TRAUMA INFORMED POLICING

DR SHARON LAMBERT
SCHOOL OF APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK, IRELAND
Psychological trauma is the unique individual experience of an event or enduring conditions, in which:

The individual’s ability to integrate his/her emotional experience is overwhelmed, or

The individual experiences (subjectively) a threat to life, bodily integrity, or sanity.

(Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995, p. 60)
TRAUMA

Individual, Group, Community......

- Single incident trauma - unexpected and overwhelming
- Complex trauma - inter-personal and enduring
- Developmental trauma: exposure to early life trauma ACEs
- Intergenerational trauma: living with trauma survivors
- Historical trauma: CSA, residential schools etc.
- The experience of immigrants, refugees, marginalised groups & ethnic minorities
SYNAPTIC DEVELOPMENT

36 weeks gestation  | Newborn  | 3 months  | 6 months | 2 years | 4 years | 6 years

| Synapse formation | Synapse pruning |

S Lambert UCC (c)
1. Amygdala
   - Controls instinctive responses
   - Right amygdala, fear, memory, emotion, procedural

2. Limbic System/Emotional Brain
   - Perceives & reacts to threat

3. Pre fontal cortex/Thinking Brain
   - Analyses, problem solves & learns from experiences
People who have experienced more trauma spend more time in ‘fight or flight’
PEOPLE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED MORE TRAUMA CAN HAVE CHALLENGES IN TERMS OF SOLVING PROBLEMS, CONFLICT AND LEARNING:
Figure 6 Incident YLD Rates per 1,000 Population by Age and Broad Disease Grouping, Victoria 1996
Bullying  Poverty  Peer rejection and having no friends  Experience of racism  Death, multiple and traumatic loss
Community violence  Food scarcity  Experience of the care system  Poor academic performance  Living in an unsafe environment
Main Findings

- Inject at earlier ages
- Higher frequencies of overdosing
- Higher frequencies of self-harming
- Higher frequencies of domestic violence
- More risk-associated behaviour
- Higher frequencies of treatments
THE EVIDENCE BASE: STUDIES SHOW THAT TRAUMA INFORMED CARE CAN...

- Increase staff and service user safety – incidents down by 68% in low threshold homeless service in Limerick (including verbal and physical abuse)
- Reduce antagonistic methods: e.g. reduced use of seclusion and restraints in mental health settings
- Decrease incidence of crisis situations in criminal justice settings
CURRENT PROJECT

• Focus Groups – GYDP workers

• Focus Groups – JLOs

• 125 ACEs questionnaire were submitted across 13 GYDPs in the Cork or Dublin areas
Age Range:

- 15 years: 29%
- 16 years: 16%
- 17 years: 6%
- 12 years: 7%
- 13 years: 15%

Disadvantaged community:

- No: 16%
- Yes: 84%

Educational Status:

- Neither in employment, education or training: 42%
- In formal education or training: 51%
- Employed: 7%
EXPOSURE TO ADVERSITY

37% Less than 4 ACES
63% 4 or more ACES

N = 125
## MOST COMMON ACES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACE</th>
<th>% Yes</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loss of parent</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional abuse</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household substance abuse</td>
<td>66%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Household mental illness</td>
<td>54%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotional neglect</td>
<td>52%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Incarcerated family member</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical neglect</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic violence against mother</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual abuse</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td>GYDP</td>
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<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 Aces</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 ACE</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 or more ACEs</td>
<td>63%</td>
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<td>Emotional abuse/verbal abuse</td>
<td>68%</td>
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FOCUS GROUPS

• How the data from the research/trauma prevalence is relevant in GYDP

• Whether and how Trauma Training or TIC approaches would be relevant in the context of GYDP

• What the limitations of the model are, or what would be required to embed trauma-awareness or trauma-informed approaches within the Gardaí
FOCUS GROUPS

“This type of talk needs to be incorporated into training in [police college] so that everybody has an understanding of it before you have your Garda hat on or your JLO hat.

“Have a better way of understanding what they’re going through”

“To be more aware that the young people you’re dealing with have experienced trauma and you adapt yourself accordingly… like your communication skills”

“You could even explain to the parents, help them understand the impact of trauma because they might have no tolerance left for the young person.. it’s important to say that in a way that doesn’t sound like you’re proportioning blame to them”
“We wouldn’t have heard anything about this years ago. We knew there were issues but we didn’t have the language for it. The basic reason for it was, ‘Mary’s in jail and Johnny’s a shop lifter she young Johnny will be a shop lifter too’. We’re looking at it more scientifically now”

“It was good to hear about the prefrontal cortex. You know we’ve all been there where we’re trying to engage young people and it’s going nowhere. I suppose that’s the reason why”

“I went to a particular young fellas house in uniform and he basically fucked me out of it, wouldn’t talk to me or engage at all. Two months later I called to him again in the same house, this time in plain clothes and it was a completely different reaction. He sat down and he spoke to me. He interacted no bother at all. He didn’t even remember me from the time previous. All he saw was the uniform”
EXPOSURE TO TRAUMA

Compassion Fatigue → Secondary Traumatic Stress → Burnout
• An online survey (Oct ‘18-May ‘19) was fully completed by 576 frontline homelessness service providers in Ireland.

• We asked about:
  – Sociodemographic information
  – Their Professional Quality of Life (30-item ProQOL, Stamm, 2010)
  – Their early negative childhood experiences, if any (10-item ACE scale Felitti et al., 1998)
  – An indication of how stressful it was to complete the survey on a scale of 0 – 10 (‘completing the survey was not emotionally difficult’ to ‘completing the survey was very difficult’)

MAIN FINDINGS

- Longer service
- Social care/work, counsellors/therapists
- Women scored higher on ACE scores than men
“ASK NOT WHY THE ADDICTION BUT WHY THE PAIN.”
— GABOR MATÉ