Organisational Toolkit Information Booklet

SBNI Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland

TIP | ACEs — Be the Change

Evaluation & Sustainability

Contents

Version 1.0

Introduction

Developing a trauma-informed organisation is best thought about as a step by step approach, a process and a journey.

This information booklet is intended to be used in conjunction with the **SBNI Trauma Informed Toolkit – Embedding a Trauma informed Approach within Organisations and Systems.** It is one of a series of ten booklets exploring the toolkit focus areas.

The ten focus areas and associated checklist were adapted from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) original ten implementation domains. These implementation domains were based on **organisational change management** literature embedded with models of trauma informed practice.

Alongside the key trauma informed principles, this framework provides a pathway (with multiple potential starting points) to embed a trauma-informed approach (TIA) across your organisation. While we recognise extended periods for implementation are required, we also emphasise the importance of small steps on the journey.

This resource focuses on the importance of **evaluation and sustainability** as an integral aspect to embedding a trauma informed approach across our organisations and systems.
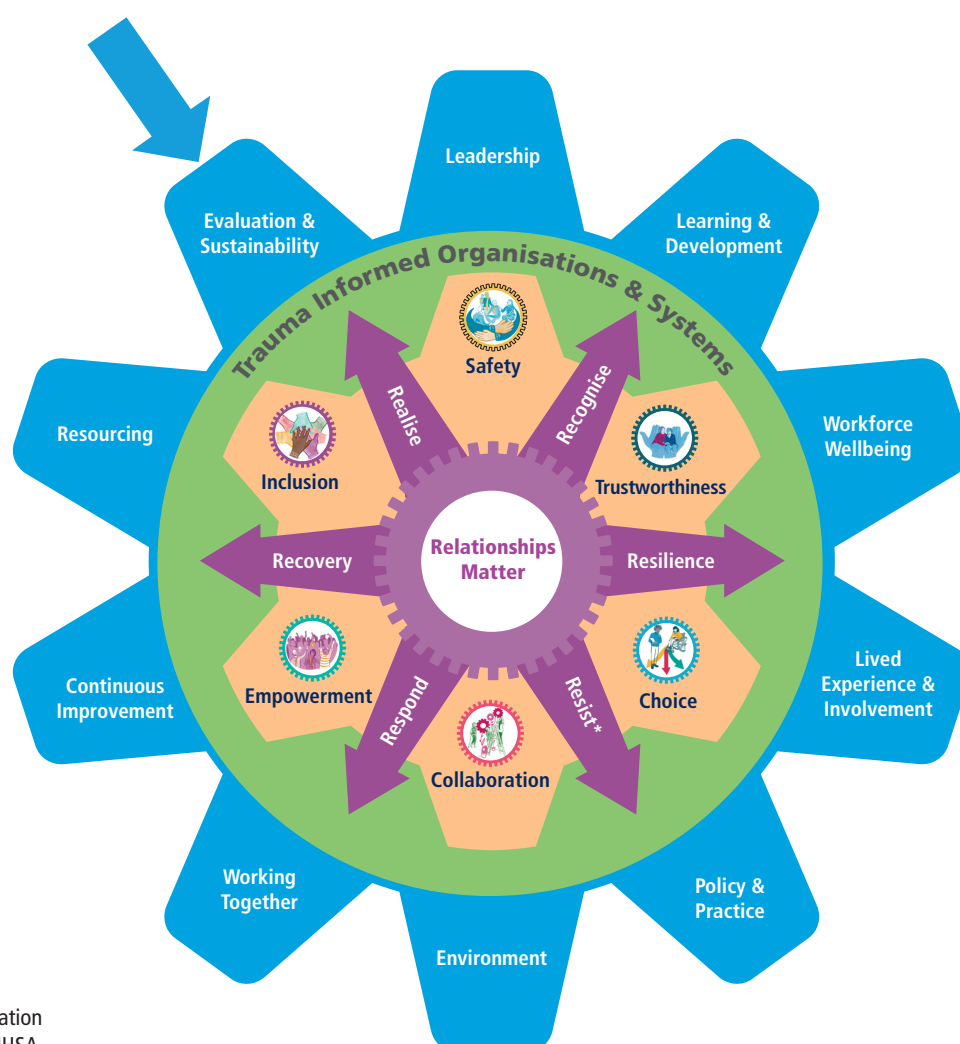
* Resist re-traumatisation
  Adapted from SAMHSA

Key Considerations:

Evaluation is essential for the successful implementation and sustainability of a Trauma Informed Approach. SAMHSA 2023 states, *"for the sustainable implementation, learning and replication of positive Trauma Informed Approach (TIA) outcomes, it is essential for organisations to evaluate their TIA initiatives."*

Evaluation can provide insights into:
- how trauma-informed is the organisation?
- does being trauma-informed improve service quality?
- do improved services help clients meet their goals?
- is the wider community engaged in TIA efforts?

Evaluation occuring at multiple stages is most helpful:

Before Implementation
- conduct a baseline evaluation to assess readiness and set priorities

During Implementation
- use ongoing evaluation to assess impact and service quality
- gather feedback from staff, leadership, and service users

Periodically
- evaluate sustainability and identify areas for refinement

Planning an Evaluation
- define the purpose
- decide how and from whom data will be collected
- identify target outcomes and reporting methods

Best Practice
- use both quantitative and qualitative data
- include observational evaluations

Create a **"Feedback Rich Environment"** to:
- build confidence and competence
- clarify progress and areas for improvement
- foster engagement and a sense of value

Evaluation is like "taking a pulse" — a snapshot in time to guide strategic decisions.

This guides our focus on
"What do we start doing, stop doing, and do more of?

Why Evaluation Matters

Evaluation is key to successful implementation of a Trauma Informed Approach to ensure progress made is sustained, even when there are changes in leadership and staff.

