



**National Trauma  
Transformation  
Programme**

Responding to Psychological  
Trauma in Scotland

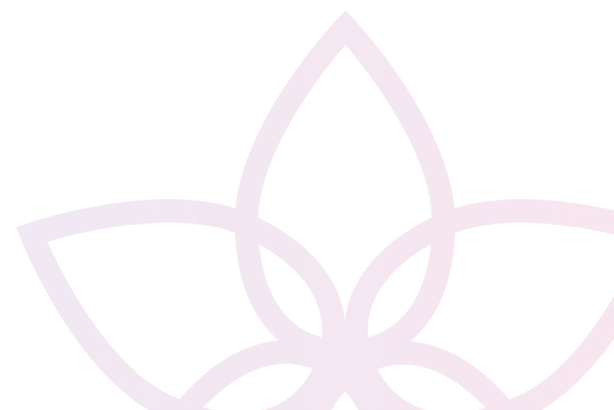
**Trauma Responsive  
Social Work Services**



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# **Trauma Skilled Training for Newly Qualified and Early Career Social Workers: Summary evaluation report**

**May 2024**



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# 1. Introduction

The [Trauma Responsive Social Work Services](#)<sup>1</sup> (TRSWS) team delivered trauma skilled training to newly qualified and early career social workers between October 2023 and March 2024. The training was delivered to 212 participants over a series of events. Key learning from project planning and data gathered from participants is set out below.

This work with Newly Qualified Social Worker's (NQSWS) is one component of the wider TRSWS programme. It was agreed with national governance groups as an interim offer while the longer-term integration of trauma skilled learning into social work qualifying courses and the NQSW mandatory supported year is considered and progressed.

Learning will be shared with key partners, including the National Trauma Transformation Programme (NTTP), and will be incorporated into planning and delivery of a further phase of trauma skilled learning for NQSW's through 2024 into 2025. For example, findings highlight advantages of delivering this programme in partnership with local areas. Further engagement with key partners including Chief Social Work Officers and the Social Work Education Partnership (SWEPP) will also shape the approach to delivery moving forward.

## Background

The TRSWS programme team delivered the trauma skilled practice learning package 'Transforming Connections' developed by NHS Education for Scotland (NES). This learning package is aligned with the trauma skilled practice level, as detailed in the [Transforming Psychological Trauma: a knowledge and skills framework for the Scottish Workforce](#). It is also endorsed by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) and is relevant for workers in a range of settings including those working with children and adults. The package incorporates the knowledge and skills required for workers with direct and frequent contact with people who may be affected by trauma. It includes completion of two trauma skilled e-learning modules on the Turas learning platform, prior to one full day in person training event and half day follow up session. It has been delivered by NES NTTP colleagues since August 2022 with an initial focus on the workforce supporting care experienced children and young people. However, there was recognised value in ascertaining practice level suitability for the social work workforce.

# 2. Approach to delivery

Following careful consideration of partners' views, TRSWS team capacity and timescales, a dual approach to project planning was identified. First, a broad venue approach delivered via Eventbrite offered eleven in person dates at locations across Scotland (Aberdeen, Ayrshire, Dumfries, Dunfermline, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Paisley, Motherwell). This allowed participants choice regardless of their work location. Second, a targeted approach involved direct liaison with key

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<sup>1</sup> The Scottish Government's ambition, shared with COSLA and many other partners, is to develop trauma-informed and responsive systems, organisations, and workforces across Scotland. The Trauma Responsive Social Work Services Programme has been developed by working closely with Governance groups, NTTP partners, including colleagues at NHS Education for Scotland (NES), the Improvement Service and Resilience Learning Partnership. The programme is being delivered by a national implementation and learning team, based in the Scottish Government's Office of the Chief Social Work Adviser.

individuals in the islands and remote local authorities, as identified by their [RESAS classification](#). This approach supported delivery in Shetland and Argyll and Bute, and Orkney and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar were offered places at other locations due to low numbers of NQSW in these areas.

