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Trauma informed approaches to support the recovery of children, young people and families affected by domestic abuse

Festival of Practice 28th & 29th March 2023

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Together, we stand tall

What we know

From the Domestic Abuse Act 2021:

- Children should not have to witness violence and abuse in their own homes. We have a duty to support victims and prevent people from being hurt
- Growing up in a household of fear and intimidation can profoundly impact children's wellbeing and development, with lasting effects into adulthood
- Children exposed to domestic abuse are victims of child abuse

*"The staff are amazing
my caseworker was
fantastic put me at ease
straight away she really
helped me through the
hardest time of my life"*



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acorns Video: Childhood Trauma and the Brain: UK Trauma Council

'Trauma informed practice'

The working definition of 'trauma informed practice' adopted and published by the government in November 2022 reflects the original internationally recognised definition developed by the United States Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

Working definition:

- ✓ **Realise that trauma can affect individuals, groups and communities**
- ✓ **Recognise the signs, symptoms and widespread impact of trauma**
- ✓ **Prevent re-traumatization**

6 key principles:

- ✓ **Safety**
- ✓ **Trustworthiness**
- ✓ **Choice**
- ✓ **Collaboration**
- ✓ **Empowerment**
- ✓ **Cultural consideration**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-definition-of-trauma-informed-practice/working-definition-of-trauma-informed-practice>



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We aim to:

- Improve the physical and mental health and well-being of families who have been impacted by domestic abuse
- Increase their personal resources by building self-esteem, confidence and assertiveness
- Empower them to increase their self-efficacy and live safely and independently
- Connect them to like minded peers and reduce isolation, improving personal support networks and reducing the need for intensive intervention in the future



My Sisters Place
Time
TRAUMA INFORMED MODEL OF EMPOWERMENT

[https://www.mysistersplace.org.uk/training/time-trauma-informed-training/#:~:text=TIME%20\(Trauma%20Informed%20Model%20of,support%20survivors%20of%20domestic%20abuse](https://www.mysistersplace.org.uk/training/time-trauma-informed-training/#:~:text=TIME%20(Trauma%20Informed%20Model%20of,support%20survivors%20of%20domestic%20abuse)

"This service is amazing! The best things - such a calm voice, education, tools, patience, talking, thinking about things differently, listening, the support, seem to understand and not judge"

We do this by:

- Placing and retaining the survivor and their family at the centre of our practice
- Providing safe environments - supporting survivors to reconnect with a sense of self and control
- Continuously assessing need through review and reflection



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Acorns Service Delivery Model