Evaluation allows you to:

Celebrate success

Check you are delivering the right activities in the right way

Share learning with others

Find out what to keep doing or stop doing in the future

Why Evaluation Matters

Evaluation is not just about accountability—it's about learning, improving, and making a bigger impact. Evaluation...

- **measures impact -** it helps you understand the real difference your services make in people's lives
- **guides improvement -** it shows what's working and what could be better, helping you refine your approach
- **motivates staff -** knowing your work has a meaningful impact is a powerful motivator
- **supports funding -** funders often want to see evidence of impact, and evaluation provides that.

Good evaluation is:

Simple: It doesn't have to be overly complex or time-consuming.

Proportionate: It should match the size and scope of the work—no need for overkill.

Useful: The insights should be actionable and relevant to the goals.

Evaluation supports effective decision making by identifying which activities are delivering real value and should be continued or scaled up. Equally it helps spot activities that aren't achieving their intended outcomes or are using resources inefficiently. Evaluation therefore supports resource allocation allowing effective targeting of time, money, and people.

It also builds a learning culture by modelling a commitment to learning and improving. It encourages innovation by providing an evidence base to phase out less effective practices therefore creating a space to try new approaches.

Organisational Readiness

It is important to emphasise that before an organisation considers implementing a Trauma Informed Approach, evaluating organisational readiness can provide a helpful platform to support the sequencing of any actions.

Organisational readiness for change refers to **how prepared**, willing and 'bought in' the organisation is, to further embed and implement trauma informed change. Determining whether the **timing is right** for a trauma-informed initiative requires thoughtful consideration of multiple factors. In essence whether the organisation is **ready and able** to take on the change is a critical factor in whether change efforts succeed or fail. Equally capturing the existing pockets of trauma informed practice and providing structures to coordinate and connect these (particularly within larger organisations) can amplify and act as an additional catalyst for implementation.

Key Dimensions of Organisational Readiness for Change

1. Leadership Commitment

- Are leaders visibly supportive of the change?
- Do they communicate a clear vision and rationale?

2. Staff Engagement

- Do staff understand the need for change?
- Are they motivated and involved in shaping the process?

3. Culture and Values

- Does the organisation have a culture that embraces learning and innovation?
- Are people open to new ways of working?

4. Resources and Capacity

- Are there enough people, time, and money to support the change?
- Are systems and infrastructure ready?

5. Clarity and Communication

- Is the purpose of the change clearly communicated?
- Are there mechanisms for feedback and dialogue?

6. Past Experience with Change

- Has the organisation successfully managed change before?
- What lessons were learned?

Organisational Culture

It is also important to understand the existing culture of an organisation when thinking of introducing changes.

Organisational culture refers to "the shared values, beliefs, norms, and practices that shape how people within an organisation interact, make decisions, and approach their work. It's essentially the "personality" of the organisation — influencing everything from communication styles and leadership approaches to how change is managed and how success is defined."

To gain an understanding of the culture of an organisation, its written and unwritten rules should be examined alongside the relationships, values and behaviours displayed by its people. An understanding of organisational culture is essential for effective leadership. Leaders and managers will be better placed to implement strategy and achieve their goals if they understand the culture of their organisation. Strategies that are inconsistent with organisational culture are likely to meet with resistance and will be more difficult or even impossible to implement, while strategies that are in line with it will be easier to put into effect and more likely to succeed.

Adapted from CHK-232-Understanding-organisational-culture.pdf

> *"Trying to implement trauma-specific clinical practices without first implementing trauma-informed organizational culture change is like throwing seeds on dry land."*
> Sandra Bloom, MD.

Reflecting on organisational culture can therefore be an important initial focus to any organisational change or implementation process. When linking culture to evaluation, we know evaluations are most effective if they take place at multiple points. When considering evaluation processes, organisations may consider an initial benchmarking process, which will support data capture and progress over time. The SBNI toolkit can be used internally to conduct an initial benchmarking exercise which contains a range of questions related to inviting reflection on organisational culture. At the time of writing, further supplementary resources are being developed.

In 2025 Ulster University published a review of organisations experiences of trauma informed implementation. (Long & Lynch. 2025.Developing Trauma Informed Systems in Northern Ireland) This review was commissioned by the SBNI and shared organisations' experiences of an external benchmarking process. It highlighted various aspects related to culture as well as the importance of **avoiding overwhelm** when initiating the process.

The review emphasises the importance of taking time to understand your organisations current functioning. '**Taking a pulse**' at the outset will involve being are mindful of the systemic factors that contribute to the experience of work, e.g. **workplace culture, leadership, sufficient staffing, education, equipment, and facilities** (adapted from BPS, 2021). These aspects are key in any evaluation of organisational culture and climate.

Peter Drucker emphasises how, "**culture eats strategy for breakfast**", although we need to be mindful that culture and strategy can work together successfully.

Organisational Trauma

The UU review included a definition of organisational trauma and emphasised how it is also important to consider any current or previous organisational trauma when commencing the implementation journey.

> *"Organisational trauma is caused by a major event or series of events, or by persistent toxic conditions, that have an overwhelming effect on the group, family, organisation and /or community, impairing the ability of the whole to function on balanced physical, emotional, mental and spiritual planes."*
> Bailleur, Phillippe. Stuck? Dealing With Organisational Trauma (p72)

Therefore, at the beginning of the implementation journey such core issues need to be acknowledged in a meaningful way. This will promote authentic and a more sustainable engagement during the process. The complex and often cumulative myriad of factors that can contribute to organisational trauma should always be kept in mind, and approached with care and sensitivity.

> *Organisational trauma often refers to how an organisation, system, or team can become unhealthy and traumatised, and how an organisation, system, or team can create trauma for the people who work there and the people it serves, through organisational adverse experiences* (Treisman, 2021).

Dr Karen Treisman also has a dedicated resource for managers on organisational trauma, also referenced in the Workforce Wellbeing Booklet.

sts_pt_a_spotlight_on_organisational_trauma_the_system_as_the_client_final.pdf

The 2025 UU review provided the following example.

