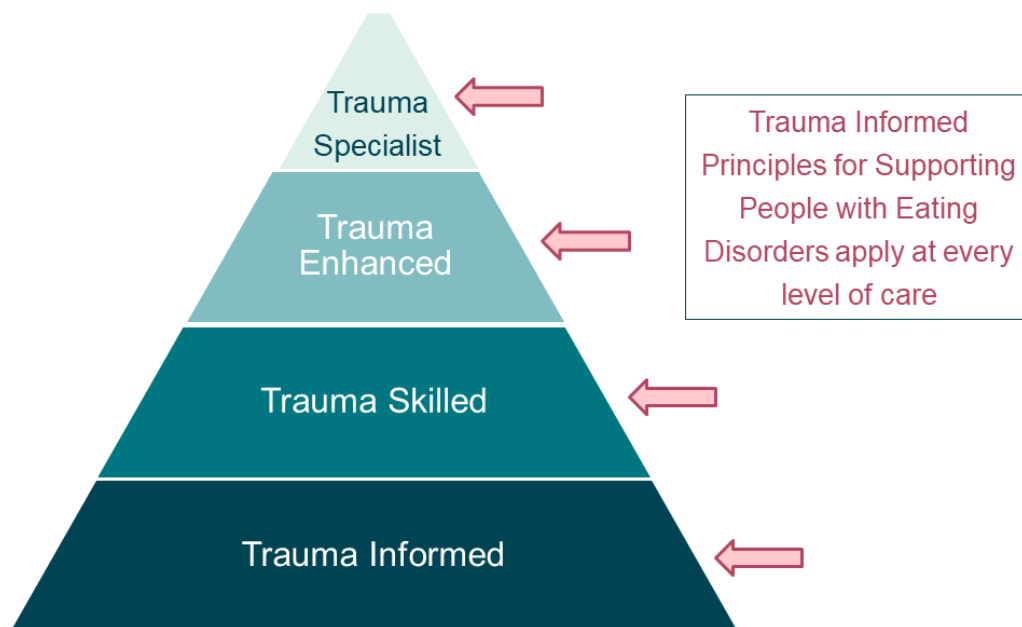


# Trauma Informed Principles for Supporting People with Eating Disorders

## Introduction and Context

In 2023 CEED initiated the Trauma and Eating Disorders working group due to the high number of clinicians working in the sector seeking consultation from CEED on how to work more effectively with people experiencing cooccurring trauma and eating disorders, across both inpatient and outpatient settings. A review of state and national policy and strategy documents revealed references to providing trauma informed care for people with eating disorders, however lacked detail on how to apply this in practice.

The Trauma Informed Principles for Supporting People with Eating Disorders developed by CEED are not intended as a tool for treating trauma directly (trauma specialist & trauma enhanced levels of care), but as a guide for the wider sector to improve the experience of people accessing treatment for an eating disorder and their supports. The principles aim to reduce the risk of traumatisation and re-traumatisation that can occur through treatment. They are further designed to reduce the risk of vicarious trauma for the workforce involved in caring for or engaging with individuals with eating disorders and their supports.



Adapted from NHS, Education for Scotland, TRANSFORMING PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA: A Knowledge and Skills Framework for the Scottish Workforce, 2017

# Trauma Informed Principles for Supporting People with Eating Disorders

## Promote Awareness and Understanding of Trauma

Promoting trauma awareness and understanding is everyone's responsibility. It is estimated that approximately 90% of people who access public mental health care have experienced trauma. It is essential to acknowledge and respond to people in a way that is respectful, empathic and compassionate. This involves understanding trauma responses and the function of eating disorders in coping with trauma. Being guided by trauma informed care principles can minimise the risk of re-traumatising people with eating disorders.

## Promote Safety

Creating a sense of safety is a priority when working with people. Safety encompasses physical, emotional and cultural aspects when engaging with individuals experiencing an eating disorder and their supports. Promoting a safe environment and supportive relationship provides an opportunity for trust and reduces the risk of further trauma, guilt or blame. Being responsive to individual needs related to safety further ensures that all people involved in both delivering and receiving care feel safe.

## Embed Lived Experience

Embedding the lived experience perspective across services ensures that hope is a constant, and plays an integral role in influencing change. Lived experience expertise contributes to a deeper understanding of the experience of eating disorders. Working in collaboration with peer support leads to an improved system response and outcomes. The voice of lived experience helps to reduce the risk of trauma and isolation in healing and discovery.

## Understanding Privilege and Difference

Eating disorders can impact people with different body sizes, cultural or religious backgrounds, neurodiversity, level of ability, age, gender identity, sexuality, and access to resources. Demonstrating an understanding of each individual's unique life experiences helps to support person-centred, equitable and inclusive care. There is a need to acknowledge and understand personal and professional privilege.

## Collaboration, Autonomy and Choice

Listening, understanding and validating people experiencing eating disorders is fundamental to providing collaborative care and support. Through promotion of shared decision making, we endeavour to work together to increase empowerment and autonomy. Communicating with the person, their supports and services ensures everyone holds a key role in a cohesive trauma informed approach.

## Connection in Relationships

Eating disorders can be isolating and connecting with self and others are important to recovery. Every interaction provides an opportunity to connect and build relationships in a respectful and compassionate way. Earning trust and showing care and interest in the whole person supports engagement and continuity of care.

## Healing and Discovery is Possible

Healing from an eating disorder is not straight forward and lapse and relapse are often experienced. Through acknowledging each person's unique strengths, traits and resources, we can create an environment that empowers individuals and their supports to have the confidence to make meaningful change. It is important to hold and instil a sense of hope that healing and discovering or rediscovering identity, life and purpose is always possible.