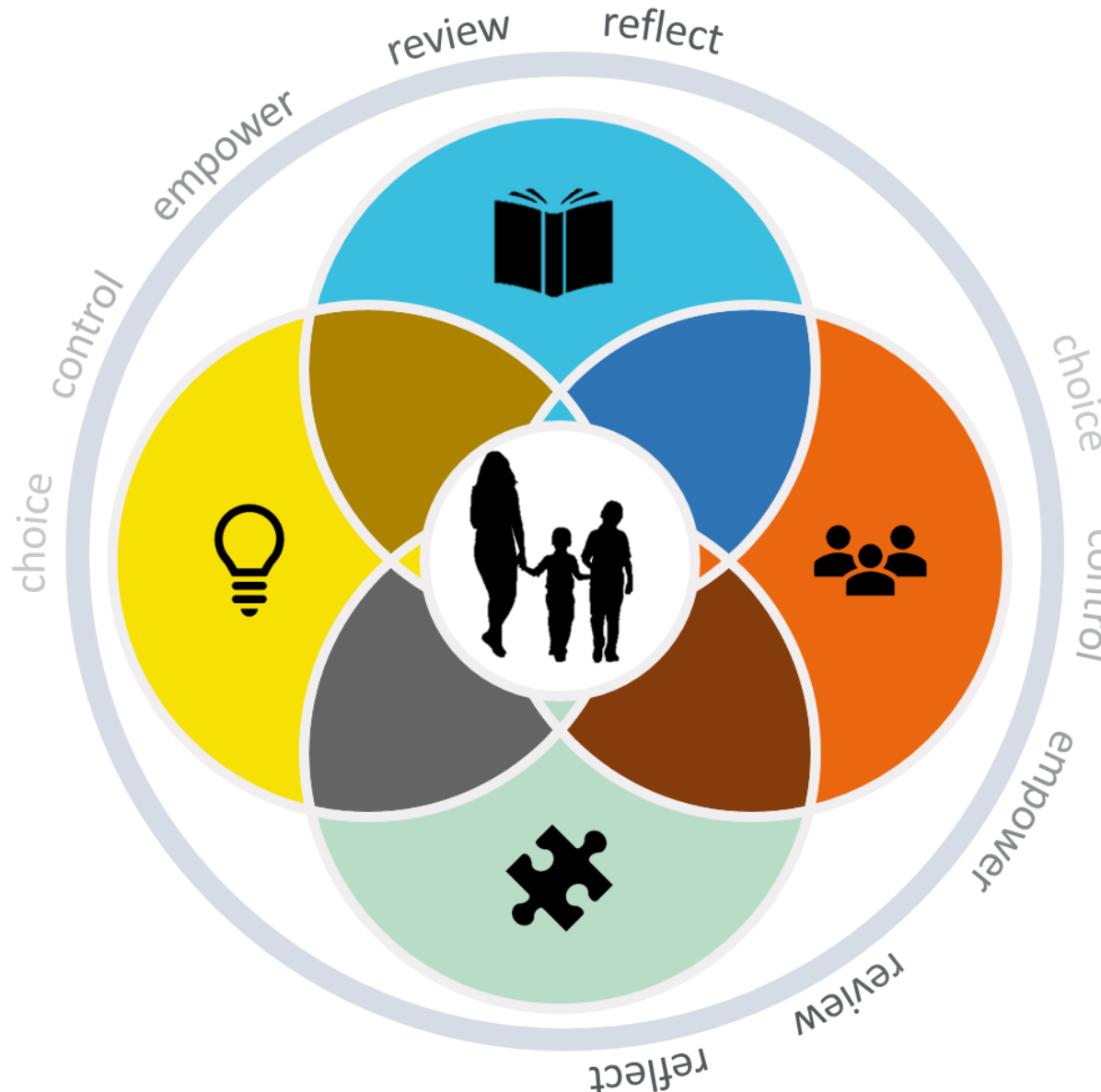
Prevent

- Teen relationship helpline
- Preventative youth programmes
- General advice and guidance for families and professionals
- Signposting
- One off information sessions, talks and presentations



Cope

- First Response – crisis service 11+
- Mental health & wellbeing support in-house, and on an outreach basis in schools, colleges and the community – long and short term
- Open access flexible support for teens – when and where they need it
- Family Support Service – advice and advocacy for parents/carers, long and short term



Participate

- Acorns Youth Panel
- Acorns peer support group – volunteer led
- Psychoeducation
- Family group programmes
- Accessible whole family activities
- Open days and seasonal events



Recover

- Play therapy
- Art therapy
- Music therapy
- Talking therapies
- Mental health & wellbeing support in-house, and on an outreach basis in schools, colleges and the community – long and short term
- Solutions focused interventions

Case study – Sally (27), Max (7), Shane (5)

Sally:

- Moved house
- Signed off child protection plan
- Enrolled at college
- Reports improved mental health and ability to cope
- Reports whole family feel happy and more settled

*Accessed
Christmas
Fund*

*Counselling –
9 sessions*

Shane:

- Improvement in concentration
- Improved school attendance
- Less separation anxiety

*Counselling
– 8
sessions*

*Intensive
family support
for 6 months*

*Play therapy
– 12 sessions*

Max:

- Bed wetting stopped
- Nightmares now infrequent
- Improved school attendance



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Play Therapy

"Toys are children's words and play is their language" Garry L Landreth



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Acorns Recovery Team – what do we do?

- Safe space
- Trauma informed practice
- Connection with parents
- Opportunities to be seen and heard

And by asking:

“What happened to you?”