> *"some staff within organisations remain impacted by current or previous adverse organisational experiences involving unsafe work environments, burnout and unacknowledged organisational trauma. Implementing a TIA might mean first acknowledging these issues before beginning to embed a TIA across the workforce. Without an increased sense of psychological safety, staff could potentially be re-traumatised without adequate engagement and involvement."*

In the review while some participants shared their lived experiences with these types of organisational trauma, they also referred to improved relationships with service users and amongst colleagues as a result of implementing an organisational trauma informed approach;

 "I really feel like at the minute we have such a good strong team"

Others spoke about repaired relationships: *"They dramatically changed … we ended up having a very close relationship"*

"These experiences of post-traumatic growth, and repair of trust through management using a trauma informed approach, highlights the important opportunities for organisations and staff to make positive changes despite their legacies." (UU review.2025)

Engagement phase

As stated when considering organisational readiness the UU review stated, "when working on engagement, it was important to support colleagues and prevent overwhelm, take the time needed and not introduce too many resources or training until people are conceptually on board.

Implementing a TIA is a significant organisational process, and so deciding on what can be done during the first review is about **being strategic and setting small achievable tasks** to address gaps.

When beginning to review the organisation and plan changes, participants spoke about beginning by **identifying strengths.**

Acknowledging small wins can boost the morale and confidence of workforces and those using services. This can lead to more creativity and willingness to:

- suggest more ideas
- consult more widely
- join up systems and make connections
- experiment and then evaluate again.

Infusing the six principles

Evaluation can be conducted at the initial implementation phase where there is an action plan related to a specific focus area (e.g. Workforce Wellbeing or Policy and Practice). This may be very informative and reshape the direction of travel, modifying it to meet with or align with realistic expectations depending on resourcing, legislation, other policy development. ITTIC (2020) notes that the principles of Trauma informed practice can be applied even when it appears there is a failure or breakdown in a truly trauma informed response.

As we consider evaluation and sustainability and indeed any of the implementation focus areas we emphasise the importance of infusing the six principles into our actions and engagements.

Creating a parallel process: A new methodological framework for conducting Trauma-Informed Evaluation and Research (TIER) in mental health settings - ScienceDirect

*It's not what you do
it's the way that you do it.*

- French Proverb
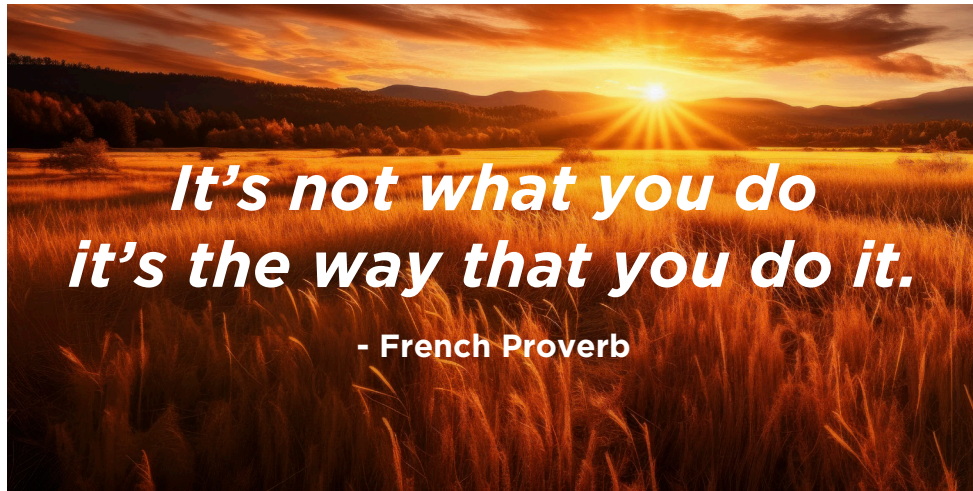
For example if there is an issue such as no resource is available, then that must be respectfully shared in order that trust is not undermined.

If choice cannot be '..provided in a specific mandated situation, how can we at least let the individual know what to expect (trustworthiness) and/or ensure emotional safety during the process? ITTIC p21

Being explicit in infusing the principles of TIA comes from having a clear understanding of how to apply them, ensuring transparency especially when difficult conversations either with service users, leaders or with peers are required.

Evaluating whether an organisation is **trauma informed** involves assessing how well it understands, recognises and responds to the effects of trauma in its policies, practices, and culture. A trauma-informed organisation prioritises safety, trust, empowerment, and healing for both service users and staff. It recognises the impact of being alone with trauma and seeks to reduce barriers to people accessing support.

Internal and External Assessment Options

As referenced there are a range of tools available to support an initial benchmarking process to evaluate an organisation's progress in becoming trauma-informed.

SBNI Toolkit

The SBNI Trauma Informed Toolkit was initially developed as an internal self assessment process. The **self assessment** checklist is best completed by a range of personnel across an organisation. Having various levels across the staff network complete the checklist, can amplify areas of consensus to aid implementation action planning. Equally focussing on areas where there are significant discrepancies or a variance of opinion, this can provide a platform for further exploration to understand the range of staff experiences and enable collaborative conversations on sequencing and prioritising next steps. Download here: Trauma Informed Checklist

One Small Thing

There are also a wide range of external assessment options and resources available internationally. In the UK, One Small Thing offer a **'Working with Trauma Quality Mark'** which is a set of best practice standards for trauma informed working. This is suitable for organisations/teams of up to 30 employees. The cost is linked to the organisation's budget category. (If an organisation has multi-sites, covers a large geographical area/different regions, and/or has a staff team of more than 30, OST will discuss and agree with the individual organisation how the Quality Mark can be applied to an area of the organisation) An organisational lead coordinates the multiple written submissions (case studies, testimonies, policy review etc). Following submission of evidence (within a three month period) an onsite visit of the physical environment will be scheduled. This is followed by a process of assessment and moderation of submitted evidence by a team of assessors. The SBNI funded two pilots with OST.

