



# Trauma-Informed Practice Policy

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## Approval

Policy owner	Executive Director, Vinnies Services		
Approved by	Executive Leadership team		
Date approved	10.11.2021	Review date	10.11.2024

## Purpose

1. The Society recognises Trauma-Informed Practice as an important element of applying a Person-Centred Approach in our work with the people we assist. The Society approaches its work with empathy, compassion, and respect, recognising that people accessing our services and programs are likely to have experienced trauma and loss.
2. This policy guides Vinnies Service employees and volunteers regarding:
  - how to implement Trauma-Informed Practices in the delivery of services and programs to ensure consistent and quality service provision
  - the responsibility of employees and volunteers to foster a Trauma-Informed Approach in their interactions with people and delivery of the Society's work.

## Scope

3. This policy applies to Vinnies Services employees and volunteers.

## Related policies and procedures

4. Related Policies and procedures include:
  - Behaviour Support Policy
  - Person We Assist Charter of Rights and Responsibilities
  - Society Code of Conduct
  - Dignity of Risk and Duty of Care Policy
  - Diversity and Inclusion Policy
  - Enteral Feeding Policy
  - Medication Policy
  - Person-Centred Service Delivery Policy
  - Privacy Policy
  - Personal Information Request Policy
  - Risk Management Framework
  - Reconciliation Plan and Cultural Protocols
  - Restrictive Practices Policy
  - Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy
  - Tracheostomy Management Policy.

## Policy principles

### Trauma-Informed Practice principles:

5. Trauma-Informed Practice recognise the prevalence of trauma and understands the impact of trauma on the emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing of individuals and communities.
6. The Society applies a Trauma-Informed approach by:
  - approaching its work with empathy and compassion
  - applying empathy, compassion, and our Vincentian values in our work with the people we assist
  - recognising that people accessing our services and programs are likely to have experienced trauma and loss
  - acknowledging that trauma may be transgenerational, particularly for people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities and that each person's experience and recovery from trauma will be different
  - respecting each person we assists' decision about whether they disclose their personal history, past or current experiences of trauma
  - applying our Vincentian values in our work with the people we assist.
7. The Society makes every effort to create safe physical, psychological, cultural, and emotional environments in our services and program. Services and programs provide tailored support to the individual and recognise that trauma will be experienced differently due to a person's culture, gender, age, socioeconomic status, religion, and other identities.
8. The Society:
  - applies a holistic approach to our work with the people we assist considering the physical, emotional, psychological, social, and spiritual wellbeing of the person
  - recognises that experiencing trauma has a significant impact on mental, physical, and emotional health and that people who have experienced trauma may require additional support
  - works with the person and their identified support network or community and offers appropriate support, including pastoral or spiritual care as appropriate or access to specialist or trauma-informed services or programs.
9. The Society understands that people who have experienced trauma may display behaviours of concern which may be coping strategies. Employees and volunteers are provided with information and support to understand trauma and strategies to minimise triggers and respond appropriately while supporting the people we assist, as appropriate to their role.
10. The Society will minimise the need for the people we assist to repeat information they have shared and reduce the risk of potential re-traumatisation.
11. The Society respects all people's inherent dignity and human rights to self-determination and informed choice to make decisions about their lives and take control of their destiny.
12. The Society encourages employees and volunteers to establish appropriate and transparent communication with the people we assist and demonstrate their reliability and trustworthiness.
13. The Society recognises that employees and volunteers working directly with the people we assist may be exposed to or vulnerable to stress, compassion fatigue, burnout, or vicarious trauma. The Society takes measures to minimise the risk and supports employees and volunteers who have experienced vicarious trauma.

14. The Society will provide employees and volunteers with training, information, supervision, and support to implement the Policy, as relevant to their role.

## Roles and responsibilities

15. The Executive Director, Vinnies Services, is responsible for:
- overseeing communication and implementation of this policy
  - fostering and modelling a Trauma-Informed culture in our interactions with people and the delivery of the Society's work
  - ensuring risk management and mitigation strategies to reduce the risk of vicarious trauma to employees and volunteers in their work.
16. Directors, Managers, and Team Leaders are responsible for:
- providing guidance and direction to employees and volunteers regarding the implementation of a Trauma-Informed Practice in their work
  - embedding Trauma-Informed Practices in their services and programs, including creating flexible, inclusive and safe environments
  - fostering and modelling a Trauma-Informed culture in our interactions with people and the delivery of the Society's work
  - maintaining collaborative relationship and referral points to relevant trauma-specific services, mental health, and other related services
  - complete an annual review of the services in their area of responsibility
  - ensuring risk management and mitigation strategies to reduce the risk of vicarious trauma to employees and volunteers in their work
  - ensuring Vinnies Services employees and volunteers have relevant training, supervision, information, and support to implement this Policy.
17. Employees and volunteers are responsible for:
- familiarising themselves with this policy and relevant procedures and seeking support from Managers, Team Leaders, or colleagues to understand how to implement the Policy
  - fostering and modelling a Trauma-Informed culture in our interactions with people and the delivery of the Society's work
  - maintaining collaborative relationships with relevant trauma-specific services, mental health, and other related services to ensure access and referral points are available as required.