NOT

“What’s wrong with you?”



Therapeutic Interventions

Acorns' Recovery Team includes therapists from a number of training and theoretical backgrounds including:

- ✓ Non-directive Play Therapists
- ✓ Counsellors
- ✓ Children's Psychotherapists.

The Team also has additional training in TraumaPlay™ and Theraplay™.

All therapists work in a similar way – using PLAY as the focus



Why Play?



- ✓ A child's natural way of communicating – known, safe, non threatening
- ✓ Play Therapy builds on this – allowing a therapist to enter the child's world – if they let us
- ✓ Play responses can be adapted to developmental need
- ✓ Play creates strong, trusting relationships
- ✓ Through positive interactions, play creates new neural pathways (neuroplasticity)
- ✓ Increases feel-good hormones and allows stress levels to subside



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Acorns Loves Brains!

..and we spend a lot of time talking about them to children and parents

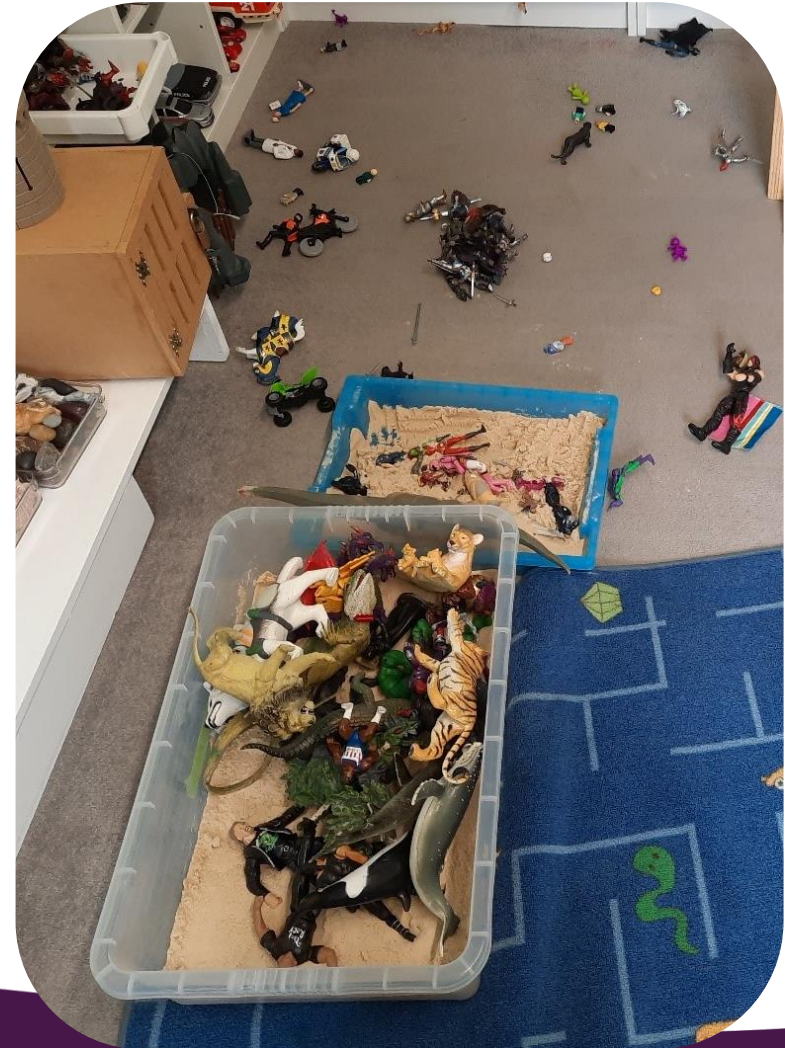
- ✓ We use the Dan Siegel Hand-Brain Model which we can adapt to different ages
- ✓ Understanding more about brains can help children and their carers understand and manage their trauma/survival responses to situations
- ✓ It is easier for children and young people to understand that some of their behaviour is their brain trying to look after them
- ✓ It is easier for parents to see their that their children's brains are in survival mode - rather than seeing 'bad behaviour'



