

Stepping Stones Trauma informed statement.

The Rationale

An increase in general awareness and understanding of trauma, and its impact on health and wellbeing, has resulted in acceptance that the experience of trauma is widespread across society. Any individual, regardless of age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, can experience trauma and resulting symptoms and difficulties; symptoms which are normal human reactions to dangerous and distressing experiences. Trauma has been shown to impact significantly on an individual's physical and mental health, as well as general wellbeing, and influence lifestyle choices which may lead to further harm. Despite the universality of trauma there still exists an approach of denial, dismissal, and victim blaming for many individuals who experience trauma and resulting difficulties. Many individuals in minority or disadvantaged groups are at a higher risk of being exposed to traumatic experiences, and do not receive sufficient recognition or support for the impact of trauma on their health and wellbeing. There is an increasing need to shift from a blame and judgement approach of asking, "what is wrong with you?" to a more helpful and empathic approach of asking, "what has happened to you?" The recognition that trauma is universal, which can affect all members of society at some point in their lives, strengthens the call for all public services to become trauma informed in their approach; understanding that trauma is far reaching in its impact on behaviour, growth, health, and wellbeing, and responding to trauma is everyone's business.

The Statement

Stepping Stones recognises the widespread occurrence of trauma and traumatic experiences in our society, and the significant impact these experiences can have on mental health. Trauma affects all members of society; from our staff, our friends and family members, to our members, and due to this Stepping Stones recognises that all areas of the organisation should be trauma informed. Stepping Stones recognises that trauma can affect people in a variety of ways, and recognises that each individual has unique support needs. Stepping Stones commits to responding to trauma with an informed and empathic approach, seeking to reduce distress and reduce the risk of re-traumatisation at all times. Stepping Stones operates with a trauma informed approach that embraces the Five Primary Trauma-Informed Care Guiding Principles identified by Falloot and Harris (2006):

Safety – Stepping Stones seeks to ensure that throughout the organisation staff and members feel physically and psychologically safe. The development and maintenance of safety is promoted in all interpersonal interactions for both staff and members. Stepping Stones seeks to understand the meaning of safety to the members it supports, and support members to achieve this.

Trustworthiness and Transparency – Stepping Stones ensures that decisions about the organisation operations, support services, and boundaries of the service are conducted with transparency, with the goal of building and maintaining trust amongst staff, members, and

the larger community. Stepping Stones seeks to develop trust by offering a consistently high standard of care to staff and members.

Choice –Stepping Stones recognises that members who experience trauma may have been diminished, dismissed, or had their choices removed in the past. Stepping Stones supports members to participate in decision-making and goal setting to determine the support they need to move forward. Stepping Stones recognises that each person’s experience is unique, and strives to offer choice to staff and members.

Collaboration and Mutuality – Stepping Stones recognises the importance of shared power and decision-making both amongst staff and between staff and members. Stepping Stones recognises that healing happens in collaborative relationships. Stepping Stones recognises that all staff across the organisation contribute to the delivery of a trauma informed service.

Empowerment – Stepping Stones believes in the resilience of individuals, and the ability to heal and recover from trauma. Stepping Stones seeks to empower staff and members by recognising individual strengths, and offering opportunities to build on these and develop new skills. Staff are facilitators of recovery, not controllers of recovery.

This approach and these principles guide Stepping Stones towards our mission to provide our communities with a range of services that will have a positive impact on their mental health and well-being and will inspire hope, recovery and tackle stigma and prejudice.