed practice

5.3.4. *Realise that trauma can affect individuals, groups and communities.*

- *Trauma-informed practice is an approach to health and care interventions which is grounded in the understanding that trauma exposure can impact an individual's neurological, biological, psychological and social development.*

5.3.5. **Recognise the signs, symptoms and widespread impact of trauma**

- *Trauma-informed practice aims to increase practitioners' awareness of how trauma can negatively impact on individuals and communities, and their ability to feel safe or develop trusting relationships with health and care services and their staff.*
- *It aims to improve the accessibility and quality of services by creating culturally sensitive, safe services that people trust and want to use. It seeks to prepare practitioners to work in collaboration and partnership with people and empower them to make choices about their health and wellbeing.*
- *Trauma-informed practice acknowledges the need to see beyond an individual's presenting behaviours and to ask, 'What does this person need?' rather than 'What is wrong with this person?'*

5.3.6. **Prevent re-traumatisation**

- *It seeks to avoid re-traumatisation which is the re-experiencing of thoughts, feelings or sensations experienced at the time of a traumatic event or circumstance in a person's past. Re-traumatisation is generally triggered by reminders of previous trauma which may or may not be potentially traumatic in themselves.*
- *The purpose of trauma-informed practice is not to treat trauma-related difficulties, which is the role of trauma-specialist services and practitioners. Instead, it seeks to address the barriers that people affected by trauma can experience when accessing health and care services.*

5.4. Key principles of trauma-informed practice

5.4.1. *There are six principles of trauma-informed practice: safety, trust, choice, collaboration, empowerment and cultural consideration:*

- **Safety** - *The physical, psychological and emotional safety of service*

users and staff is prioritised.

- **Trustworthiness** - *Transparency exists in an organisation's policies and procedures, with the objective of building trust among staff, service users and the wider community.*
- **Choice** - *Service users are supported in shared decision-making, choice and goal setting to determine the plan of action they need to heal and move forward.*
- **Collaboration** - *The value of staff and service user experience is recognised in overcoming challenges and improving the system as a whole.*
- **Empowerment** - *Efforts are made to share power and give service users and staff a strong voice in decision-making, at both individual and organisational level.*
- **Cultural consideration** - *Move past cultural stereotypes and biases based on, for example, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, disability, geography, race or ethnicity.*

5.5. Current trauma-informed approaches at Lewisham Council

5.5.1. Trauma can be caused by a wide range of experiences, from physical accidents to emotional abuse, and some examples of traumatic events include War/Conflict, Neglect, Domestic Abuse, Violence/Assault, and Race-Based trauma to name just a few. The above principles are being applied holistically across a range of interventions and practices.

5.5.2. There are examples of trauma informed practice in a number of services:

- Officers in the Housing Needs & Refugee Service (part of the Housing Directorate) received trauma informed training in 2021 and, following staffing changes, more training will be delivered. This will enable officers to become more trauma informed in their service delivery.
- The Children's Social Care Division have the Signs of Safety practice framework, which is modelled on trauma and restorative approaches. The Meliot Family Support Service, who work intensively with the most vulnerable children on the edge of coming into care, are trained in trauma informed practice and deliver group and individual work with families using this approach. As part of the staff development offer in 2024, the CYP Workforce Team are introducing more specific trauma informed training.
- The Adult Social Care Division have several processes that encompass the trauma-informed approach, for example providing a compassionate and dedicated interventions by their Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHP) alongside multi-agency colleagues to access specialist support.
- Understanding and being consciously aware of individuals personal experiences (trauma) and potential impact it may have on their day-to-day interactions is an integral part of the Council's Borough of Sanctuary Programme and it will form part of the Borough of Sanctuary online learning module that is available to all staff.
- The Inclusion Strategy 2022-25 seeks to ensure a fair and consistent approach to behaviour management in schools, with policies supporting the work of the Lewisham Tackling Race Inequality Strategy; taking trauma into account; and seeking to reduce the number of suspensions and permanent exclusions. All Lewisham schools have been asked to review their support for children at risk of exclusion and ensure that practice is inclusive. A recent audit of Lewisham school

behaviour policies found that a positive and nurturing ethos really came through in many instances and that some behaviour policies included 'restorative' approaches, and this good practice will be shared. (However, there is more work to be done on ensuring that schools work more collaboratively with children/parents/carers; and consider potential links between behaviour and safeguarding issues).

- The Safe Surgeries Network is an initiative aimed at reducing the barriers faced by migrant populations in accessing healthcare. Safe Surgeries training has been delivered in Lewisham and this included information on the trauma and re-traumatisation of people with a history of forced displacement approaching services. Lewisham GP surgeries display Safe Surgeries posters telling people that everyone can register and that they don't have to have proof of address or ID to register.
- The Council's Youth Justice Service has been developing a trauma informed approach since 2016 and has been recognised for good practice in this field. The Youth Justice Service bases its approach on the 'TIAARA' model (Trauma-informed, Anti-Racist and Restorative approaches) to achieve better outcomes for children and families and staff wellbeing.