If successful, organisations are awarded either a:

➡️ Bronze Award (Trauma Aware Award)

➡️ Silver Award (Trauma Informed Award)

➡️ Gold Award (Trauma Responsive Award)

which remain valid for 3 years.

Trauma Informed Oregon Implementation Tool

The SBNI have also funded pilots of an Implementation Tool designed by Trauma Informed Oregon (TIO) in the United States to assist organisations, systems, and agencies in implementing trauma informed care and tracking their progress. This tool provides a framework for incorporating trauma-informed policies, practices and care into any organisation's structure, developed in conjunction with the Human Services Implementation Lab (I-Lab) at Portland State University's Regional Research Institute.

Organisations who participate in the full assessment option (which includes a whole organisation staff survey, policy review and key informant interviews) receive a report with findings, recommendations and a score from 1-5 related to five key elements.

➡️ Organisational Commitment

➡️ Culture & Climate

➡️ Training & Education

➡️ Policy Procedure & Practice Review

➡️ Feedback & Quality Assurance

TIO also offer self-assessment options. Organisations who participated in these pilots shared their experiences of the external assessment process in the Ulster University review. This review helpfully summarises how the role of the external assessment was to:

➡️ Come to the process as an empathetic and knowledgeable partner, who could listen, support and tailor assessments to the organisation's needs

➡️ Provide access to expertise and resources to support them with their maintenance and progression strategies

➡️ Provide organisations with an objective review

➡️ Provide validation on progress to date

➡️ Feedback on how to meet their organisational goals moving forward.

> *"The role of the external assessment teams was also for relationship building and information sharing with the SBNI, and by providing important guidance on organisational TIA processes..."*
> UU review.2025

Sustainability Considerations

Implementing a TIA is a significant organisational process, hence providing realistic timeframes, (that implementation is lengthy process) is necessary at the outset.

When beginning to review the organisation and plan changes, participants in Ulster University's review spoke about beginning by *identifying strengths and the importance of learning from other organisational journeys.*

Connecting with peers on similar journeys can support connectedness, collaboration, and sharing of learning and experiences. … actively connecting with other organisations was a central activity.
UU review.2025

Participants referred to a strong sense of a growing (trauma informed) network, the importance of investing in leaders and connecting with others to receive support and share learning.

Practitioners thought a trauma informed approach was now seen as a valued approach within organisations, and that this was facilitated by the frameworks and shared language. Therefore taking the opportunity to promote the shared language and the trauma informed frameworks will support sustainability.

To be sustainable it is essential you connect and invest in people. As Bill Bannear emphasises, fostering more quality and trusted relationships is a critical enabler for change:

We need to stop trying to find the solution, and instead design for the conditions that enable the emergence of many solutions…For the catalysers of complex system change (often government), that means starting to value relationships as a key outcome.
Bill Bannear

One participant in the Ulster University review highlighted the importance of making sure that a balance is struck between investing in the people and the structures.

"you can have all the structures and all the frameworks and we've got all those, but it's about what people do with this information and how they translate it into action and their behaviours."
UU review.2025

There were clear recommendations about the development of additional readiness resources and peer-led activities to facilitate the further development of practice-based knowledge and local expertise on embedding a TIA in Northern Ireland.

"If we can share the information of what we've learned because that's what it's all about, it's about learning, then make it better for everybody else".
UU review.2025

