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)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Physical Safety</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>• (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)</td>
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<th>Waiting area and other areas</th>
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<td>• 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?</td>
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<td>• Staff wearing ID badges? (e.g. Can be optimised with values/ safety plan/ coping tools/ role etc).</td>
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- 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)