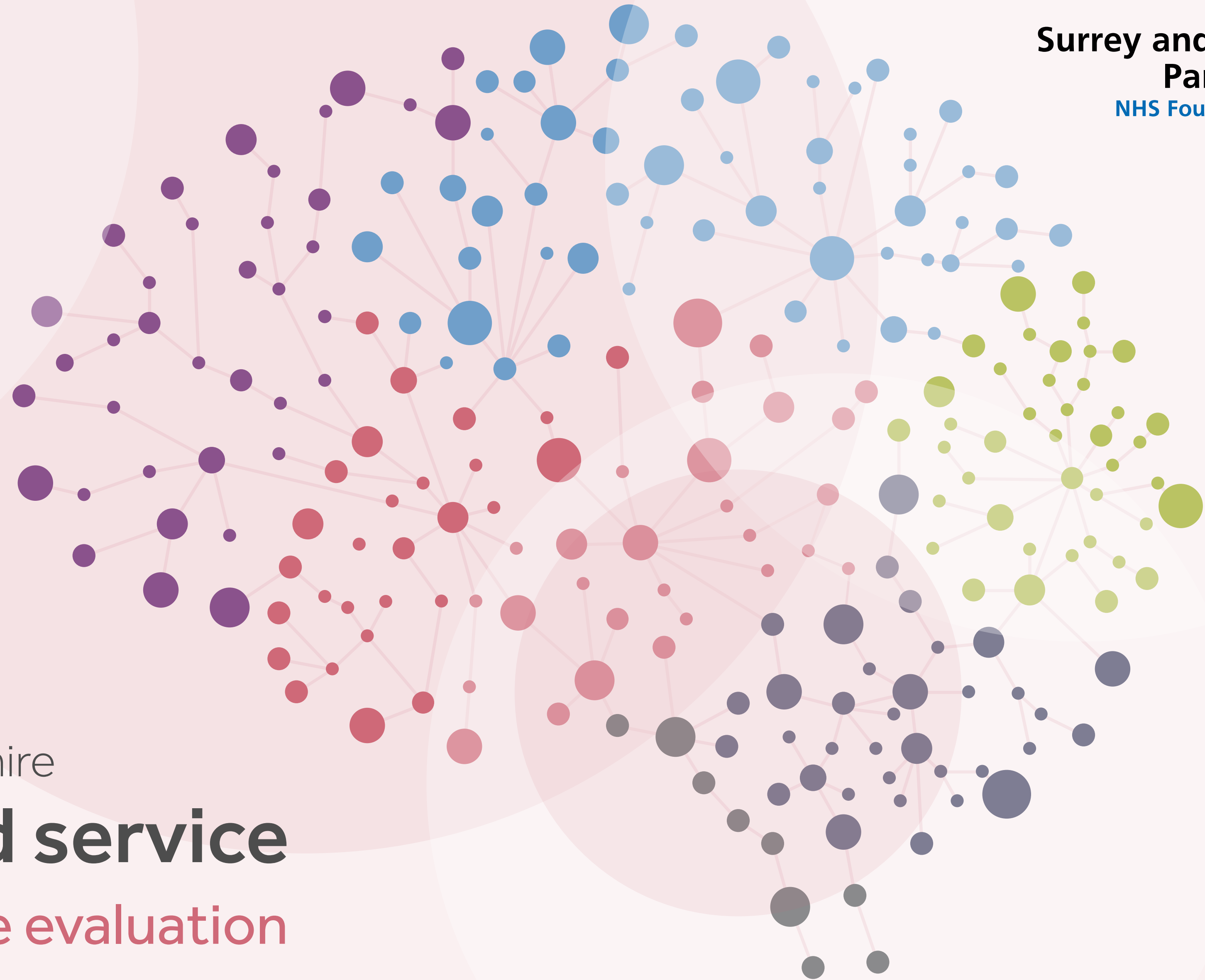




**Health
Innovation**
Oxford & Thames Valley



**Surrey and Borders
Partnership**
NHS Foundation Trust



Surrey and Northeast Hampshire

Trauma-informed service

Recovery College course evaluation

End of year two 2024

Introduction

The psychoeducational course “A Trauma-informed Approach to Care” is run by Surrey and Borders NHS Foundation Partnership Trust (SABP) through the Recovery College. The aim of the course is for students to develop an understanding of trauma and trauma-informed approaches in order to use the trauma-informed principles for themselves. The course first ran in September 2022 and the evaluation of year one of the course can be accessed [here](#). In year two courses were run in January and February 2024.

The course was codeveloped and codelivered by Surrey and Northeast Hampshire Trauma-Informed Service staff with clinical and lived experience of trauma and trauma-informed approaches. Each session was also codelivered by someone from the Recovery College.

The course covered the topics of:

What is trauma?

The impact of trauma

The six principles of trauma-informed care

Changes from year one

Following feedback from the previous years' course a number of changes were made:

- The course was changed from four two-and-a-half-hour sessions to five two-hour sessions to reduce the burden of the session on students.
- All content was reviewed to ensure it is up to date with the growing evidence base.
- All videos were reviewed and replaced where possible for alternatives that were less likely to trigger for people. Additional Explainers of the video before these are played were added and the order of content was adapted to include grounding exercises after videos are played. Trigger warnings were considered, but based on the evidence base, were decided not to be included.
- Grounding exercises were adapted to have more of an external to the person focus rather than internal, as these are less likely to be triggering for people.
- Content now includes more about recovery, post traumatic growth and a clearer message that trauma does not always mean someone struggles or will go onto have difficulties. Stories of people who have experienced trauma but gone on to achieve great things to give a message of hope were added.