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Some examples of common themes we see in play:

Exploring the mess and chaos – The “inside out”



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Paint, containment and boundaries

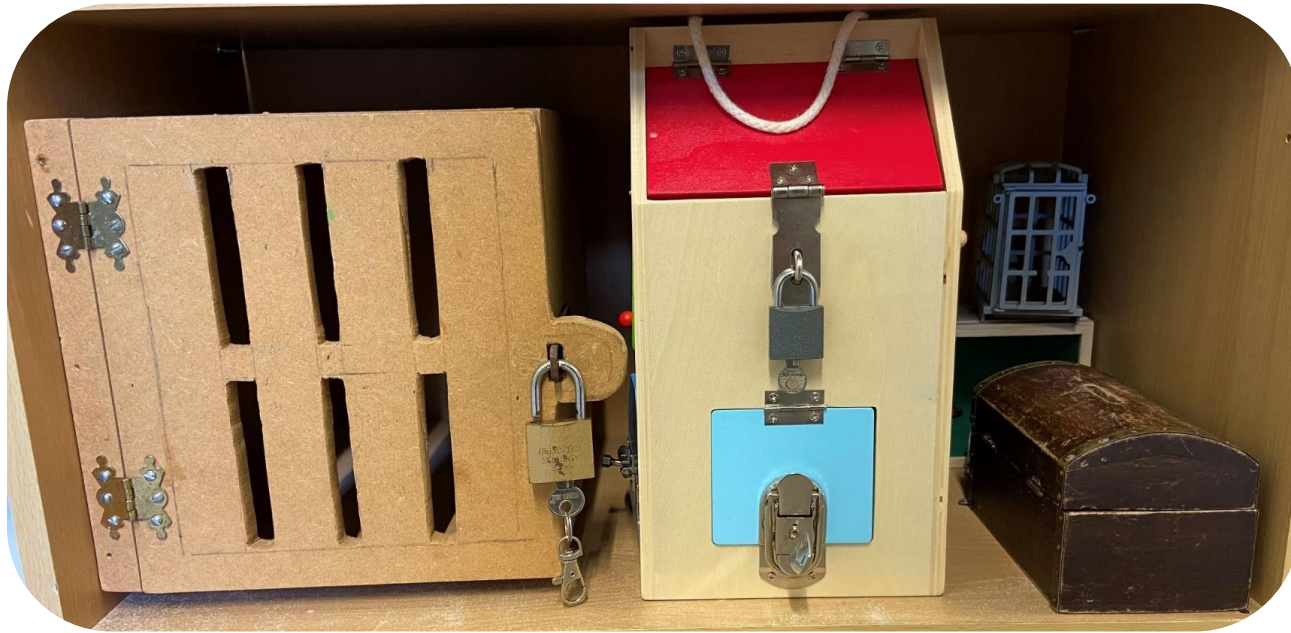


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Exploring threat, safety and protection



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Exploring conflict



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Exploring feelings through art



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Exploring a 'wished for' relationship

