



## Trauma-Informed Care – Information Sheet for Visitors

Thank you for supporting Oasis Youth Support Network. As a visitor to Oasis YSN, there is some important information that we would like to share with you regarding our approach to working with young people.

We recognise that the young people we work with at Oasis YSN have all experienced trauma. Events that can lead to trauma include: physical assault; accidents; sexual assault; natural disasters; witnessing death or injury to others; neglect and abandonment in childhood; abuse in childhood including emotional abuse and neglect; war; captivity; torture; extremes of deprivation and poverty, including homelessness.

Trauma affects the way people see themselves and relate to others, and the way they access a whole range of services. Unless services understand and respond effectively to the impact of trauma, we risk reinforcing the effects of trauma and creating further harm<sup>1</sup>.

Oasis YSN adopts a Trauma Informed Care approach to service delivery. As a visitor, it is expected you will support Oasis YSN workers by interacting with young people in a way that is consistent with this approach in order to work in a trauma-informed way. This information sheet provides some basic details about Trauma Informed Care. If you have any queries after reading this sheet, please address them with the Oasis YSN worker responsible for coordinating your visit.

### What is trauma-informed care?

Trauma-informed care is a strengths-based framework that is grounded in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma, that emphasises physical, psychological and emotional safety for both providers and survivors, and that creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Mental Health Coordinating Council. (2012). *Understanding and Responding to Trauma: Trauma-informed care and community-based services resource book*. Rozelle, NSW: Author.

<sup>2</sup> Hopper, E., Bassuk, E., & Olivert, J. (2010). Shelter from the Storm: Trauma-Informed Care in Homelessness Service Settings. *The Open Health Services and Policy Journal*, 3, 80-100.

## **What does a trauma-informed approach mean?**

The experience of trauma affects people very differently. It can impact upon brain development, how trauma-survivors think, feel, and behave. The coping strategies that trauma-survivors used at the time of the trauma may continue to be used when the trauma has passed and these may or may not work as effectively later on in life. Some strategies that worked at one time may also bring additional problems for the person. However, it is important to understand that these strategies are the trauma-survivors' attempts to cope and survive, and they were developed for 'good reasons'.

Working in a trauma-informed way means that staff, volunteers and visitors will need to bring the following characteristics, qualities, and ways of working, to the interactions we engage in with young people at Oasis YSN: empathy; warmth; genuineness; respect; collaboration; non-judgemental; and the ability to optimise autonomy rather than exercise power and control ('working with', rather than 'doing to').

## **Safety, boundaries and relationships**

Safety is an important aspect in trauma-informed care. This includes both the physical safety of the environment in which care and support takes place, as well as safety within relationships. An environment that feels safe is best for all young people, staff, volunteers and visitors.

Working in a trauma-informed way recognises that boundaries need to be negotiated in a flexible, equitable and collaborative way that ensures the young person maintains a sense of control and predictability in the relationship. That said, there are some boundaries that are non-negotiable, including ethical guidelines, codes of conduct, and rules of the service. The central reference point should always be the safety and wellbeing of the young people we work with.

As a visitor to Oasis YSN, we ask that you respect the following boundaries when engaging with young people in order to support workers by achieving consistency, and maintain a trauma-informed approach to service delivery that is safe for everyone.



### Do

- ✓ Be friendly – not friends
- ✓ Role model appropriate and healthy relationships
- ✓ Do validate the young person's emotions (validation does not mean you need to agree with them)
- ✓ Do set clear limits/ boundaries regarding what you accept, e.g. language, behaviour, etc
- ✓ Do address any violations of these limits/ boundaries as they arise
- ✓ Do be consistent in maintaining limits/ boundaries
- ✓ Do speak to your visit coordinator if you have any concerns regarding boundaries
- ✓ Before accepting a gift from a client, consider whether it is appropriate (e.g. is it within the client's financial means?)

### Don't

- ✗ Don't give out personal details to clients such as phone number, address, etc
- ✗ Don't promise anything outside your remit, or that you cannot follow through on
- ✗ Don't say that you can keep anything secret for clients
- ✗ Don't endorse, engage in, or discuss having engaged in problematic behaviours with clients, e.g. drinking alcohol, taking drugs, using stereotypes, racism, etc
- ✗ Don't socialise with clients outside the setting of Oasis YSN
- ✗ Don't give clients anything you have paid for with your own personal money