

# Aged Care Diversity Framework

## Resource Sheet 4 An Introduction to Trauma Informed Care

### Why the focus on trauma?

A high proportion of older people from the 12 diverse groups have experienced significant trauma in their lives and continue to experience the impact throughout life. Examples include on-going symptoms of post-traumatic stress syndrome experienced by refugees, abuse survivors and people separated from their families; the effects of discrimination experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and LGBTI elders; multiple areas of disadvantage experienced by people who are homeless, mentally ill, or living with disability. Research continues to show that the effects of trauma can have serious negative effects on the psychological wellbeing and physical and cognitive health of older people.

### What is Trauma Informed Care?

Trauma informed care (TIC) assumes that any individual is more likely than not to have had an experience of trauma that has impacted on their lives. TIC recognises trauma may be present and acknowledges that trauma can play a significant role in a person's life experiences. TIC is not about treatment but rather about providing accessible support that is appropriate to people who have experienced trauma. The idea is that the support provided doesn't trigger or increase symptoms associated with the trauma and thus re-traumatise the person. The aim is for trauma informed care to become a natural part of the way we work in aged care in much the same way that taking universal precautions is the established norm of infection control.

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## What can re-trigger trauma?

Traumatic memories and responses can be re-ignited when the person:

- has to re-tell their story
- senses that they are being labeled (e.g. a hoarder, a schizophrenic)
- feels that they have no choices
- thinks they are not being truly seen and heard
- doesn't feel emotionally safe and lacks trust in the support providers
- feels that providers are doing things for rather than with them

## What are the key principles in providing trauma informed care?

- Ensuring physical and emotional safety with older consumers
- Maximising client choice and control of support decisions and responses
- True collaboration and co-design of support strategies
- Enhanced sensitivity to client needs and the building of trust
- Equipping the client to empower themselves
- Respect for diversity in all of its forms.

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For links to further information and resources, see **Sheet 17: Resources Nos. 29, 34, 36**