

Developing trauma informed environments *(Part 4)*

A key part of taking a trauma-informed approach is developing relationships through Safety, Trust, Choice, Collaboration and Empowerment.

We have been looking at each of these elements in turn. Today's theme is Choice.

Choice

Learning how to make choices is a vital part of development. It ultimately gives us the freedom to make decisions about our life and build our independence.

For young people with a history of trauma their relationship with choice can be challenging.



By providing opportunities for choice in a safe environment we can help young people to develop new beliefs about choice.

By working with the young person to discover their preferences, they have an experience of being treated with dignity. This supports them to develop self respect, and confidence.



Don't knows

Too many choices can be as tricky as no choices!

There are many reasons why someone might struggle to make decisions. This may be related to their past experiences and/or their communication/ cognitive abilities.

Each young person is different so you will need to test out what works best for them.

'Error free' Choices

For some people they are so anxious about making mistakes they try and avoid making any decisions. Here providing small choices where there is no wrong can help to build a persons confidence. For example: "Shall we use the red or blue pen?" "Shall we do this or that first?"



Ideas on how to promote Choice for young people

By providing young people with options throughout your interactions with them, you can promote choice, which can help them to develop a sense of control and safety. Here are some ideas on how to include choice within different situations.

Taking a break – Offer young people chances to stop or take a break in a session when things feel difficult or distressing.

Disclosure- What information would they like to share with who and when?

Involvement of their parents in interventions– Can they choose how they might want to involve their parents in their sessions?

Attendance at meetings– Give people a choice to attend meetings concerning them.

Location, time and date of meeting– Can they choose where and when to meet?

Compliance– Sometimes it's tough sticking to the rules. Work together to think about what makes it easier or harder. Provide choices about consequences.

Aims and goals of the session– Can they set the goals for the session and later change their mind?

Working with partner agencies– Give people the chance to pick which partner agencies they want involved.

Supporting these small yet very personal choices can over time empower people to feel able to make bigger choices which they may have once perceived as overwhelming.