The team delivered this approach to Shetland and Argyll and Bute with Orkney and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar offered attendance at other locations due to low number of NQSWs. Highland was also included within this approach due to their high numbers of NQSWs and their remote and rural status.

The available evaluation data reflects no differences between learners' experience across the two approaches. However, anecdotal information suggests there were broader benefits associated with the targeted local approach. As anticipated, local links allowed for shared peer learning, venues to be identified (on two occasions without cost), nuanced timings, local communication with participants to promote attendance and encouraged completion of pre-course work. This targeted approach also allowed NQSW local leads to participate in the sessions, offering opportunities to consider how the training might be embedded in the local context.

### **3. Communications with national partners and local leads**

Early planning discussions regarding participant criteria took place with several national partners, including SSSC, SWEP and Social Work Scotland (SWS). National and local leads including those responsible for social work learning development were key to sharing the opportunity with NQSWs and early career social workers and ensuring they had the capacity to attend.

Chief Social Work Officers (CSWO) played a key role in early communication. In two sites, the CSWO attended and introduced the training session, demonstrating relevance, making links with local developments and ambitions, and conveying messages of hope and value to participants. One CSWO was directly involved in the planning stages when faced with low take up of places, ensuring the event was at capacity. Another CSWO, in a targeted area, invited the TRSWS team to two local strategic groups to discuss the programme and trauma informed and responsive systems work developing in the area.

### **4. Participant numbers**

#### **E-Learning modules**

Completion of e-learning pre-requisites is a core component of the learning package. It provides essential trauma skilled level knowledge prior to the one day in person event. Due to data gathering processes, it is unknown how many participants completed the e-learning modules. Facilitators for the TRSWS team indicated that it was noticeable and beneficial when participants had undertaken this pre-learning. Some participants provided specific feedback noting the value of this component.

#### **In person learning session**

A total of 340 places were offered over the course of 14 in-person training dates. Of the 11 events that were advertised on Eventbrite, 244 places out of 264 were taken up. Whilst most of these events reached maximum booking capacity, the overall attendance rate was 62.4% (212). In future

the team will prioritise provision of this learning package through links with local leads as opposed to offering generic sign up where social workers may find it harder to identify and dedicate the necessary time to commit. This may help with maximising participation levels.

In person sessions were capped at 24 participants. The largest group was 20, the smallest 11 and the average attendance was 15. As highlighted through participant feedback, the in-person learning was highly valued and played a key part in creating a safe, supportive, and effective learning environment.

### Half day online follow up sessions

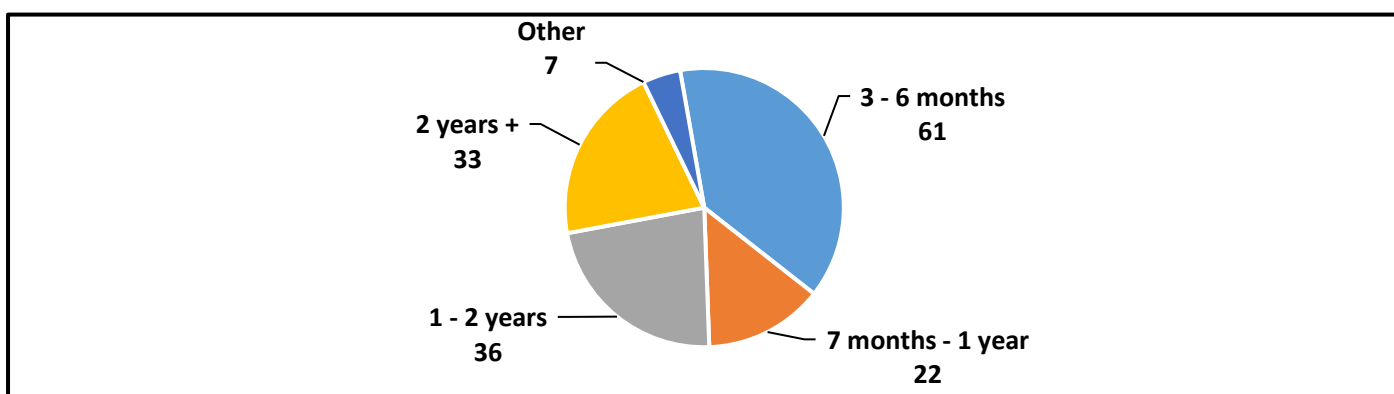
45 participants who completed the 1 day in person learning went on to confirm they would participate in an online half day follow up session 12-16 weeks later, providing time for participants to put their learning into practice between sessions. Of those, 38 participants attended over 5 sessions. Feedback from participants indicated that the follow up sessions were valued, provided a space for reflection, and helped to embed learning into practice.