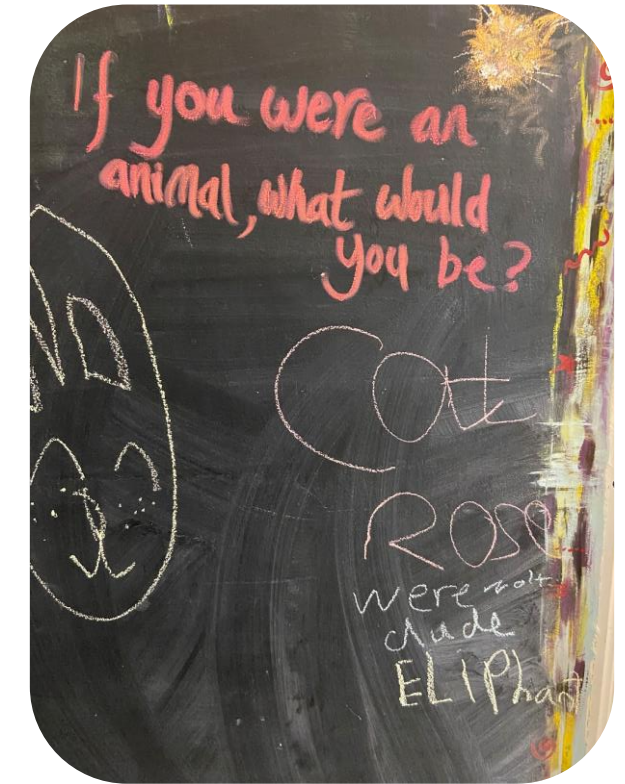


Creating places of safety and nurture

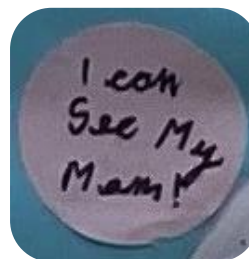
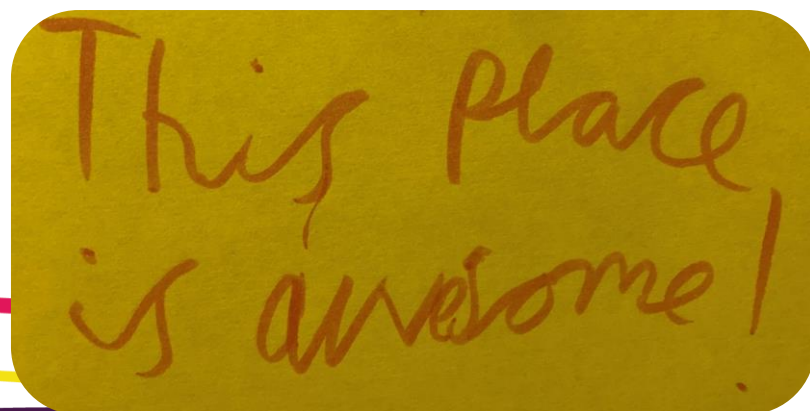
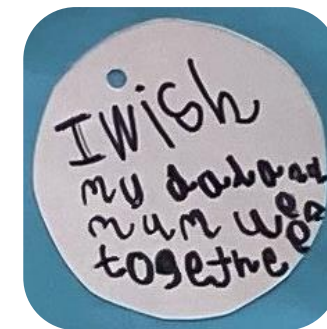
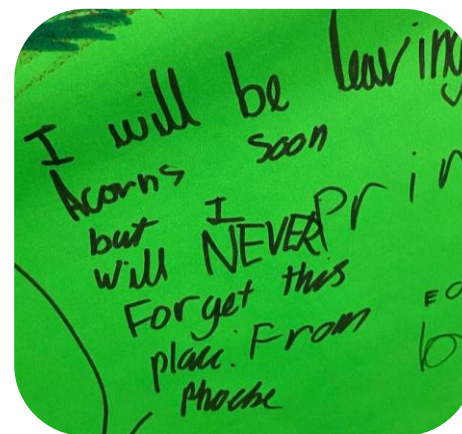
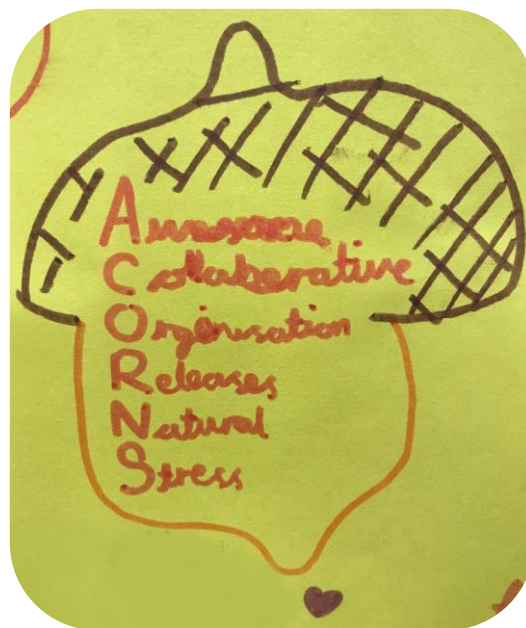


