Trauma Informed Practice

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Policy

1. Introduction

At The Children's Trust School (TCTS), we recognise that many children and young people we support have lived experiences that may include trauma, adversity, medical trauma, neurological injury, attachment disruption and prolonged stress.

This Trauma-Informed Practice Policy sets out the values, principles and culture that underpin how we think about communication, emotional regulation, learning and wellbeing at TCTS. It works in direct alignment with the *Positive Communication and Emotional Regulation Policy*, which provides the detailed operational framework for practice.

Trauma-informed practice at TCTS is a whole-school approach, embedded across education, therapy, health and care, and applicable to all staff.

2. Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that:

- Children and young people experience emotional, physical, sensory and relational safety
- All communication — including distress — is understood within the context of lived experience
- Practice reduces the risk of re-traumatisation
- Regulation and wellbeing are prioritised as prerequisites for learning
- Trauma-informed principles are consistently applied across settings and transitions
- Practice aligns with PMLD standards, recognising pre-intentional communication and embodied emotional expression

This policy supports TCTS's commitment to delivering high-quality Education, Health, Therapy and Care (EHTC) in line with statutory guidance and best practice.

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

All staff who work in The Children's Trust School.

4. Definitions

PMLD

PMLD Standards

Pre-Intentional

Unless otherwise stated, the words or expressions contained in this document shall have the following meaning:

Emotional regulation support:	Supporting the emotions of young people when they become dysregulated.
Communication of distress / unmet need:.	All behaviour is communication, dysregulation is an example of the communication of distress and of unmet need.
Co-regulation:	Recognition and validation of the young person's communication.
Emotional support:	Support for young people when they are in emotional need
Emotional safety and engagement:	The environment required to ensure successful delivery of the policy
Parental responsibility	The responsibility of all adults to act in the best interests of the young person
DSL	Designated Safeguarding Lead
KCSIE	Keeping Children Safe in Education
PMLD	Profound and Multiple Learning Disability

5. **Policy Statement**

5.1 Trauma-Informed Practice at TCTS

TCTS adopts a trauma-informed approach that acknowledges that trauma:

- Can be single-incident, cumulative or ongoing
- May be linked to medical interventions, pain, uncertainty, loss, or lack of control
- Impacts emotional regulation, communication, sensory processing and feelings of safety
- Is communicated through behaviour, particularly for pupils with PMLD and complex needs

We recognise that stress-based responses are not wilful or deliberate, but adaptive responses to perceived threat, overwhelm or unmet need.

Trauma-informed practice at TCTS prioritises:

- Emotional and physical safety
- Predictability and consistency
- Attuned, relational responses
- Co-regulation before self-regulation
- Repair, reflection and reconnection following distress

Language and practice focus on:

"What are you communicating?" rather than *"What is wrong with you?"*

5.2 Trauma, Communication and Emotional Regulation

In line with the *Positive Communication and Emotional Regulation Policy*, TCTS does not view behaviour as something to be managed or corrected.

All behaviour is understood as:

- Communication of emotional state, unmet need or sensory experience
- An indicator of how safe or regulated a child feels
- Context-dependent and changeable

For children and young people with PMLD and complex needs:

- Communication may be pre-intentional
- Emotional expression may be physiological or sensory
- Regulation is often entirely dependent on adult support

Staff are expected to respond with curiosity, compassion and reflection, recognising the individual's history, triggers and patterns.

5.3 Trauma-Informed Environments

The school environment plays a critical role in trauma-informed practice.

At TCTS, environments are designed to:

- Provide predictability and routine
- Minimise sensory overload
- Support regulation through posture, movement and positioning
- Enable access to trusted adults
- Allow flexibility when pupils are unwell or distressed

Staff are expected to anticipate stressors, reduce unnecessary demands and adapt expectations to the child's emotional capacity at that moment.

5.4 Trauma-Informed Relationships and Co-Regulation

Relationships are central to trauma-informed practice at TCTS.

Children and young people are supported through:

- Consistent, emotionally available adults
- Respectful handling and communication
- Attuned responses to subtle cues
- Co-regulation through tone, proximity, pacing and touch (when appropriate)

Trust is built through predictability, reliability and repair, particularly following distress or incidents that compromise emotional safety.

5.5 The Zones of Regulation

Staff are trained in the Zones of Regulation to support them in

- providing an appropriate environment for every pupil
- co-regulation strategies

A full description of the Zones of Regulation can be found in the Positive Communication and Emotional Regulation Policy.

5.5 Understanding Context, Biography and Transition

At TCTS, trauma-informed practice depends on understanding each child's story, not solely their current presentation.

5.5a Pupil Background and Biography

Children and young people at TCTS may have experienced:

- Significant medical interventions or trauma
- Periods of hospitalisation or separation from caregivers
- Changes in placement, caregivers or professionals
- Pain, loss, bereavement or uncertainty
- Repeated experiences of lack of control or voice

Understanding a pupil's biography — including medical history, family context, attachment experiences, transitions and significant events — is essential to interpreting communication and supporting regulation.

This understanding is developed through:

- Close collaboration with families and carers
- MDT discussions and shared reflection
- Information gathered during transition and admission processes
- Ongoing observation and review

Biographical knowledge is treated respectfully and used to:

- Anticipate potential triggers
- Adapt routines and interactions
- Support emotional safety
- Inform individualised regulation and communication plans

5.5b Trauma-Informed Transition

Transitions — including admission to school, class changes, staffing changes or post-16 pathways — can be particularly significant sources of stress and potential re-traumatisation for children with complex needs.

Trauma-informed transition at TCTS includes:

- Careful planning and multi-disciplinary collaboration
- Gradual, paced introductions where possible
- Sharing of biographical and emotional information (not just clinical data)
- Maintaining familiar routines, objects or people
- Supporting families through clear, compassionate communication

Staff recognise that children may communicate distress before, during or after transition through changes in regulation, engagement or health presentation.

Transitions are reviewed reflectively, with adjustments made to support emotional safety.

5.6 Families and Carers as Partners

Families and carers are vital partners in trauma-informed practice.

TCTS works with families to:

- Understand the child's lived experiences and history
- Share insights about regulation, comfort and safety
- Build consistent approaches across home, school and residential settings
- Support transitions and significant changes collaboratively

Family knowledge is valued as essential to understanding context and communication.

5.7 Workforce Support, Supervision and Training

Trauma-informed practice requires a supported workforce.

TCTS commits to:

- Ongoing training in trauma-informed and attachment-aware practice
- Integrated supervision and reflective space
- Support following incidents or emotionally challenging situations – Flow chart appendix
- A culture that recognises the emotional impact of this work on staff

Staff wellbeing is recognised as integral to pupil wellbeing.

6. Stakeholder Consultation

This policy was drafted collaboratively across The Children's Trust School team.

7. Related Policies and Procedures

The following policies and procedures stated below support the effective application of this policy and SOP:

- Positive Communication and Emotional Regulation Policy
- Supervision Policy
- Wellbeing policy

7. External References and Guidance

The following external resources and guidance were consulted in drafting this policy and SOP:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (Department of Education)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (Department of Education)
- The Zones of Regulation Curriculum ® by Leah Kuypers 2011, © Think Social Publishing, Inc.