## Review

18. The Trauma-Informed Practice Policy is scheduled for review every three years from the date of approval or, more frequently, as needed to align with industry standards or practice changes.

## Further assistance

19. Feedback on the policy can be provided to the Executive Director, Vinnies Services.

## References

20. Relevant legislation, regulations, or other instruments:
- Mental Health Coordinating Council- Trauma-Informed Care and Practice Organisational Toolkit
  - Blue Knot Foundation- Organisational Guidelines for Trauma-Informed Service Delivery 2020

- NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators 2020

## Approval and amendment history

Version	Approval authority	Date	Amendment summary
Doc 1		15/04/2016	
Doc 2	Executive Leadership Team	10/11/2021	Update of the Trauma-Informed Care Policy and change of name.

## Appendix 1: Definitions

21. Relevant definitions include:

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Cultural safety</b>	Cultural safety is achieved when an environment is inclusive and safe for everyone: where there is no challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are, what they need, and how they need it. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge, and experience of learning, living, and working together with dignity and truly listening. Services that are culturally safe recognise the person we assist's identities and life experiences and incorporate their world views, beliefs, and values into their Person-Centred Service Delivery.
<b>Division</b>	Division refers to an individual area within Vinnies Services; Homelessness and Housing Services, Disability and Inclusion or Health Services.
<b>Evidence-based Practice</b>	Evidence-based Practice is an approach that integrates the best available research with professional expertise and person-centred practice.
<b>Holistic Approach</b>	A holistic approach means providing support that looks at the whole person, not just their mental health needs. The support should also consider their physical, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing.
<b>Trauma</b>	Individual trauma results from an event, series of events or circumstances that are experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening and that has lasting effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, and spiritual wellbeing.
<b>Trauma-Informed Practice</b>	A framework for human service delivery recognises the prevalence of trauma in populations accessing community services. It acknowledges that respect, choice and a sense of safety can contribute to trauma recovery. Trauma-informed practise also recognises the risk of vicarious trauma for staff and incorporates an understanding that staff wellbeing is key to providing quality care.
<b>Strengths-based Approach</b>	A Strengths-based Approach works with people we assist in identifying and utilising their strengths and skills to achieve their goals.
<b>SCIS</b>	SCIS is the Society's Client Information System.
<b>Vicarious Trauma</b>	Trauma experienced by staff in human service delivery because of exposure to others' experiences of trauma.

## Appendix 2: Trauma-Informed Practice Procedures

1. The procedures provide an overview of Vinnies Services Approach to implementing Trauma-Informed Practices across its services and programs.
2. Employees and volunteers must apply Trauma-Informed Practices in their interactions with people and deliver the Society's work. Employees and volunteers must:
  - recognise that people accessing our services and programs are likely to have experienced trauma or loss or may currently be experiencing trauma by the fact that they are seeking assistance from the Society
  - seek to understand each person we assist in the context of their life experiences
  - recognise that trauma may be intergenerational, recent, or historical and may be experienced differently due to a person's culture, gender, age, socioeconomic status, religion, and other identities
  - acknowledge that people we assist who have experienced trauma may be hesitant to seek assistance, provide information or may have a sense of reliance on services
  - seek to understand what a person is telling us
  - ensure communication with the people we assist is culturally appropriate, respectful, and adapted to the person
  - not allow their values, cultures, gender identities, sexualities, values, or beliefs to negatively impact the quality of support provided
  - where possible, ensure meetings or events are held at a time and location convenient and comfortable to the person considering any triggers, privacy and safety, or accessibility concerns. Refer to the Person-Centred Service Delivery Policy for more information
  - provide an appropriate response to trauma-related behaviour while maintaining the Society's duty of care to the person, people we assist and employees and volunteers
  - acknowledge a person's strengths and support them in ways that build skills, their sense of dignity and empowerment
  - encourage the people we assist to make autonomous decisions that affect their lives. Refer to the Dignity of Risk and Duty of Care Policy for more information
  - ensure communication and coordination with the person's identified support network or community, if the person provides consent
  - ensure relevant information is recorded and updated on the person's file on Microsoft teams, the Society's Client Information System (SCIS), Lee Care or Best Practice. This will reduce the need for the person we assist to repeat information each time they access a Society service or program or assess their needs.
3. During their engagement with Vinnies Services, the people we assist may disclose that they have experienced past trauma or current situations that may cause physical or psychological harm. In response to a disclosure, employees and volunteers must:
  - be supportive, empathise with the person's story and experiences and acknowledge the person's feelings
  - be open and honest about the boundaries of your role
  - maintain confidentiality
  - avoid being abrupt, dismissive, or discussing the people we assist within hearing of other people
  - engage in the discussion within the scope of their role, and if appropriate, refer the person to a counselling service or the Society's pastoral care team for assistance
  - complete a risk assessment or safety plan for the person we assist, as per the division's procedures
  - report any current incidents or situations of physical or psychological harm according to the Society's Incident Management Policy and Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy (in development).