No data was collected on why participants who completed the 1 day in person learning session took up the follow up learning offer or not. On reflection, TRSWS communications would have benefitted from emphasising this as an integral and essential part of the learning package. It may have been perceived as optional. The team will work closely with local contacts as we move forward to improve understanding of this as an essential learning component.

## 5. Participant demographics for in person sessions

### Participant length of time in employment

In agreement with key national partners, the training was aimed at NQSWs with 12-18 months practice experience. There was some flexibility to recognise the impact on student learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. Places were offered to those who have been qualified from 3 months - 2 years, including some exceptions up to 3 years, as detailed below:



### Local authorities and areas of practice

31 local authorities were represented across all events. Participants also covered the range of practice areas. Children and families 55%, adult services 37%, and justice social work 8%. There are no statistically relevant distinguishing themes or comparisons in data or feedback from the different local authorities or practice areas.

## 6. Training feedback on intended learning outcomes (ILO)s

Quantitative and qualitative data was gathered through pre and post surveys to measure participants self-assessment on a range of individual learning outcome's (Appendix A for ILO details). Evaluation of learning is structured around the Kirkpatrick<sup>2</sup> model of training evaluation, with a key focus on level one (reaction: learner satisfaction) and level two (learning: increased knowledge and skills) and self-report data on level three (behaviour: application of learning).

### Pre and post learning surveys

190 pre-learning surveys and 159 post learning surveys were completed. Data was therefore gathered from 75% of our 212 participants who attended the one day in-person learning. As data gathering procedures did not link pre and post learning at an individual level, it is possible that some individuals who completed the pre-learning survey may have not attended the training.

Information on participant experience offers essential learning for the TRSWS programme. As such, methods of promoting completion of the pre and post evaluation survey will continue to be prioritised. Participants were also encouraged to log their learning through the SSSC My-learning app (QR code was provided in sessions).

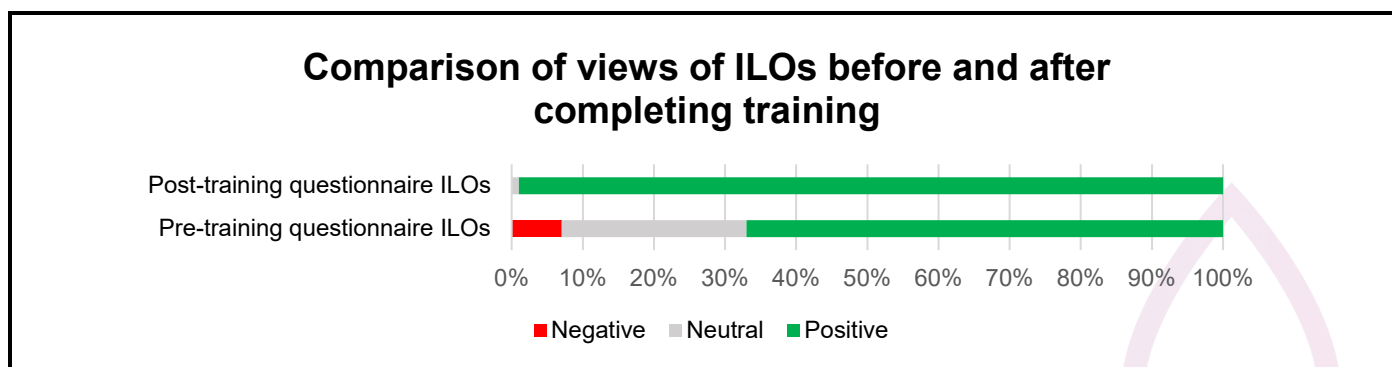
### Intended learning outcomes (ILO's)

Following completion of the NES trauma skilled e-learning modules, the aims of the one-day training focus on supporting attendees to translate understanding and knowledge in the following areas into routine practice:

- The ways in which trauma can impact upon people.
- How to develop trauma-informed relationships that support recovery.
- The importance of caring for our own well-being
- Hearing and talking about experiences of trauma.