The review includes the development of a process map and diagrams with phase-based activities to support focus and positioning, and track progress.
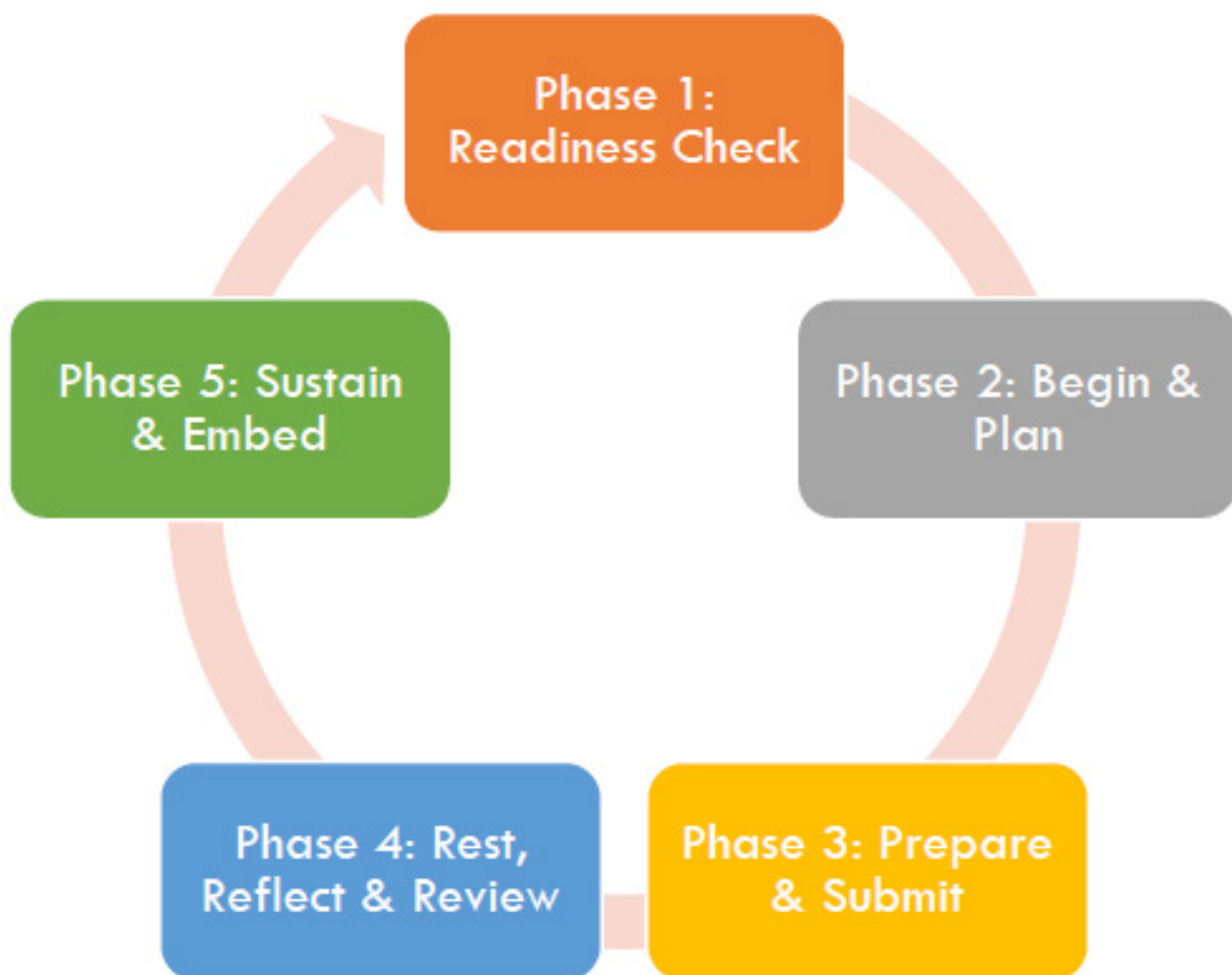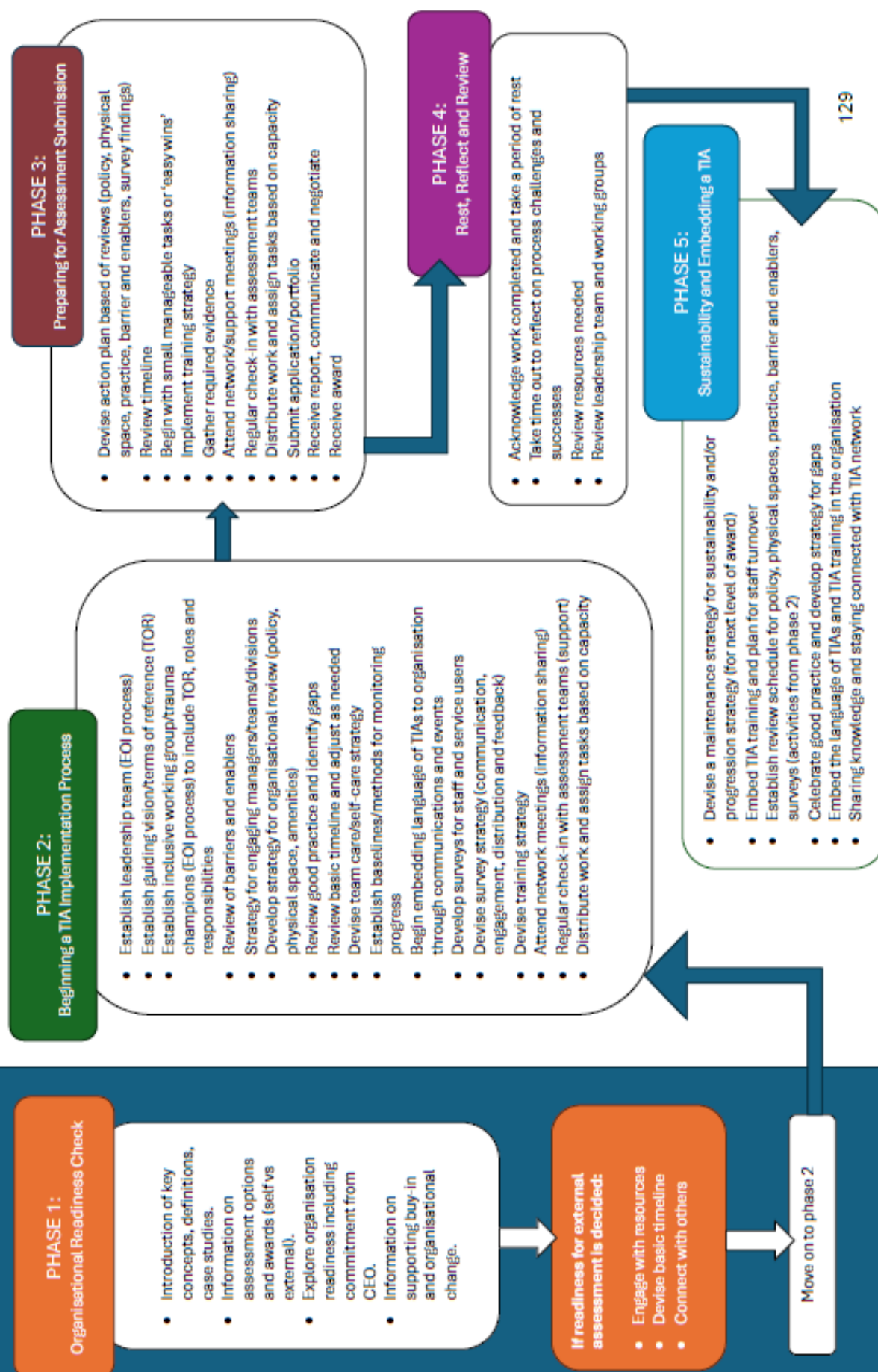
Phase 1: Readiness Check

Phase 2: Begin & Plan

Phase 3: Prepare & Submit

Phase 4: Rest, Reflect & Review

Phase 5: Sustain & Embed

Figure 8 : Implementation Process for Trauma Informed Approaches in Northern Ireland: External Assessment Pathway and Core Activities

PHASE 1:
Organisational Readiness Check

- Introduction of key concepts, definitions, case studies.
- Information on assessment options and awards (self vs external).
- Explore organisation readiness including commitment from CEO.
- Information on supporting buy-in and organisational change.