Changes to the evaluation were also made for the second year:

- A follow-up online evaluation questionnaire was created in addition to inviting students to participate in an online interview in order to maximise student participation.
- Students were also contacted sooner about the evaluation after the end of the course.



Changes from year one

The sessions were designed to be interactive and to provide insights into trauma and trauma-informed approaches whilst providing a safe space for open discussions. The course was predominantly tailored for people who use services and anyone in caring roles, however there were no requirements for access and the course was open to anyone enrolled as a student with the Recovery College who had previously attended the Introduction to the Recovery College (IRC) course.

The ethos behind running the course is that a deeper understanding about trauma will aid the recovery of those who have experienced it by helping them to recognise in themselves behaviours that may be a consequence of trauma, and by helping them to be able to apply the trauma-informed principles to themselves. This course aimed to enlighten students about the impact of trauma, not just on those who use services but also from the standpoint of carers and professionals.

Furthermore, it is hoped that this understanding will be useful for those who have experienced trauma as well as acquiring the knowledge about how common trauma is, aiding the understanding that they are not alone. It was hoped that by students understanding trauma-informed approaches that they would be more empowered to advocate for themselves and ask for what they need in interactions with services, understanding why certain things are important to them and the difference they can make if they are adhered to.

Learning about the six trauma-informed principles will contribute to students knowing what a trauma-informed approach could look like and what services are working towards, which may enhance their level of their care. The course content was accompanied by various grounding techniques enabling students to leave with skills and tools to actively contribute to their well-being.