4. The people we assist will be supported to make informed choices and have control of decisions to reestablish their sense of self-determination and rebuild their lives. Employees and volunteers working in our services or directly with the people we assist must:
  - provide people we assist with options during their engagement with the Society including information about the services available to them, time to consider their options and support in this decision
  - take a Strengths-based Approach
  - maintain professional boundaries
  - work with the person we assist in understanding their needs, preferences and the support required and assist them to develop an individual support plan or case plan
  - communicate with transparency and respect with the person we assist about possible barriers and risks identified that might impact their support plan or case plan.
5. Vinnies Services employees and volunteers must maintain relationships with relevant trauma-specific services, mental health, and other related services to ensure access and referral points are available as required.
6. Employees and volunteers must respond to, manage, and report incidents and near-miss events related to behaviours of concern according to the Society's Incident Management Policy.
7. If a person we assist regularly displays behaviours of concern, where appropriate, a Wellbeing Response Plan, Behaviour Support Plan or Safety Assessment, must be developed with the person we assist, as aligned with the division's requirements. The plan supports the person we assist in identifying their triggers, the type of behaviour they may display and helpful strategies that can support them. Refer to the [Person-Centred Service Delivery Policy](#) and [Behaviour Support Policy](#) for more information.
8. To support the creation of safe, inclusive, accessible, and discrimination-free services and programs, Managers and Team Leaders must complete annual reviews of the services in their area of responsibility which includes Trauma-Informed elements such as:
  - providing inclusive, accessible and safe spaces, including where appropriate gender-specific space or where community-based support is provided
  - providing spaces for reading or relaxing and having personal discussions
  - informing the people we assist of any operational routines, expected occurrence or times a service or program is available or not available and relevant information, where possible
  - addressing any issues which may cause stress or make the person we assist feel uncomfortable or unsafe
  - providing storage arrangements for the people we assist to store their personal belongings and money safely.
9. Managers and Team Leaders must reduce and aim to eliminate the use of restrictive practices within their services and programs when responding to behaviours of concern related to trauma. Where a restrictive practice is required, employees must ensure a Behaviour Support Plan and Restrictive Practice Plan is developed and approved. Refer to the [Behaviour Support Policy](#), Restrictive Practice Policy and Medication Policy for more information.
10. Managers and Team Leaders are encouraged to conduct reflective practice on the implementation of Trauma-Informed Practices. These sessions may be facilitated by a suitably experienced employee or an external Supervisor, which must be approved by the relevant Vinnies Services Director. The discussion is an opportunity to reflect on the person's experience and identify areas to strengthen the implementation of Trauma-Informed Practice in their service or program.



## Professional Boundaries

11. Employees and volunteers are encouraged to build positive and supportive relationships with the people we assist while maintaining professional boundaries.
12. To apply a Trauma-Informed Practice to the Society's work, it is important to establish healthy professional boundaries and interpersonal relationships with the people we assist. Employees and volunteers must:
  - adhere to the Society's Code of Code and Child Safe behaviours, which outline acceptable and unacceptable behaviour
  - consider the impact their behaviour may have on the person we assist and check with the person we assist, a colleague, Manager or Team Leader for further guidance as appropriate
  - use language which is respectful and appropriate
  - maintain appropriate physical boundaries and respect the person we assist's personal space
  - not undertake actions that the person has the capacity to complete themselves, at that point in time. The people we assist should have ownership over their plan, where possible, and be encouraged to implement actions in a supportive environment to encourage learning, skill development and resilience.
13. Any behaviour that breaches the Society's Code of Conduct or Child Safe Behaviours will be treated seriously and may result in immediate suspension or permanent removal from the Society. Unlawful behaviour will be reported to the relevant authorities. Refer to the Counselling and Disciplinary Policy and Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy for more information.

## Vicarious Trauma

14. The Society will minimise the risk of vicarious trauma to employees and volunteers. Manager and Team Leaders must ensure employees and volunteers are:
  - provided with access to information regarding the signs of vicarious trauma and how to seek support
  - provided with training and supervision appropriate for their role
  - provided with access and resources for relevant support, including opportunities for reflective practice, team interaction, peer support or mix in 'case load'
  - encouraged to implement self-care strategies and have a work/life balance
  - aware of and have access to pastoral support or Employees Assistance Program 1800 818 728 or [info@accesseap.com.au](mailto:info@accesseap.com.au) for support
  - encouraged to raise any concerns regarding risks to health and safety in the workplace with their Manager, Team Leader or the Safety and Wellbeing Partner.
15. Managers and Team Leader must offer employees and volunteers a debrief opportunity following an incident.
16. Employees and volunteers are encouraged to attend debrief opportunities.
17. Employees and volunteers are encouraged to speak with their Manager or Team Leader if they are concerned that they or a colleague may be experiencing stress, burnout, compassion fatigue or vicarious trauma.
18. Managers and Team Leaders must support employees and volunteers to access support and address any concerns regarding health and safety risks in the workplace. For support or guidance, contact a senior Manager, relevant Vinnies Services Director, Safety and Emergency Management Team or Employment Relations Team.
19. Employees working directly with the people we assist may be provided with external supervision, as approved by their Manager, refer to the External Supervision Protocol for guidelines for further information (in development).