If readiness for external assessment is decided:

- Engage with resources
- Devise basic timeline
- Connect with others

Move on to phase 2

PHASE 2:
Beginning a TIA Implementation Process

- Establish leadership team (EOI process)
- Establish guiding vision/terms of reference (TOR)
- Establish inclusive working group/trauma champions (EOI process) to include TOR, roles and responsibilities
- Review of barriers and enablers
- Strategy for engaging managers/teams/divisions
- Develop strategy for organisational review (policy, physical space, amenities)
- Review good practice and identify gaps
- Review basic timeline and adjust as needed
- Devise team care/self-care strategy
- Establish baselines/methods for monitoring progress
- Begin embedding language of TIAs to organisation through communications and events
- Develop surveys for staff and service users
- Devise survey strategy (communication, engagement, distribution and feedback)
- Devise training strategy
- Attend network meetings (information sharing)
- Regular check-in with assessment teams (support)
- Distribute work and assign tasks based on capacity

PHASE 3:
Preparing for Assessment Submission

- Devise action plan based of reviews (policy, physical space, practice, barrier and enablers, survey findings)
- Review timeline
- Begin with small manageable tasks or 'easy wins'
- Implement training strategy
- Gather required evidence
- Attend network/support meetings (information sharing)
- Regular check-in with assessment teams
- Distribute work and assign tasks based on capacity
- Submit application/portfolio
- Receive report, communicate and negotiate
- Receive award

PHASE 4:
Rest, Reflect and Review

- Acknowledge work completed and take a period of rest
- Take time out to reflect on process challenges and successes
- Review resources needed
- Review leadership team and working groups

PHASE 5:
Sustainability and Embedding a TIA

- Devise a maintenance strategy for sustainability and/or progression strategy (for next level of award)
- Embed TIA training and plan for staff turnover
- Establish review schedule for policy, physical spaces, practice, barrier and enablers, surveys (activities from phase 2)
- Celebrate good practice and develop strategy for gaps
- Embed the language of TIAs and TIA training in the organisation
- Sharing knowledge and staying connected with TIA network

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More detailed information can be found on page 129 of the full UU report with this diagram which demonstrates how **progress will ebb and flow**. When organisations know this is to be expected this can support those involved in implementation not to become disheartened when progress stalls.

> *We have seen (trauma informed implementation) efforts in agencies struggle through ups and downs over a period of years, experience frustration and confusion in meetings, see changes in membership of the workgroup, have periods of inactivity and still move forward.*
>
> *Organisations persist through these challenges when there is a commitment of key staff and leadership, understanding that it is a long haul process, solid relationships that exists or are built during the process, and – on a practical note – have strong facilitation skills available to the group.*
> (adapted from Trauma Informed Oregon.2017)

Organisations can promote sustainability by celebrating positive practices, publicising their commitment to do things in a trauma informed manner and providing platforms to connect their champions.

Sustainability will be promoted when there is meaningful codesign. This requires an ongoing commitment to organisational listening, ensuring this is not lost as an administrative exercise. Review participants had helpful advice to promote sustainability.

> *My message into that would be keep it really simple because it's a very complex area in its own right, it's so multi layered, so multifaceted, it embraces everything from how we breathe, walk and talk, to the buildings that we live and work in, it doesn't need us to make it any more complicated.* UU review.2025

Some organisations spoke of the importance of recognition and an award to them, as they thought it ensured the approach would continue to be supported and maintained. Awards can also support teams to reflect on their achievements and celebrate their hard work.

Sustainability can be promoted by ensuring the benefits of the approach are amplified across services. The evidence and examples section in the SBNI toolkit provides a summary of the benefits for organisations from the QUB senior professional and organisational assessment.

In summary this highlighted

Wide ranging positive benefits for:

Service user

➡   More meaningful engagement and participation in services

Staff

➡   Higher job satisfaction – improved health and wellbeing

Service system level

➡   reduced staff sickness and vacancies

➡   increased staff retention

➡   potential public sector savings

No disadvantages to this approach were highlighted throughout the QUB research on progress across NI organisations and systems.

(QUB Implementation Report. Mooney et al. 2024)

The UU review concluded by stating that the societal ripple effects of implementing TIA work cannot be overstated. The word 'journey' was used by both Universities work as it supports the development of connection and solutions that can be long lasting and beneficial for society at large.

Participants noted shifts in culture with teams that do not typically work with clients, [e.g. finance HR departments] but who provide important services, and who can make important decisions that affect both staff and clients…. outcomes resulted in a new organisational culture, whereby **staff now humanise numbers and decisions***. UU review.2025*

Participants in some organisations related that **their expectations for culture change have been exceeded.** *UU review.2025*

We can all play a part by:

Acknowledging parts of the system that are not letting us operate in a trauma informed way

Aligning recommendations with Trauma Informed principles

Acknowledging complexity

Supporting learning & reflective practice

Building a culture of openness and support

COMPASSIONATE LEADERSHIP SHARED VISION

Acknowledging system pressures

THE RIGHT PEOPLE

Noticing and actively appreciating efforts and activities that are trauma informed

Supporting trauma informed change to happen

Compassionately listening to both our own and our workforces experience

Building shared vision, consensus & relationships across sectors

Promoting and setting a trauma informed cuture

Local and international Examples & Resources

In the 2025 Ulster University review you can read about the NI organisations who kindly shared their implementation journey and experiences of using an external assessment process.

Developing Trauma Informed Systems in Northern Ireland: Full Report

Developing Trauma Informed Systems in Northern Ireland: Executive Summary

Dedicated Implementation Posts

At the time of writing we are aware of two organisations which have dedicated posts (Trauma informed implementation leads) in Northern Ireland. The Probation Board for Northern Ireland and The Salvation Army commissioned dedicated posts to drive and embed implementation across their organisation.