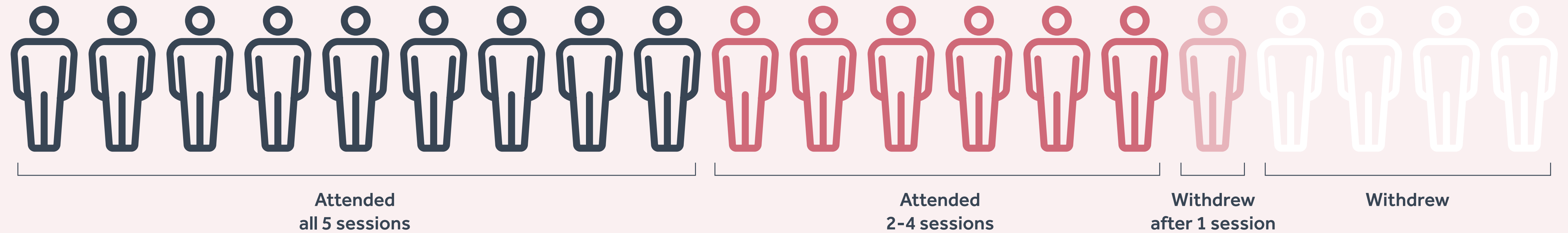


Evaluation

Evaluation consisted of a feedback form administered at the end of each course, a follow-up online evaluation questionnaire sent by email to all students approximately one-three months after the course and invitation to participate in an online interview with the external evaluation team. Students who participated at interview were reimbursed for their time, given an information leaflet and completed an online consent form.

In total 20 students registered for the courses run in year two. Four students withdrew, one student withdrew after one session due to sickness. Nine students completed all five sessions and six students attended between 2 and 4 sessions.

20 Registrations



Nine students completed the feedback form at the end of the course. Of these nine, four students completed the follow-up online evaluation questionnaire and one student participated in an online interview.

Achieving a goal

Students were asked to provide a goal that they wanted to achieve by the end of the course.

To have more understanding how I can get through.

To learn how to better manage mental health problems linked to childhood trauma.

To get a broader understanding of trauma affects.

To be able to support and improve my own mental health as well as others who have experienced trauma.

To extend my knowledge of trauma.

To help me understand trauma better.

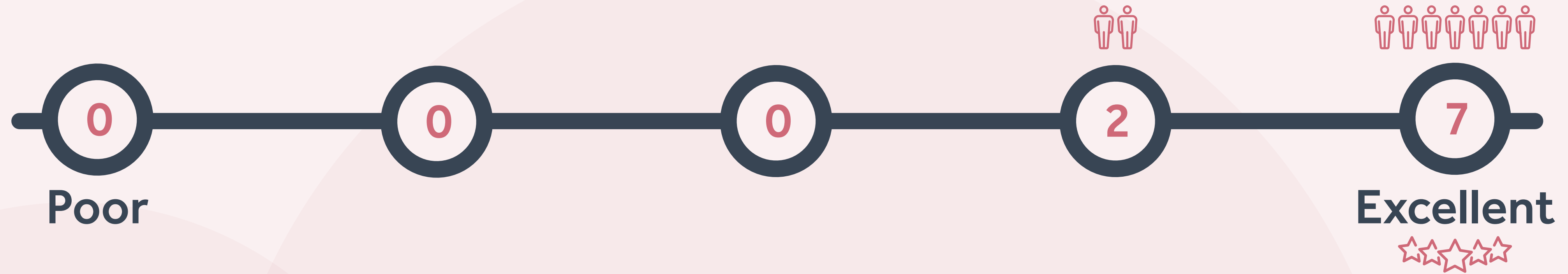
It was suggested by my GP/mental health nurse to attend this course because I have PTSD. [Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder] I want to learn how to live with my condition and about self-care. To learn more about trauma and how to manage mine.

Develop an understanding about Trauma and towards current mental health service use and upcoming trauma work. Become aware of some skills and tools.

To learn more about trauma and what behaviours may be a result of it.

Achieving a goal (continued)

All students responded that they had met their goal at the end of the course. When asked on a scale of 1 (poor) - 5 (excellent), how effective did students find this course in helping them to achieve their goal seven students reported 5 and two students reported 4.



In the follow-up questionnaire students reported that the course had helped them to achieve their goal through increasing their understanding around trauma and what trauma-informed approaches are in practice. Students also reported on the impact that achieving their goal had for them:

Not to be so stress and worry, just step back and think for little.

