

Overview for parents

Trauma Perceptive Practice (TPP) Information

**The Essex approach to
understanding behaviour
and supporting
emotional wellbeing**

What is TPP?

Trauma Perceptive Practice (TPP) is an initiative led by Essex Senior Educational Psychologist, Stephen Whitfield. It is the Essex approach to understanding behaviour and supporting emotional wellbeing. It has been written for childhood educators to understand and subsequently know how to help all children and young people, especially those who are vulnerable. This is explored through concepts in psychology and neuroscience related to attachment, neurobiology and the impact of trauma on brain development and learning. It is underpinned by core values of kindness, compassion, hope, connection and belonging. Becoming Trauma Perceptive encourages us all to think and act more boldly, through our values, policies and practice.

Why we need TPP

This approach explores the interconnected and critical importance of the **development of the human brain**, the **attachment relationship**, the differential **impacts** of childhood developmental trauma on children and young people's **social and emotional health** and the importance of developmental **experiences** through **supported relationships**.

These relationships can be powerfully supportive in enabling the child/young person to become **resilient** and to **mitigate against the impact of trauma**.

The **research** tells us that if children and young people have **consistent** experiences of being **safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, respected, responsible and included**, then they will develop the skills and brain systems that provide **resilience to stressors**.

Definition of Trauma

Within TPP, we define trauma as a response to a perceived threat to survival or emotional wellbeing of an individual.

Trauma leads to adverse brain, bodily and psychological changes that damage self, relational development and impair living, learning and working.

Two elements that need to be present for trauma to occur:

- An external event , incident or threat to a person.
- The internal response to that threat depending on many factors.

The qualities of a school/setting that is embracing TPP

Trust

Openness

Support

Relatedness

Respect

What does it mean to be Trauma Perceptive?

The importance of a shared understanding

A school/setting that is trauma-perceptive

*“realises the widespread **impact** of trauma and **understands** potential paths for recovery; **recognises** the signs and **symptoms** of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system; and **responds** by fully **integrating knowledge** about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices, and seeks to **actively resist re-traumatisation**.”*

What TPP does

For everyone

- Provides understanding for all pupils, not just those who have experienced trauma.
- Helps schools/settings to support pupils whose emotional wellbeing needs manifest themselves in behaviour that challenges.
- Enables the adults to recognise and respond supportively to those who have been impacted by traumatic stress so that the pupils can make progress with their learning.
- Helps staff to understand pupils' behaviour; 'What has/is happening?' rather than 'What is wrong?' asking themselves, 'Why? Why now?'
- Promotes a school/setting culture of emotional containment through relationships for all.

| What TPP does

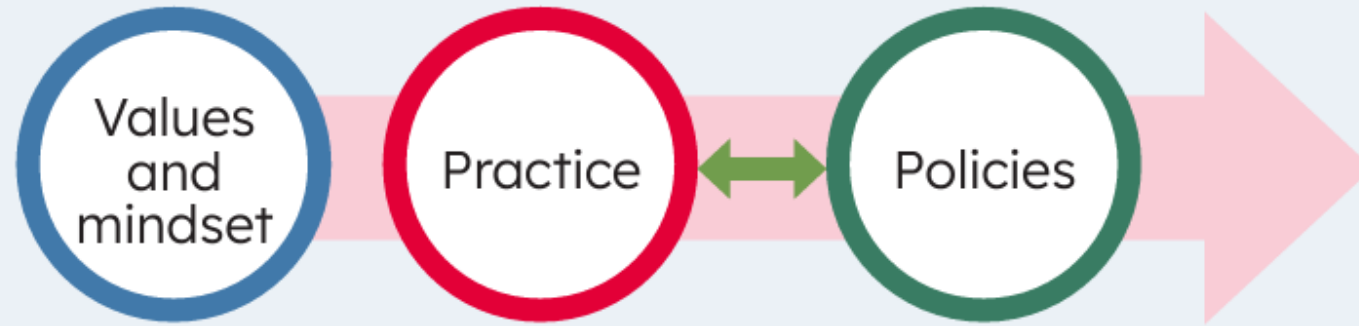
- Supports staff to provide an environment which promotes the sense of belonging.
- Enables staff to be more knowledgeable and skilled to effectively support pupils.
- Enables staff to be aware, understand and meet the pupils' emotional needs so that they can make progress with their learning.
- Enables staff to have healthy and helpful conversations with each other using reflective practice.
- Creates an underlying culture of respect and support so that pupils are provided with clear expectations.
- Develops an understanding of co-regulation/self-regulation to guide them through stressful situations.
- Enables the school/setting to realise the prevalence and impact of trauma and respond by building resilience, relationships and safety for children, families and staff.

For staff in particular and therefore pupils and families

| What TPP won't do

- Isn't a 'quick fix' or a 'magic wand' for 'sorting out' 'difficult' children or children who may 'cause harm'
- Isn't filled with strategies
- Isn't a specialist support fix for mental health issues
- Isn't a checklist or ticklist
- It will not label children.

Becoming trauma perceptive
is about the journey through
the following:



TPP values:

A shift in our mindset to a trauma perceptive description of vulnerable children and young people can create...

- **Compassion and kindness** instead of blame and shame
- **Hope** instead of hopelessness
- **Connection and belonging** rather than disconnection

The Mindset shifts:



Compassion and kindness (instead of blame and shame)

Understanding behaviour:

- what has happened/ is happening to the child?
- what is being communicated?
- sees behaviours as ways of coping- adaptive automatic responses (and therefore resulting from a stressor).
- from the perspective of a 'stress detective'. Adults ask themselves "Why/ Why now?"

Rather than

Seeing behaviour as an individual deficit- 'What's wrong with you?'- using negative labels:

- always seeing behaviours as purposeful and planned.
- behaviour being seen as 'naughty', wilful defiance and disrespectful.

The Mindset shifts:

Hope (instead of hopelessness)

Finding and building on individuals' strengths and confidence (a positive psychological position).

Rather than

Focussing on difficulties/ labels – 'writing children off'.



The Mindset shifts:



Connection and belonging (instead of disconnection)

Relationships and connection underpin all behaviour and wellbeing policy and interventions.

Rather than

Punitive approaches that result in disconnection, isolation and exclusion.