5.5.3. Lewisham is an active participant in the Tackling Racial Inequality Group (TRIG) which is coordinated by London Councils. Connected to this, TRIG initiated a project to explore the importance of language in relation to race equality, including the use of the acronym 'BAME'. Mirroring the methodology of co-production used to create the Values and Behaviour framework, a series of 'Discovery' sessions were conducted in January and February 2024 to explore preferences at a local level. The sessions were designed and facilitated to create a safe space for staff to share and hear from others about their personal experiences and views relating to race and ethnicity terminology.

5.5.4. The draft People and OD strategy is being developed, which will communicate our vision for our people and identify the areas we need to focus on to deliver our corporate strategy to the best of our ability through effective leadership, engagement and optimisation of our people. The strategy sets out six priority areas:

- Attracting and retaining talented people
- Developing leaders for now and the future
- Developing skills for now and the future
- Performance and accountability
- Readiness for change
- Promoting a positive working environment

5.5.5. The strategy, coupled with the [Council's Values and Behaviours Framework](#), underpin everything the Council does - setting a benchmark and aiming to standardise behaviour across the organisation.

5.5.6. Our staff are one of the primary interfaces between the Council and those we serve. Residents access council services through a number of 'doors' and can experience a variety of different services on their path to resolving an issue. It is important that all staff are equipped to respond to and identify the varying needs of residents whilst adhering to our values by being inclusive and cognisant of residents' perspective and potential trauma.

5.5.7. Equipping staff with effective skills to service our diverse resident needs across the spectrum services remains a priority for the organisation. The following training/development is in place:

- Armed Forces Covenant Awareness – this training is available for all frontline staff and includes a section on understanding the impact of trauma and how it can manifest in different ways.
- [Thrive LDN](#) has partnered with Nicola Lester Psychological Trauma Consultancy to offer free, [pre-recorded trauma-informed practice training](#) to support individuals and organisations. Comprising of three levels, Bronze, Silver and Gold, this training is now available to staff, via the Learning Academy. The effectiveness will be evaluated in line with best practice.
- Elements of a trauma-informed approach are also covered across a range of training, interventions and processes including:
 - Supervision for certain roles such as Social Care, Occupational Therapy and Educational Psychology
 - One-to-One and Appraisal process (supported by training for managers)
 - Training modules such as: Customer Service, Developing Resilience, Unconscious Bias, Managing Stress, Progressive Relaxation and Emotional Intelligence in a VUCA World
- Dealing with vicarious trauma requires a thoughtful and proactive approach to self-care. A suite of well-being initiatives is also available to support our staff including:
 - Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) – featuring a wellbeing app
 - Staff wellbeing hub

5.6. Planned additional trauma-informed initiatives at Lewisham Council

- 5.6.1. The Council is in the process of setting up mandatory training for staff. This will be divided into two groups a) core mandatory for all staff b) role/group-specific mandatory training.
- 5.6.2. Customer service training awareness will be a module within the core mandatory requirements for all staff, with elements related to trauma informed practice embodied within this training.
- 5.6.3. For role-specific mandatory training, People and OD will work with services to conduct a training needs analysis to define and agree the target audiences for additional role-specific training that will include trauma-informed methodology. Trauma informed learning will be grouped into categories: Staff providing frontline services to residents, and managers supporting their people who may have experienced trauma.
- 5.6.4. Regarding the Thrive LDN programme, for the Council to roll this out with more intention, we will assess which groups and services would most benefit from it. To do this, our first aim is to trail the current Thrive LDN training to members of our SLT. The purpose is to obtain their feedback, and how this approach could be applied within their respective areas. Also, whether the training would need to be adapted for specific staff groups. For some key services the trauma informed approach is already embedded within existing learning e.g., Signs of Safety in Children's Social Care, so may not require anything additional to be offered. The precise training need will be determined following an SLT trial of the Thrive LDN training.
- 5.6.5. Part of the role-specific mandatory training will be the Managers Essentials programme. This will include a module on Inclusive Leadership and another on Managing Wellness.
- 5.6.6. There is a planned initiative to engage the Lewisham Strategic Partnership; introducing the principles of trauma-informed practice and encouraging partners and contractors to adopt trauma informed training and development to their staff where they feel it is relevant to the services they provide.

6. Financial implications

6.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

7. Legal implications

7.1. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

8. Equalities implications

8.1. Due regard to equalities must be considered when adopting new policies. Taking a trauma-informed approach to service delivery involves (a) taking into account the effects that trauma can have on individuals and communities; (b) recognising the signs and symptoms of trauma; and (c) aiming to prevent re-traumatisation.

9. Climate change and environmental implications

9.1. There are no direct climate change and environmental implications arising from this report.

10. Crime and disorder implications

10.1. There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

11. Health and wellbeing implications

11.1. While unique to the individual, generally the experience of trauma can cause lasting adverse effects, and impact mental, physical, social, emotional or spiritual well-being. Taking a trauma informed approach to service delivery should have a positive effect on staff and residents' health and wellbeing as it involves (a) taking into account the effects that trauma can have on individuals and communities; (b) recognising the signs and symptoms of trauma; and (c) aiming to prevent re-traumatisation.

12. Background papers

12.1. [Overview and Scrutiny Committee- Meeting Papers](#), 18 March 2024

13. Report author and contact

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