You can read more detail about this in the Autumn 2025 edition of the SBNI quarterly newsletter available on the SBNI website. You can also read more on the Salvation's Army's ongoing implementation journey with report links on page 56 and 83 of the toolkit. Other sector specific case studies links are also available in the toolkit.

Organisational Readiness Example

In 2019 the SBNI commissioned the National Children's Bureau (NCB) to consider organisational readiness. This review acknowledged that multiple frameworks and tools are available to measure system change readiness. At this time NCB developed a bespoke tool to measure system change readiness. This tool was based on a modified version of the Trauma Informed System Change Instrument from Southwest Michigan Children's Trauma Assessment Centre, which was designed for the child welfare system in Michigan, USA.

The tool was selected as it had been tested for reliability and validity and it was deemed a condensed version would increase the likelihood of completion by respondents. Supplementary questions were added to this tool to reflect the Evidence Review of Trauma Informed Practice in Northern Ireland that was completed by Queen's University Belfast in 2018. You can read the full report here Trauma Informed Practice (TIP) Systems Change Regional Insight Report

Scottish Readiness Assessment

In Scotland there is a specific readiness resource which organisations are asked to complete. The questions pertain to the follow themes:

Theme - Organisational culture and leadership:

Question: Is there agreement amongst strategic and operational leaders in your organisation that embedding a trauma-informed and responsive approach is important and is in alignment with existing priorities?

Question: Is there agreement and momentum that this is the right time for the organisation to begin this work?

Question: Do leaders have capacity to engage with this work?

Question: Is your organisation ready and able to ensure staff have the capacity to complete the self-assessment and identify that stategic and operational changes might be necessary to sustainably implement a trauma-informed and responsive approach within their work?

Theme - Staff care, support and wellbeing:

Question: What 1-1/group supervision arrangements and reflective practice arrangements do you already have in place?

Question: Are workers engaged with these?

Question: How does your organisation usually respond if a worker is experiencing issues relating to past trauma which is impacting on their work?

Question: Are managers and supervisors familar with the concepts of vicarious and secondary trauma?

Theme - Staff knowledge, skills and confidence:

Question: Do you have workers within your organisation who are trained to the appropriate level to provide post training support?

Question: Do supervisors and line managers feel confident and able to talk about trauma-informed practice within their line management sessions?

Theme - Additional Questions

Question: What is in place now to support change?

Question: What gaps have you identified?

Creating Trauma-Informed and Responsive Change - Part Two

Ensuring there is a feedback rich environment with multiple points to collate this information will ensure sustainability remains firmly on the agenda.


What worked well for you?

What could we do together to make your experience even better?

Scotland also provide a range of evaluative tools to be used with children and adults to evaluate their experiences of services e.g. method_sheet_appreciative_questions. pdf (evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk)These ensure that service users views shape and influence future services either for themselves or for other users.

Peer Learning Opportunities

At the time of writing the SBNI Trauma Informed Practice Team are enhancing the opportunities for peer support and peer learning. Identifying those existing champions with implementation experience and knowledge can influence and create positive ripples to further embed a TIA in organisations and across systems. Ensuring people leading the agenda are ones who are passionate and convinced of the benefit rather than those who are "told to be interested" supports sustainability.

You can learn about the use of peer support bubbles on a recorded NISCC webinar or learn about their use with practice teachers or social work students from research papers written by Dr Denise MacDermott (Ulster University) and Caoimhe Harkin-MacDermott (Bryson Care)
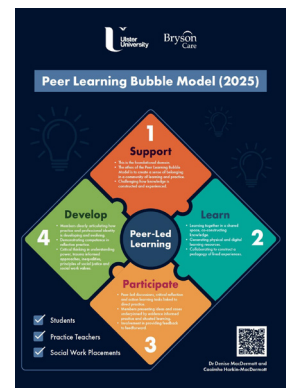
Applying The Peer Learning Bubble Model with Voluntary Sector Social Work Students - YouTube

MacDermott, D. and Harkin-MacDermott, C. (2021) 'Perceptions of Trainee Practice Teachers in Northern Ireland: Assessing Competence and Readiness to Practise during COVID 19', Link to open access journal article https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09503153.2021.1904868

Staff surveys

Michael West tells us "The staff survey is the most powerful and yet underutilised source of intelligence for ensuring our health services can achieve the vision of high quality, compassionate care for all." This is true across all sectors. Many organisations across Northern Ireland have issued staff surveys.

Those organisations who participated in the full external assessment with Trauma Informed Oregon, distributed whole organisation staff surveys to capture the staff experience across a wide range of issues. This supports the organisation to keep in touch with the reality of the work and what staff experience as key stressors. Inviting staff to co-create and support in the sequencing of any implementation plan can be highly effective. Staff surveys and regular feedback loops can also be informally built into existing structures e.g. emotional check ins at the outset of team meetings. To use a 'Signs of Safety' © analogy (used in work with families) consider:

1. What are we worried about?
2. What's working well?
3. What needs to happen?
   [Ref What Is Signs of Safety? - Signs of Safety]

