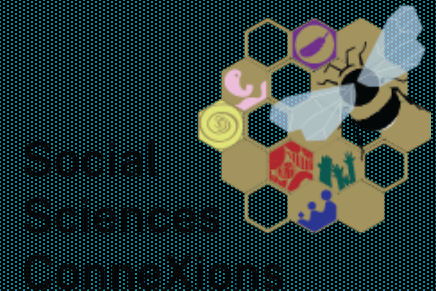



# The Language of Trauma

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*“We need to have an infant and child literate society,  
where everyone who has worked or works with children  
knows what to expect” (Perry, 2017).*

# Context

In June 2022  
5,836 children were  
recorded as  
living in State Care

From 2014-2019 non-accidental injury  
was recorded in 5% of all paediatric  
major trauma patients, and accounted  
for 34% of major trauma in children aged  
under 1 year (NOCA,2021)

Tusla recorded 61,418  
referrals in the first  
nine months of 2022,  
(15%) more than the  
same period in 2021  
(Tusla, 2023, p.3)

1,201,618 children  
living in Ireland

23.6% of the  
population

Are you a trauma literate professional?



9

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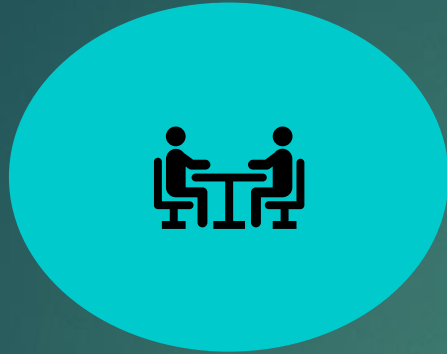
10



# Protecting The Future: Childhood Trauma in Ireland, A Multidisciplinary Exploration



# Data Collection



12 Semi-Structured Interviews

Multidisciplinary  
Irish Professionals  
Biopsychosocial



1 International Focus Group

5 international experts

Purposive & Snowball Sampling

Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022)

# Results

## 5 Main Themes

The language of  
trauma

The children of today  
are the adults of  
tomorrow

Prevention is  
better than cure

Intergenerational  
Wounds

Balancing the  
scale

## Sub Themes

Over emphasis on behaviour

The professional's  
trauma/attach history

Lack of awareness in the medical  
sector

From conception

Link to adult incarceration  
/homelessness

# The language of trauma

Behaviour =  
Communication

Beyond  
Words

Professional  
Education

Meet The  
Child Where  
They Are At

Curious

Professional  
Accountability

“Very Quiet”

“Difficult”

“Naughty”

“Bold”



# Step into the child's world

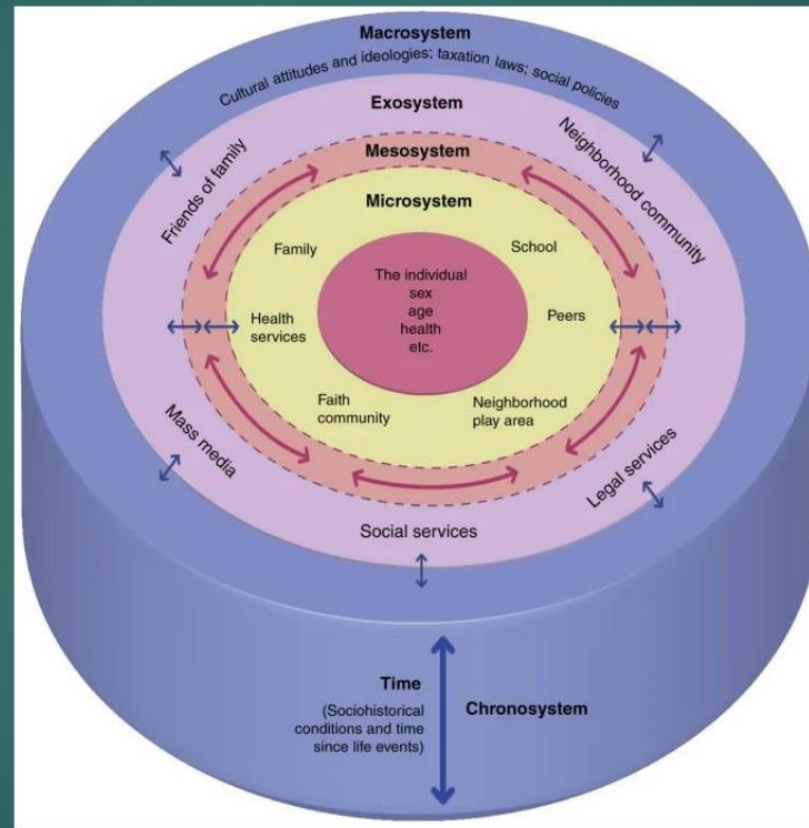



Fig.1 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory of Human Development.