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Exploring having a voice



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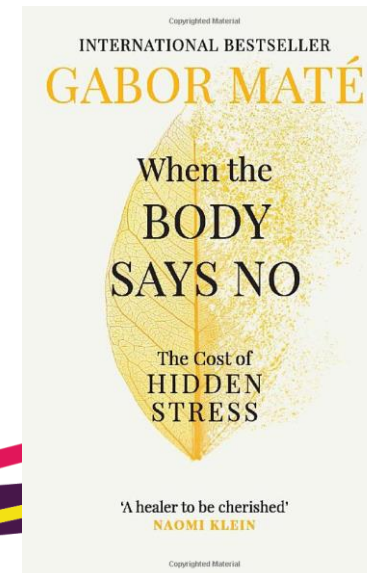
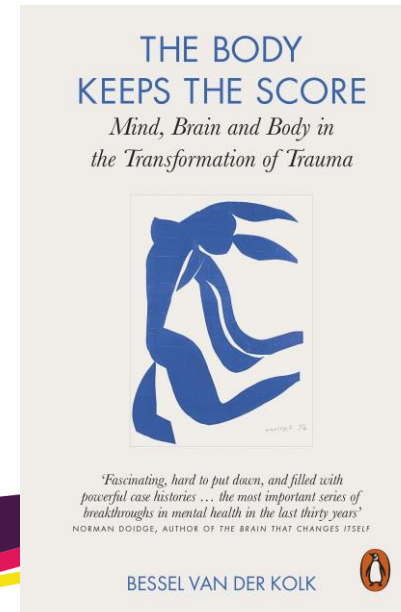
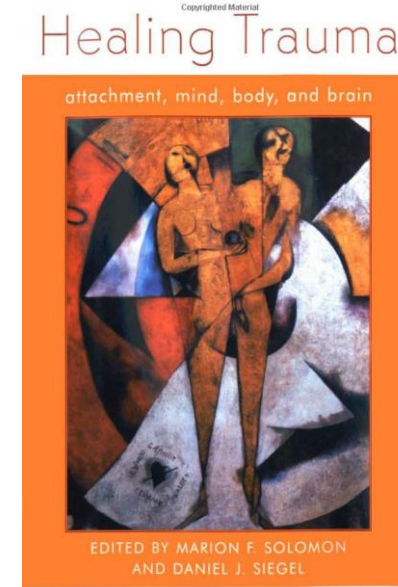
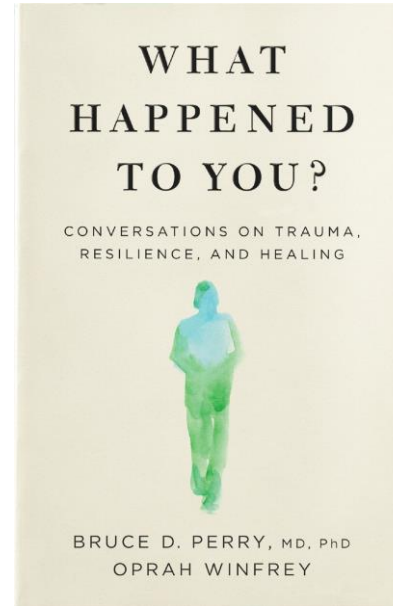
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More information

You can find out more about Play Therapy and the approaches we use here:

- ✓ <https://www.bapt.info>
- ✓ <https://playtherapy.org.uk/what-is-play-therapy>
- ✓ <https://www.traumaplayinstitute.com/>
- ✓ <https://theraplay.org/>

You can find out more about the magic of brains (and the impact of trauma) by reading books by: Bruce D Perry, Dan Siegel, Gabor Maté, Bessel Van Der Kolk



