



# Understanding trauma and brain development

## SUGGESTED TRAINING AND USEFUL RESOURCES



### Loddon's Commitment to Supporting Families

Our shared core competencies

### Introduction

The Loddon Children and Youth Area Partnership (the Partnership) has identified four competency areas that will enable workers and organisations to act in the best interests of children, young people and families:

- Understanding trauma and brain development
- Respecting culture and cultural difference
- Social inclusion
- Sharing information and integrating services (collaborative practice).

The purpose of this document is to provide recommendations regarding suitable training options in the competency, **understanding trauma and brain development**. In addition to training options this paper also provides resources and information for professional development purposes.

### Methodology

The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare (the Centre) conducted a mapping exercise to identify existing training through:

- an online survey of Partnership organisations
- focus groups and telephone interviews with Partnership organisations
- a desktop review of existing training packages and resources relevant to each competency
- consultation with experts in each of the four competency areas.

To capture the full spectrum of professional development tools and to assist partner organisations to choose the mode of delivery best suited to their service, we have provided a range of training courses and other resources. Providing options encourages blended learning programs that provide flexibility and cater for different learning styles. The types of training and materials included in this competency training package include face to face training, seminars, webinars and eLearning modules, amongst others.

### Key findings from consultations

Consultations confirmed the importance of staff attitudes, beliefs and values to the acceptance and sustainability of professional development strategies. The main themes to emerge from interviews and focus group consultations are outlined below.

#### *Who needs training?*

Most Partnership organisations held the view that all practitioners who are in contact with children, young people and families should have at least a minimum standard of competency and training in the four competency areas. This was particularly true for trauma and brain development, and cultural awareness. However, Partnership organisations also highlighted the difficulties they face in achieving universal training with reference to cost, capacity and 'training fatigue'.

The need for training in the four competency areas also varies across locations, organisations and even different areas within the same agency, with some staff requiring little training as their role involves limited interaction with children and families. Refresher training depends on how often skills and knowledge are used in everyday practice.

#### *How training is provided*

It was generally recognised that training should have both theoretical and practical components.

Among partner agencies, training is typically delivered in the form of face to face training or workshops. Interactive workshops and experiential techniques such as case studies and role play are effective because they allow practitioners to apply knowledge and skills to practice.

It was suggested that face to face training and workshops could be delivered jointly to multiple agencies to increase efficiency and promote collaborative practice.

Mentoring or supervision programs were also suggested as a means of strengthening competency. The literature shows a range of different methods that can be used to pair a mentor with a mentee, including 'competency matching', where mentors who are



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proficient in a competency area are paired with mentees who are not. Mentoring could be offered as a follow up to training to ensure that knowledge and skills learned are being embedded in practice.

### *Making training attractive*

Some agencies expressed frustration about training fatigue and a lack of employee capacity to engage with voluntary training. Employees are less likely to participate in training if it appears to be irrelevant to their everyday work. Promoting the benefits of the training program, such as how it will make their work more effective or efficient, can make the training more attractive to employees.

### **Selecting professional development options**

Partnership organisations differ, for example, in size, culture, geographic location and in capability requirements, which means different approaches to professional development and training delivery might be needed. Financial considerations will therefore vary among agencies. While we have not included cost in the selection criteria it remains an important consideration for many organisations when choosing training packages.

### *Validation criteria*

Training packages are based on a cycle of learning, reflection, application and review. Criteria used when determining training opportunities were:

1. The training package is underpinned by the latest available research.
2. It aligns with the goals of the organisation.
3. It is relevant to the needs of participants.
4. It is flexible in delivery.
5. It allows for reflective and active learning.
6. It applies a cultural lens.
7. It addresses legal and ethical considerations.
8. It builds on participants' existing knowledge and skills.
9. It provides opportunities for participant feedback for the purposes of continuous improvement.





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### Suggested Training / Providers

1. **Blue Knot Foundation:** *A range of professional development training, including in-house, for workers and educational workshops for adult survivors of childhood trauma.* See details at [www.blueknot.org.au](http://www.blueknot.org.au)
2. **Berry Street Childhood Institute:** Berry Street Education Model provides schools with training, curriculum and strategies to engage the most challenging students. It is designed to improve a school's capacity to address school engagement of vulnerable and disadvantaged young people. See details at: [www.childhoodinstitute.org.au](http://www.childhoodinstitute.org.au) this website includes a 5 minute video about the model.
3. **Australian Childhood Foundation:** Support carers and professionals who look after and work with traumatised children to make sense of the impact of abuse. ACF provide a range of face to face training and also offer a free on-line course. See details at: [www.childhood.org.au](http://www.childhood.org.au) and [www.professionals.childhood.org.au](http://www.professionals.childhood.org.au)
4. **SNAICC: *Recognising and Responding to Trauma:*** Looks at trauma and understanding its impacts, and builds understanding of trauma-informed approaches to healing and working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, communities and families. <http://www.snaicc.org.au/sector-development/training-programs/> or [www.snaicc.org.au](http://www.snaicc.org.au)
5. **Laying the Foundations** eLearning course through Murdoch Children's Research Institute, cost \$140 + GST for 5 modules. (Google: centre for community child health laying the foundations).
6. **A Practice Guide for Working with Families from Pre-birth to Eight Years** (Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood, 2013) Includes chapters specifically about brain development [http://www.scseec.edu.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/Reports%20and%20publications/Publications/Early%20childhood%20education/DECD\\_PracticeGuide\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.scseec.edu.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/Reports%20and%20publications/Publications/Early%20childhood%20education/DECD_PracticeGuide_FINAL.pdf)
7. **The Amazing Brain: Trauma and the Potential for Healing** Infographic
8. **How Childhood Trauma Can make you a Sick Adult** (The Adverse Childhood Study short clip) <http://bigthink.com/videos/vincent-felitti-on-childhood-trauma>
9. **Trauma-Informed Care: Perspectives and Resources** (The National Technical Assistance Center for Children's Mental Health at Georgetown University <https://gucchdtacenter.georgetown.edu/TraumaInformedCare.html>)
10. Hunter Institute of Mental Health. (2014). **Connections: A resource for early childhood educators about children's wellbeing.** Canberra, ACT: Australian Government Department of Education. <https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/himh/assets/Uploads/PDF/connections-resource.pdf>
11. Child Trauma Academy <http://childtrauma.org/cta-library/>

### Useful Websites / Online Resources

*There is an extensive and growing range of informative resources about the impact of toxic stress on brain development. The following list is just to get you started and by no means exhaustive.*

1. **Centre on the Developing Child**, Harvard University website: [developingchild.harvard.edu](http://developingchild.harvard.edu). (Google: Harvard university brain architecture).
2. **Centre for Community Child Health** workshops, seminars and eLearning courses (Royal Children's Hospital) [www.rch.org.au](http://www.rch.org.au)
3. **Australian Childhood Foundation;** [professionals.childhood.org.au](http://professionals.childhood.org.au), [childhood.org.au](http://childhood.org.au).
4. **Trauma Informed Care: Perspectives and Resources** (The National Technical Assistance Center for Children's Mental Health at Georgetown University)
5. **Child Welfare Trauma Training Toolkit** (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network)