Exit interviews if conducted in a psychologically safe manner can also provide constructive feedback for organisations on areas of strength and where there may challenges, which have impacted staff retention. Examples of feedback surveys have also been shared in the lived experience and involvement booklet.
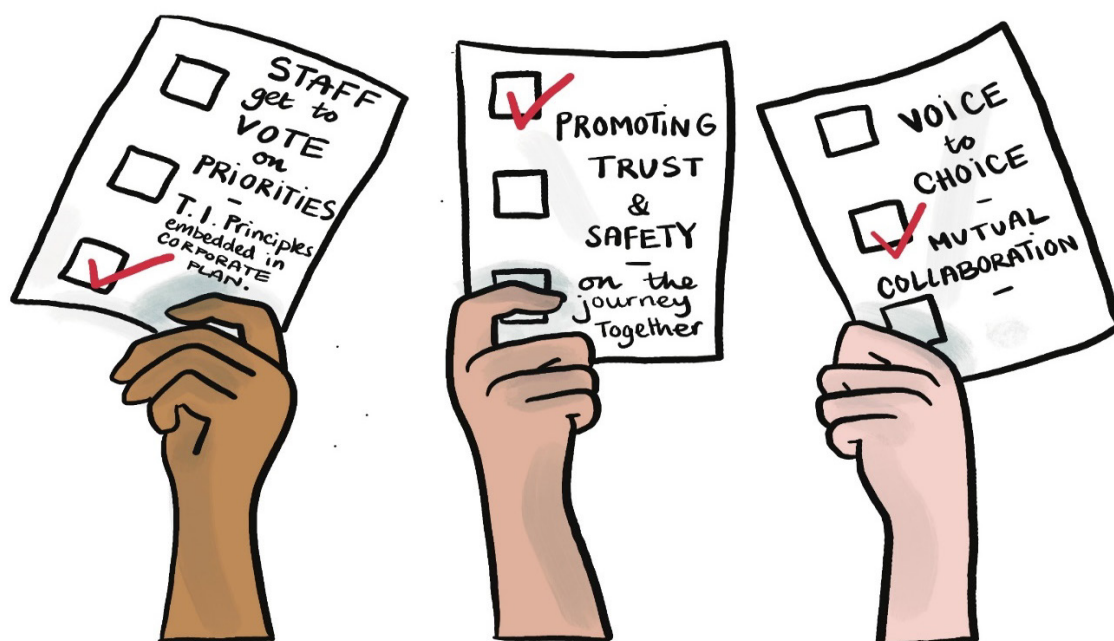
Linking research to Practice

Queens University Healthcare Library, issues a monthly social work bulletin to share local and international research related to a wide range of relevant topics, including trauma informed practice. This is an extract from one of 22 local and international articles and summaries shared on the topic of supervision in June 2025. Staff need to be a library member (or eligible to register). To be added to the circulation list for this bulletin please email: hazel.neale@healthcarelibrary.qub.ac.uk

Extract

Australian Mental Health Social Workers' Experiences of Burnout.
Findings indicated that although there are individual and contextual aspects of burnout, mental health social workers would feel most supported by organisations implementing structured burnout prevention practices, including mandating supervision and regulating caseloads.

IMPLICATIONS Burnout is a stress-induced phenomenon that is multi-dimensional, yet many social workers are expected to manage this issue through individually structured practices such as self-care. Organisations need to take a stronger and more systemic approach to proactively prevent and respond to worker burnout in mental health work.
Carles, Genevieve; Australian Social Work. 2025, 78:1, p58-70.

NI Programme for Government

Sustainability can be supported when there is an explicit senior leadership commitment to work towards embedding a TIA.

Within Northern Ireland's **Programme for Government** there has been a specific commitment to develop a trauma-informed public sector, "equipping staff at all levels with the skills needed to work in partnership". There was also recognition that a number of programmes across the Executive deliver early intervention work using a trauma-informed and public health approach.

The document acknowledges the levels of trauma in our post-conflict society, and aspires to work across the Executive to embed trauma-informed, responsive systems; "We know that harm results in elevated levels of trauma and that it is these same underlying societal issues and economic challenges that often lead people into crime, as well as making them vulnerable to criminal exploitation."

Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most

Additional International Assessment Options

The ARTIC Scale | Traumatic Stress Institute

trauma-informed-organizational-capacity-scale.pdf

Creating PRESENCE – by Dr. Sandra Bloom

Your feedback matters

Thank you for taking the time to read the information booklet. We welcome all suggestions for improvement. Please feel free to share any new or existing local examples for inclusion by contacting us on SBNI.Info@hscni.net. To download the toolkit or contact a member of the team directly please click here Trauma Informed Toolkit.

Adapted from SAMHSA, 2014

*In this final booklet in the series, we wish to acknowledge the work of the local artist Beth McComish, who designed the artwork used throughout the toolkit and in this series of information booklets.

References

In addition to the SBNI Trauma Informed Toolkit and Trauma Informed Checklist

1.   Long, M. & Lynch, L. (2025). *Developing Trauma Informed Systems in Northern Ireland.* Belfast:Ulster University, Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland.

2.   Long, M. & Lynch, L. (2025). *Developing Trauma Informed Systems in Northern Ireland. Executive Summary.* Belfast: Ulster University, Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland.

3.   CHK-232-Understanding-organisational-culture.pdf

4.   Bailleur, Phillippe. 2021. Stuck? Dealing With Organisational Trauma.

5.   The new zeitgeist: relationships and emergence | by Bill Bannear | Medium

6.   Creating a parallel process: A new methodological framework for conducting Trauma-Informed Evaluation and Research (TIER) in mental health settings - ScienceDirect

7.   Southwest Michigan Children's Trauma Assessment Center

8.   Method_sheet_appreciative_questions.pdf (evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk)

9.   Creating Trauma-Informed and Responsive Change - Part Two

10.   Applying The Peer Learning Bubble Model with Voluntary Sector Social Work Students - YouTube

11.   MacDermott, D. and Harkin-MacDermott, C. (2021) 'Perceptions of Trainee Practice Teachers in Northern Ireland: Assessing Competence and Readiness to Practise during COVID 19', Practice, 33(5), pp. 355–374. doi: 10.1080/09503153.2021.1904868. Link to open access journal article https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09503153.2021.1904868

12.   Carles, Genevieve; Australian Social Work. 2025, 78:1, p58-70

13.   Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most

Focus Area Action Plan
Evaluation & Sustainability

Evaluation & Sustainability

Start Date	Tasks	Actions	Lead	Completion Date	Comments

Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland
HSC Leadership Centre
12 Hampton Manor Drive
Belfast
BT7 3EN
T: 028 9536 1810
E: SBNI.info@hscni.net
www.safeguardingni.org
X: @safeguardingni