Survivor Voice – Acorns Youth Panel

“Young people need models, not critics” John Wooden

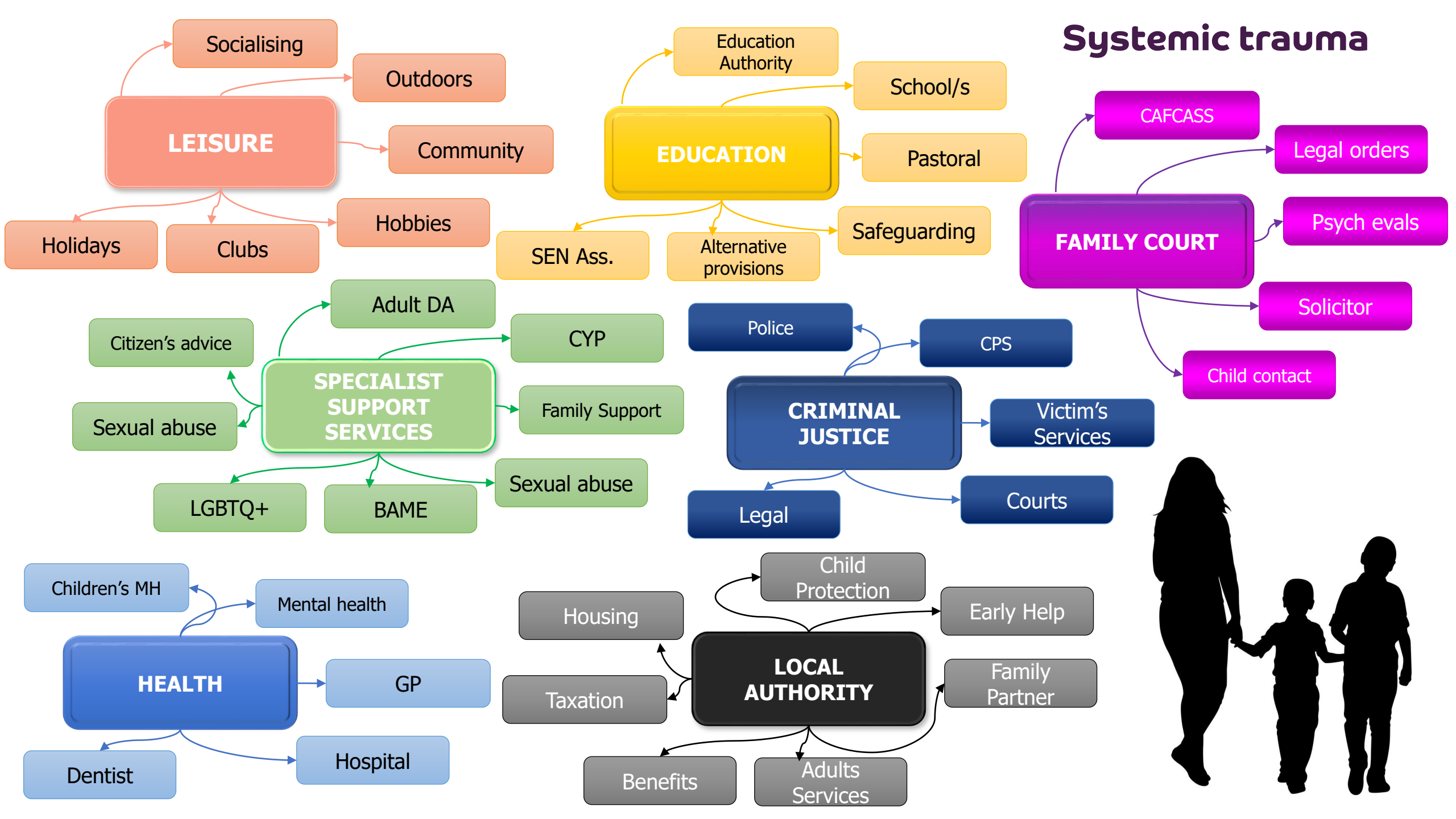


Acorns Youth Panel is a group of young people who work together to represent youth voice in the DA sector by speaking up to local organisations and authorities. They play an important and active role in advocating positive change for young people across our region.



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“Trauma is not what happens to us, but is what we hold inside in the absence of an empathetic witness”

Peter A Levine



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Questions?

“It has been the best service I have ever experienced. They have supported me and my children. Helped with other services and making me go from strength to strength”



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