Validation that I can and should expect Trauma informed Care.

Allows me to reflect differently on my own experience.

More confidence in rights.

Learning and confidence

In the follow-up questionnaire students were asked to rate their learning around the core course content on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.


Number of students who responded agree or strongly agree (out of four students)

I have a better understanding of what trauma is

4

I have a better understanding of the impact of trauma

3

I understand the six principles of trauma-informed care

4

I have a better understanding of what to expect from care that is trauma-informed

4

Students were also asked to rate their confidence around communicating about trauma-informed approaches and what they need from others.

I feel more confident to speak to people supporting me about trauma-informed approaches to care

4

I feel more confident to tell those supporting me what I need

3

Approaching things differently

To be more confident and questioning when dealing with care authorities.

Three out of four students reported that they have discussed the training with friends, family or professionals.

I now know that my Service Provider should be offering me trauma informed care. I will not accept being retraumatised by them.

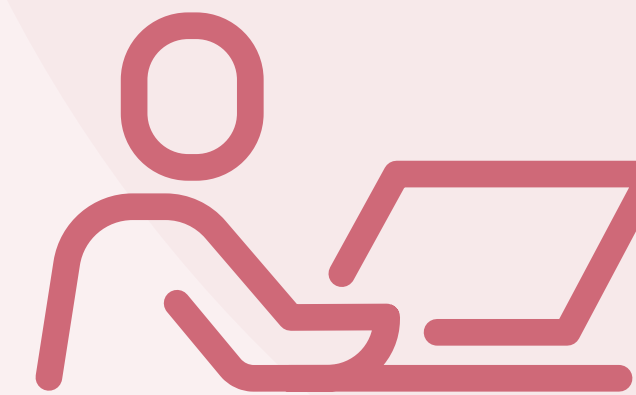
Helps to understand the general principles can apply to all types of trauma

I understand how to cope with this situation

All four students who completed the follow-up questionnaire responded that completing the course had resulted in them approaching things differently.

Eight out of nine students reported that the course had supported them to engage with an activity; another Recovery College course (n=6), education (n=1) and volunteering at the Recovery College (n=1).

To recognise what trauma-informed care looks like. I knew in my gut that the care I had wasn't but gave me confidence to know what I should be receiving...Empowered, not feeling like clinicians are in power and patients are inferior. Validated sense of equality and not being treated like an inferior being...Patient is the expert in themselves. Shifting mindset that professional is the "God" of everything. Rebalancing the power dynamic. [Taken from interview notes]



The student who participated in an online interview reported that their main takeaways from the course were recognising what trauma-informed care looks like, feeling empowered and the patient as the expert on themselves.

What was helpful about the course?

Eight out of nine students provided comments about what they found helpful about the course. Student responses included the session content, interactivity of sessions and the way in which facilitators ran the course:

Clear presentation of up to date approaches to mental health problems involving trauma and good group discussion.

The compassionate element which came through in the content.

The **facilitators are fabulous** and the content of the course is good. I particularly liked the mindful tasks.

Excellent content and well presented. Lots of group interaction. **Having experiences validated.**

I know more about it and **it is OK if sometimes I want to cry** or scream. The next day its going be better.

I enjoyed the course material, it was very insightful and informative. I also enjoyed that there was a **wide range of coping/calming activities introduced.**

Gaining **more understanding about Trauma.** Skills and Tools and doing the activities. The Teams online aspect. Recapping briefly over the previous week.

It was only recently that my health professional pointed out that I have CPTSD [Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder]. It was really hard for me to cope. This Recovery College course was so informative and supportive. **I feel that knowledge is power, and the Recovery College team has done precisely that: empowered me.** I also now know how to recognise my triggers and any other early signs and ask for help when needed. Thank you!!

What was not so helpful about the course?