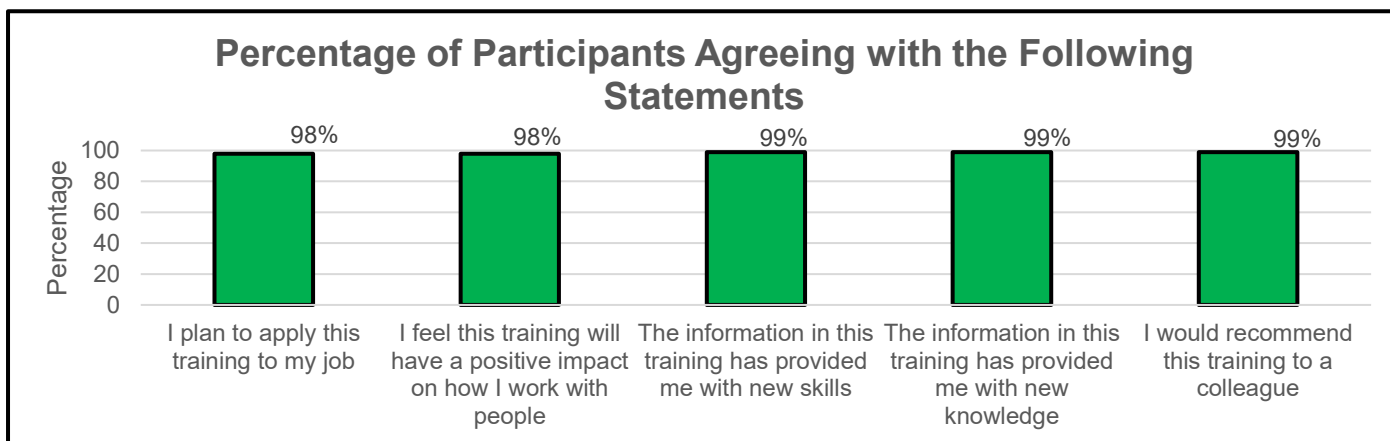
Participants were asked to rate their views on the intended learning outcomes both ahead of and following the one-day training sessions (see Appendix A). It is important to note that some individuals may have completed the pre-requisite e-modules before completing the pre-training survey which may impact on those reports.

Following the one-day in person training, 99% of all participants were positive about having achieved the ILO's, a summary of which is reflected below:



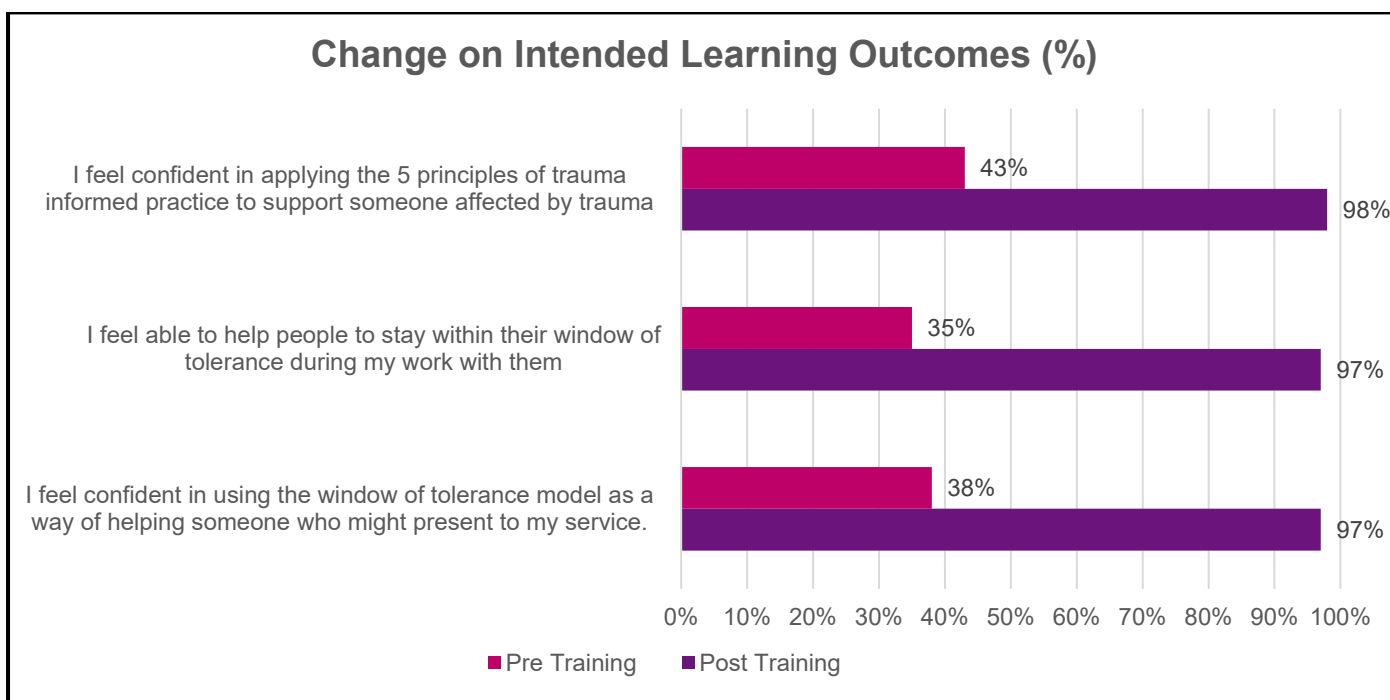
<sup>2</sup> Kirkpatrick, Donald L. Evaluating Training Programs: The Four Levels. San Francisco: Emeryville, CA :Berrett-Koehler ; Publishers Group West [distributor], 1994.

Participants felt the training was relevant and of value, with feedback that the sessions provided new knowledge, skills and will impact on practice.



### Key themes

Several key trauma related concepts and frameworks are introduced and reinforced during the in-person learning session. Further qualitative feedback is outlined below. Data collected highlighted a substantial change on the following three learning objectives.



Baseline data collection suggested a high level of pre-course awareness in the following areas, which increased to complete agreement (100%) across the cohort of NQSW attending the programme:

- I am aware of the prevalence of trauma in the service that I work in (97%)
- Being trauma informed is important and relevant to my job (98%)
- I understand the impact that trauma can have on how people experience relationships (93%)

This is likely to reflect the previous learning and practice experience of NQSW. This view is supported by qualitative feedback - see below for details.

## 7. Qualitative comments

Participants were asked three open questions and thematic analysis of feedback was undertaken:

### **Qualitative comments - “What aspects of this training content or delivery did you value most?”**

134 participants provided comments on what they valued most. Some were general comments, for example referring to having enjoyed ‘every aspect,’ it was ‘informative’. A few offered some detailed thoughts.

“All of the course was very informative and useful and will take all knowledge gained towards my practice”.

“This was an excellent training day that highlights the importance of trauma whilst giving workers new skills and confidence to support people who are affected”.

A primary theme in responses to this question highlighted specific elements of the training programme, for example, the trauma informed principles, the concept of connection before correction, understanding the impact of trauma, the e-modules, and psychoeducation skills. The most frequently referenced component of value was the window of tolerance model and several participants noted that the learning prompted thoughts on how this tool might be used with people using services.

“This was relatable, and I appreciate the time to explore how to use this (the window of tolerance) in practice”.

There were some further comments related to the opportunity in the learning to think about how to apply knowledge and skills learned into practice. Other examples included.

