

## PIE on a page

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A Psychologically Informed Environment (PIE) “... is one that takes into account the psychological makeup – the thinking, emotions, personalities and past experience - of its participants in the way that it operates.”<sup>1</sup> It’s an approach to supporting people who have experienced complex trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)<sup>2</sup> It also considers the psychological needs of staff working with challenging behaviours: developing trauma related skills and knowledge thereby increasing motivation, job satisfaction and resilience. Originally developed for the homeless sector its principles are transferrable and beneficial to a variety of other fields. The PIE framework is not prescriptive, each element can be achieved in a variety of ways, tailored to the specific service.

### The Key Elements

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A PIE has 5 elements:

1. A psychological framework: using psychological approaches, tools and models to support and inform our interventions e.g. Trauma Informed Care, a strengths-based approach, cognitive behavioural coaching.
2. Relationships: staff use therapeutic style relationships to build trust and provide consistency to ensure people feel psychologically safe, a prerequisite to change. This can be supported by adaptations, to policies and procedures such as referral, assessment and support planning.
3. Staff support and training: working with people who exhibit challenging behaviour or are reluctant to engage, can be emotionally draining and frustrating. Becoming a PIE encourages this behaviour to be viewed from a different perspective, one of trauma. PIE services intentionally support staff to build emotional resilience in working with such behaviours and embed reflective practice. This leads to greater staff competence, confidence and commitment, reducing burn-out, increasing motivation.
4. The physical environment: there’s a wealth of evidence showing that people’s behaviour is influenced by the physical environment. How lighting, colours, temperature and design, for example, can impact on actions and mood, whether an individual feels psychologically safe or threatened. PIE applies this understanding to shaping the design and delivery of services working with vulnerable people.
5. Evidence generating practice: measuring and evaluating the impact of changes implemented. Have they had the intended impact? Do they need to be modified? What have we achieved? What have we learned?

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<sup>1</sup> Robin Johnson, co-author of “Psychologically Informed Services for Homeless People – Good practice guide” 2012 Dept of Communities and Local Gov and developer of <http://pielink.net/>

<sup>2</sup> Complex trauma refers to the psychological problems and linked patterns of thoughts, feelings and behaviours which tend to result from prolonged exposure to traumatic experience. (Good practice guide 2012)