



## TCI – Module One Crisis Prevention: Creating a safe space for learning

### Effects of trauma

The majority of young people in OOHC have suffered much adversity and trauma in their lives. It is essential that the adults caring for these young people understand the effects of trauma and adversity so they can respond in a way that decreases the young person's stress. When a trusted adult is trauma informed they are able to respond to a child or young person with understanding and empathy when they cannot control their emotions. They also know the importance of the young person's perceptions of safety within the context of a trusting relationship. The Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) system helps organisations create a trauma-sensitive environment where young people and adults are safe and feel safe and all adults involved in the caring of the child or young person understand the effects of trauma and adversity.

The goal of the TCI system is to prevent and de-escalate potential crises, build the capacity of staff to manage aggressive and violent behaviours avoiding potential injuries, and to create a learning culture where everyone, young people and adults, learn from experience.

Children and young people come into care with a variety of life experiences and ways of behaving and coping as a result of environmental impacts and the breakdown of trusting and secure relationships. Safety and security are at the top of the list for a child or young person if they are to grow and thrive in their environment. Meeting the basics needs in a caring and nurturing manner promotes a therapeutic relationships. Trusting relationships and attachments promote feelings of security and give children the courage to try out new skills.

## What is trauma?

A trauma is a psychologically distressing event that is outside the range of normal childhood experience and involves a sense of intense fear, terror and helplessness.

### Types of trauma:

**Sexual:** When an adult or someone involves a child in any sexual activity, observes sexual intercourse, is exposed to pornographic material

**Physical:** When a parent or carer physically injures a child intentionally or is physically assaulted in some way

**Relational and Systematic Trauma:** When a child does not receive the love, affection or attention he/she requires to feel good about themselves and develop properly. Constant change of placements, incorrect matching of child/young person and carers

**Neglect:** When basic needs for food, housing, health care and warm clothing are not met

**Domestic Violence:** Can include witnessing violence or being aware of it happening between adults in the home eg. A drug deal gone wrong, home raided.

Trauma in childhood can permanently alter the way the brain functions. How much physically damage children experience depends on:

- The age at which they are first traumatised
- The frequency of their traumatic experiences
- The degree to which their care takers contributed to the trauma
- Intensity of the trauma

This can result in

- Problems with self-regulation
- Aggression
- Impulse control
- Physical problems
- Attention and dissociative problems
- Poor interpersonal relationships
- Developmental level

(Garbarino,1999; Ledoux, 2002; Perry, 1997,2002; Schore, 2001; van der Kolk, 1994, 2006).



Children and young people who have experience some form of trauma and adversity can develop patterns of pain based behaviours. A trauma informed organisation supports and facilitates trauma informed care through its policies, procedures and practices that recognise and responses to traumatic events young people have experienced. Pain based behaviours and high risk behaviours can offer be prevented by creating a setting in which emotionally competent adults meet young people's needs and allow young people to heal and thrive through caring and developmental relationships.

## Pain Based Behaviours

Pain based behaviour are often triggered when a child or young person feels a loss of control and is reminded of a traumatic event. Pain based behaviour is an expression of emotional and psychological pain when the child or young person has run out of coping skills. This is where the child and young person needs help to co-regulate emotions by having people around them assessing the feelings behind the behaviour, understanding the meaning of the behaviour to the child and responding in a manner that meets the child's needs in that moment.

In a crisis it is very important to manage the environment. In a crisis a child or young person will become hyper-vigilant to what is accruing in the environment. Before we respond in a situation we need to ensure that the environment is not providing additional stimulation and stress. Many times a crisis could have been prevented or diverted by changing those things in the environment that may be contributing to the stressful situation.



**Details of this topic are covered in the Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) Student Workbook 7<sup>th</sup> Edition. Refer to Module One pages S1 – S18.**