

Enhancing police trauma-informed practice: co-creating understandings of trauma-informed practice with people from marginalised communities

To enhance trauma-informed police practice with people from marginalised communities, to improve service delivery and influence perceptions of police legitimacy and improve trust and confidence.

Key details

Lead institution	Swansea University
Principal researcher(s)	Professor Mark Jones
Police region	Wales
Collaboration and partnership	The project is an AWPAC funded project between: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Wales Police • Swansea University • University of South Wales (USW) • Higher Plain Research and Education
Level of research	Professional/work based
Project start date	April 2025
Date due for completion	April 2027

Research context

Police responses to trauma-informed marginalised communities is an emerging area of practice. A better understanding of this can enhance service delivery and influence how people from such communities perceive the legitimacy of the police and improve trust and confidence (Revolving Door, 2022; Munro, 2021).

An increased awareness about how trauma impacts people engaged or at risk of being engaged with the criminal justice system (CJS) is vital for the identification of vulnerability, development of trauma-informed policing and strengthening the case for the prevention (Bateson et al, 2019). Traditional policing methods risk exacerbating trauma and distress and result in marginalised communities fearing and mistrusting the police. Conversely, trauma-informed practices can reduce harm and build trust in these communities (Huppe and Lair 2025).

Research evaluating pre- and post-trauma-informed practice training with police officers found that the training improved perspectives, with officers more empathic and informed in their decision-making (Quigg et al, 2024). Similar research found that police officers believe there is merit in becoming trauma-informed. However, there is a lack of clarity on what this might be in day-to-day practice and uncertainty regarding where the responsibility lies concerning trauma-exposed individuals (Gillespie-Smith et al, 2019).

Research also suggests better case outcomes through using trauma-informed approaches. Birch (2024) found that trauma-informed practices improved hate crime outcomes and Bennett et al (2025) found trauma-informed practices reduced victim dropout and improved case outcomes in sexual violence cases.

Research methodology

The project will use a participatory methodology to co-create understandings of a trauma-informed approach to support people from marginalised communities engaged with the CJS who have complex adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and trauma.

The aim of the project is to develop a research informed, half-day education and training module for officers working with the public across the police forces in Wales (including delivery to student police officers at USW), supporting the development of a whole system approach (Association of Directors of Public Health: The Wave Trust, 2021).

The methodology includes:

- rapid literature review
- focus groups with stakeholders
- creating themes for education and training
- mapping with trauma-informed practice framework and other texts from rapid review
- delivery and evaluation of training alongside knowledge exchange activities
- end of project evaluation of the training module

References

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Birch, Philip. (2024). [Trauma-Informed Policing: Enhancing Law Enforcement Practices through Empathy and Sensitivity.](#) Abuse: An International Impact Journal. 5. 1-21.

Gillespie-Smith, K. Brodie, Z. Collins, K. Deacon, K. and Goodall, K. (2019). Research report: [Moving towards trauma-informed policing: An exploration of police officers' attitudes and perceptions towards Adverse Childhood Experiences.](#) Scottish Institute of Policing Research report.

Huppe, E., & Lair, Z. (2025). [Improving Police-Citizen Interactions Through Trauma-Informed Policing.](#) Applied Police Briefings, 2(1), 20–22.

Munro, T. (2021). [Public-health approaches to policing: How Wales is working to become a trauma-informed nation,](#) in Policing Insight [Online].

Quigg, Z., Wilson, C., McCoy, E., and Butler, N. (2024). [The impact of adverse childhood experience and trauma-informed practice training for police in two regions in the United Kingdom.](#)

The Police Journal, 0(0).

Revolving Doors (2022). [Knowledge Exchange Network \(March 2022\): Trauma-Informed Principles, Practice and Supervision.](#)

ACE Hub Wales and Traumatic Stress Wales (2022). [Trauma-Informed Wales: A Societal Approach to Understanding, Preventing and Supporting the Impacts of Trauma and Adversity.](#)

Research participation

This research will facilitate focus groups with stakeholders, including:

- police officers with expertise in trauma-informed practice
- frontline police officers
- people who have been marginalised in society and are engaged with the CJS who have complex ACEs, trauma and other complex needs, such as neurodiversity and/or substance use