“It makes me think that the small things I have done when working with service users will make a difference”

“Open discussions around strategies and working with individuals was useful”

The second key theme identified in 41% of comments, focused on the learning environment, in particular the opportunity to reflect, share thoughts, feelings, and practice examples with peers.

“Having the space to reflect and think about ways in which we can improve our practice”.

“I feel this (the opportunity for discussion) made the training come to life and I could make more sense of it by relating it to real life cases. ”

“It was so nice to be able to discuss practice with other newly qualified workers in a nonjudgmental space”.



Several statements specifically described the benefit of group discussions and the interactive nature of the learning environment. The value of in person training was noted, and activities were described as engaging, well-structured, clear, relevant and well balanced across the day.

A few participants highlighted the value in recognising the impact of working with trauma including vicarious trauma and burnout, the importance of self-care and the self-care framework used in the training.

Some statements related specifically to the trainers, including general notes that their input, approach, and insight was valued. Descriptions included trainers being 'engaging', 'knowledgeable', kept the content focused, validated participant's experience, and drew on their own practice.

### **Qualitative comments - "Is there anything you would change about the training?"**

107 participants answered this question, with the majority providing feedback to suggest that they would not change anything about the programme or its delivery and some individuals going on to reiterate positive comments about the session.

Some participants offered comments about the content and structure that they would change including suggestions for additional specific content as follows:

"More specific sources of trauma e.g. racism / discrimination and how this can be intersected and influence other things".

"More information about mental health conditions impacting upon trauma and the need to understand other things that can impact on trauma."

"Greater focus on how colleagues can be more supportive to others, how trauma can impact workforce."

### **Qualitative comments - "Any additional comments?"**

48 participants offered further optional free text comments adding to the comments they had already provided. The majority of these were general positive comments about the training, trainers and venue. The language used was upbeat and affirming, for example.

"Really worthwhile training. I think it should be rolled out to all social workers".



## 8. Follow up sessions

The half day online follow up session provides the necessary opportunity to revisit topics from the training since participants returned to practice. The aim is to help consolidate learning and offer an opportunity to discuss any challenges or barriers in embedding knowledge and skills into practice.

38 individuals attended the follow up sessions with 17 completing a post evaluation survey. Detailed survey responses can be found at Appendix 2.

Participants were asked:

“What were the most helpful or beneficial things about the follow up session?”

“If there was anything they would change?”

“How the session might help implement trauma responsive approaches in the workplace?”.

Most responses related to the opportunity to reflect, discuss and consolidate learning. These included comments related to taking forward learning, to increased awareness, confidence, and knowledge. Reference was also made to specific learning components and how to use these more confidently and in a purposeful manner. Additional comments related to a small safe space and being able to reflect on using a trauma informed approach and the trauma principles in practice.

“It encourages us as newly qualified workers to reflect on the principles learned throughout the training and incorporate concepts such as the window of tolerance. This helps us better our practice as we are thinking about our actions and the way this can affect others in the initial response.

There were a few comments, stating a preference for in-person learning and online that large group discussions would have been better than small break out rooms.

## 9. Conclusion and next steps

The TRSWS team’s delivery of the trauma skilled learning package to newly qualified and early career social workers met its planned project objectives. Feedback was very positive, highlighting the relevance of the learning package to this workforce cohort. Feedback also indicated that the learning approach taken, focusing on supporting knowledge and skills into practice, was valued. This was reflected in the data gathered which indicated an increase in knowledge, understanding and confidence in working with trauma for participants.

We will continue to monitor and review the learning package to ensure it best meets learners needs and expectations. Key learning regarding project planning will also be taken forward with partners.

In the context of the launch of the revised SSSC Codes of Practice and forthcoming Continuous Professional Learning requirements, there will also be progress towards the implementation of the NQSW supported year. Developing our knowledge about psychological trauma and its impacts, and how the social work profession can best respond, is gaining greater focus. The team will therefore, continue to work with all relevant partners to support existing and crosscutting work.



# Appendix A - Pre and post in-person learning – ILOs

## Pre evaluation questions



## Post evaluation questions



## Appendix B - Post online follow up learning - ILOs

### Follow up Session Questions