Students were asked what was not so helpful about the course. Two students did not provide an answer for this question and three students commented that there was nothing unhelpful. Four students provided responses about what was not so helpful:

Probably the break in sessions, although they were unavoidable

At times I felt that the information was a lot to take in but once I was able to digest the information over the coming week it became easier to take in.

Some powerpoint slides slid into one to another which made the information difficult to read.

Would have been better for me as a face to face course.

I didn't really like splitting into groups and going into rooms.

Student satisfaction and suggestions for improvement

All students responded that they were satisfied with online running of the course and course materials:

The course was easy to access via teams and the digital information packs were presented well.

Personally really like Teams over Face to Face. Great additions of videos and activities perfect for course – the interactive ones and video explanation ones.

Three out of nine students gave suggestions as to what could be included or given more coverage in the course content:

More on techniques for helping with trauma – based problems

Information such as different therapies to help overcome trauma and how to access these services.

Bit more about nervous system?

The student who participated in an online interview reported that there were many issues with accessing the course due to Microsoft Teams and suggested Zoom for running future courses, however overall, they were very satisfied with the online running, interactivity and ethos with which the course was run.

MS Teams, I missed a lot of content because of Teams issues. I was thrown out of breakout rooms up to six times. Zoom would be much better... The course was really well run. Online but very interactive and participants were treated as equals. We could contribute and add value ourselves. There was space built in to the class to allow for this. Example of the facilitators practicing what they preach... It felt authentic...I felt heard and validated...I would definitely do the course again. [Taken from interview notes]

Student views on adopting a trauma-informed approach

In the follow-up questionnaire students were asked what the benefits of all services working in a trauma-informed way would be.



Student experiences of healthcare services

The student also highlighted the gap in service provision for appropriate therapy for individuals who have experienced trauma, exemplifying compassion focussed therapy which was not available within their local area. The student emphasised the detrimental impact of being referred for therapies not intended to deal with trauma had had, including retraumatisation, frustration and loss of confidence and trust in services.

Only one out of four students provided a time where their care was trauma-informed and the impact this had for them. One student reported they had not experienced this, one student did not know if they had or not and one student did not want to answer.

Trauma informed care empowered me. I felt listened to, empathised with, strengthened, uplifted. I felt like I was in a safe, healing relationship as opposed to someone thinking they knew better than me what I needed and trying to fix me.

Three out of four students gave examples of times where their care had **not** been trauma-informed.

When medical staff told me they knew "exactly" how I felt as it diminished my experience.

Being in Therapy with non-trauma informed therapists was stressful and retraumatising. It was like being in the traumatising environment that caused my trauma in the first place. **How different it feels when I feel safe, valued and heard by the person** that is supposed to be caring for me. Validated, empowered treated as an equal.



Additional comments

Seven out of nine students provided additional comments, three students responded with thanks for running the course, one student requested face to face courses in their local area, one student suggested a creative writing course to help revisit events without being re-traumatised. Other student comments included:

Good course, showed an understanding of trauma and its different faces.

Practice in dealing with issues through roleplay would be of interest

Breakout rooms was different. Was nice to speak more freely with others, though sometimes the group staying on topic wasn't as prevalent as set said course related discussions though was nice to experience both aspects of this. Additional insights into course like whiteboards from everyone's inputs. Though the general discussion was nice as well.



You said we did for year three

- Revisit the content and delivery of content to ensure clear understanding of what a trauma-informed approach is and isn't, including what this can look like from services.
- Revisit the content and delivery to ensure the aim of the course is clear and focused on what student's can do to use the principles of a trauma-informed approach to help advocate for themselves, including changing the title of the course.
- Consider running the course in person.
- Ensure wherever possible that the courses run without breaks, e.g. for school holidays.
- Some students found MS Teams challenging and would prefer zoom. Unfortunately, this is not possible due to licensing and security requirements of Zoom.
- Include more concrete examples of what trauma-informed care might look like to support students to identify when their care is trauma-informed.



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