

## Creating spaces and buildings which are in line with trauma-informed and trauma-responsive values and principles

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*Note- These are simply ideas and some general suggestions, they are not prescriptive or exhaustive. In line with trauma-informed practice, each space and organisation will need to review and assess their own space, and decide and evaluate what is realistic, a priority, and what will be most helpful. This will also differ depending on the function, task, purpose, and aims of the unique building/space; including safety and financial considerations. This are general suggestions, however, there are additional needs for a therapeutic context, such as sensory and regulation rooms etc. It is also key that the people and community using the space/building are actively involved and are drivers in what they need, want, and experience.*

Creating these spaces involves an acknowledgment, recognition, and buy-in that our physical environment can impact our experience and our overall wellbeing. This includes acknowledging that trauma-informed spaces should aim to reduce stress, chaos, triggering people, increasing feelings of danger/unsafety/unpredictability, and so forth. Within this, they should actively aim to increase feelings of safety, calm, security, containment, warmth, and of being welcomed, and valued. The environment optimally can be a “brick mother” and ideally will embody the principles of being a safe haven and a secure base. The environment should convey the important messages such as, “We value you”, “We prioritise safety”, “We care for you”, and “We hold you in mind”.

**Some elements to reflect on and consider:** (It can be helpful to, in detail, walk through the experience of your space/building from multiple people’s perspectives)



### Physical Safety

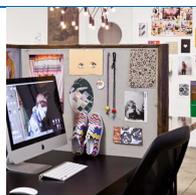
- (E.g. Lighting in the parking/ Security processes/ Emergency contact numbers available/ Clear Signs/ Exit signs /Alarms or buzzers/ Locked doors/ Sign-in book/ Enough space etc)



### Waiting area and other areas

- Welcoming? Personal greeting? Receptionist/security have received some training around the importance of their role, the impact of trauma, and some ways of reducing and de-escalating incidents?
- Staff wearing ID badges? (e.g. Can be optimised with values/ safety plan/ coping tools/ role etc).

- Clear and accessible signage? Signs in multiple languages and brail? Anchors to support one to orient e.g. Art work/ plants/ features? Clear exit signs?
- Where possible wide corridors? Open spaces? Curved features and design?
- Inviting and calming colour scheme? (Generally recommended to use earth and natural colours such as blue, green, and wood)
- Calming and inviting art work? (Wonderful if created by the community/people using the services)
- Calming, low level, and regulating music?
- Plants, windows to outdoor space, and/or art work of nature? Water features (e.g. Aquarium, fountain etc)?
- Open decluttered spaces? No hidden corners?
- Clean and maintained spaces?
- Age-appropriate and culturally-aware toys, equipment, reading materials etc?
- Seating area with an array of seating for different regulation needs e.g. Rocking, spinning, containing, soft etc?
- Access to water and tissues?
- Lighting? (e.g. Not intrusive/ fluorescent/ too dim/ buzzing/flickering/ humming/natural etc)
- Furniture? (Ideally earth colours and curved rather than hard straight edges)
- Posters, inspirational quotes, messages of hope displayed?
- Mindful of sound and volume? (e.g. Sound proof rooms, carpet, sound proof art, mindful of staff raising voices or shouting across rooms, music choice etc)
- Temperature of the room?
- Spells? E.g. Cleaning smells/ candles/ sprays/ incense etc.



### Personal space

- Being able to personalise space, so not hot-desking (e.g. Photos/ own stationary/ seat selection/ screen saver of choice etc).



### Communal and purpose-built spaces; access to them

- Spaces to socialise, eat together, and connect?
- Spaces to make private phone calls?
- Space to calm down and have some quiet time?
- Space to breastfeed?
- Space to have meetings?
- Space to carry out therapy etc? (Additional trauma-informed needs for these spaces)
- Space to pray?
- Space/access to exercise (e.g. Gym/ bike scheme/ suggested walking routes/ yoga classes etc)
- Space/access to nature and outdoor space (e.g. Communal garden/ sensory garden/ a maze or labyrinth sticker or grass feature can support left and right brain activation)