# Quotes:


*I really feel like a lot of kids are being let down, because grownups just don't know enough about trauma and what it can mean for your development. How trauma can shape the way that you relate to people or react to people and none of its your fault but a lot of children are left feeling alone and misunderstood like there's something wrong with them. Really if we all just did a little bit more work in trying to understand what's going on we would be able to respond differently so I suppose I did sit with that question I know there's probably a lot of good stuff happening but for me some of the systems that children move in have the potential to actually traumatize or retrigger trauma depending on what has gone on before it.*

-Interview Participant 4



*“We see far too much of children going to school for instance and having behaviour management approaches which are contraindicated for children with childhood trauma history and that's through lack of understanding and lack of knowledge”*

-Interview Participant 2



*“I just think there needs to be a greater bravery and curiosity in some professions and with individual professionals. I know that’s pushing it a bit far but that just based on my personal professional experience to tackle what is going on in the family home and address it in a way that is supportive and not judgemental”*

-Focus Group Participant 1

*“When these young adults or children are triggered and their overwhelmed by their responses to this trigger and you enter into that state of co dysregulation you’re not helping them”*

-Focus Group Participant 1

Key stakeholders in the lives of children in foster care should receive trauma informed care training (Lotty et al, 2020).

Emotional tone is the raw material which permits us to aid children using our own body language (Delahooke, 2019)

Behaviour is a child's first language (Archer & Gordon, 2006)

Emotional tone

Body language

Professional's play an integral role (Treisman, 2021)

Reactive

Own trauma responses

Misinterpreting Behaviour

Countertransference



# The Perpetuation of Trauma

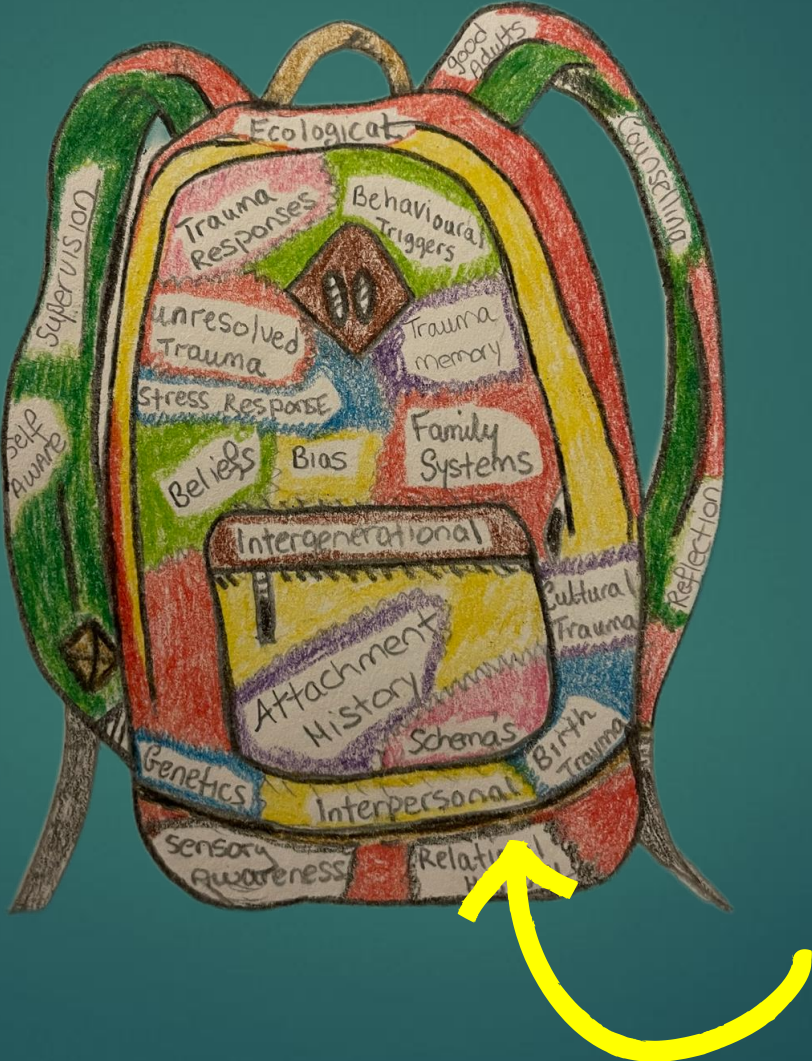
# The Trauma Literate Professional's Invisible Trauma Backpack

## Why? Trauma Literacy

The straps represent the professional's development practices which strengthen their practice.



A trauma literate professional is aware of their backpack



**Draft 1**  
Developed from data collected and literature.

The storage section represents factors that impact or colour a professional's ability to interpersonally work with others



- Research has highlighted a relationship between a person's early trauma history and their choice of career (Bryce et al, 2021, p.2).
- The strong desire towards helping professions often masks the professional's own needs (UNHCR, 2001, p.5)
- A key aim of trauma informed care is to avoid or resist the re-traumatization of clients as well as staff by perpetuating their trauma (SAMHSA, 2014, p. 10).



# Reflect..... What is in your backpack?

*Your practice?*

*Your body language? What does it say about you?*

*Tone of voice?*

*Beliefs?*

*Your history?*

*Past Experiences?*

*The language of trauma goes beyond words. It transcends generations, families, and situations.*

*Where to next?*



# Exploring Trauma-Literacy Among Early Childhood Education and Care Professionals in Ireland: A Qualitative Study

10 Semi  
Structured  
Interviews

5-6 Focus  
Groups

International  
Comparison

# *Potential Outcomes:*

- Determining the factors that contribute to becoming a trauma literate Early Childhood Education and Care professional in Ireland.
- The generation of new practice-based knowledge with the potential to inform future interventions, policies, practices and educational programmes.
- Examining the role of a professional's human development in providing trauma- informed care.
- Establishing Ireland's position within an international trauma- informed care context.



In Conclusion

# Help/Support



116 123  
Or text 0872609090



1800 247 247



061 224627

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