



Supporting the wellbeing of individuals with intellectual disability: An Australian evaluation of trauma-informed practice

Associate Professor Tonia Gray and Dr Danielle Tracey from the Centre for Educational Research have received funding from the Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) to investigate the impact of a new framework for supporting Australians with an intellectual disability. The framework addresses the high risk of trauma and distress experienced by people with an intellectual disability, and will be trialed in conjunction with existing community services.

'Almost 3% of Australians have an intellectual disability, with a significant number of those people requiring care at home and in the workplace', Associate Professor Gray explains. 'Unfortunately, despite recent reforms that acknowledge the diverse cognitive and autonomy-based needs people with intellectual disability in Australia, the incidence of trauma within this group are alarmingly high. These people may be traumatised by certain care practises, communication breakdowns, and sexual or other forms of abuse. They may have difficulty accessing trauma support services themselves.' In order to improve the safety and quality of life of people with an intellectual disability, the Ageing, Disability and Home Care's State-wide Behaviour Intervention Service has partnered with the FACS Illawarra Shoalhaven District and the House with No Steps to trial a support framework informed by trauma outcomes and prevention strategies.

'This investigation will examine the effects of adopting a Trauma Informed Framework within the existing Australian industry guidelines for interacting with people with an intellectual disability, both while they are receiving care and in the workforce', Dr Tracey says. The study will run for 12 months and gather information from key stakeholders, using



interviews and other qualitative methods, on the framework's efficacy. Its impact will be measured at the systemic, workplace, and client level. This information will comprise a report to inform any future extensions of the framework.

This trial of the Trauma Informed Framework will allow policy makers and service providers to determine the efficacy of adopting such a framework for optimising the wellbeing of people with an intellectual disability. The associated workforce implications for adopting this framework will also be gathered to inform future implementation.

Project Title: Implementing trauma-informed practice in a disability NGO: Supporting the wellbeing and recovery of clients in the disability sector

Contact Details: t.gray@westernsydney.edu.au or d.tracey@westernsydney.edu.au;
<http://www.westernsydney.edu.au/cer>

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