

Helping a child experiencing trauma

This leaflet has been created to help school staff to support a child experiencing trauma.

What is trauma?

Trauma is a reaction to the experience of events involving threat or danger to yourself or others. Personal experience can cause this, or sometimes through witnessing or hearing about terrible events that have happened to others.

Children and young people sometimes witness or are involved in things they find very scary or stressful such as accidents, violence or terrorist attacks. It's quite normal to be upset for even quite a while after a frightening event.

Trauma has been described as 'normal reactions to extraordinary events'. If reactions continue for over three months, then it may be necessary to explore professional support.

What might I see in the child?

A child may display or experience different behaviours, signs and feelings, including:

- Nightmares or sleeping problems
- Panic attacks
- Hyper-vigilance - a state of increased awareness
- Poor concentration
- Continuous minor physical complaints such as stomach aches or headaches
- Unusual and untypical behaviour
- Feeling angry, sad, guilty confused or any combination of feelings.



Six ideas to support a child:

1. Try and make things as normal as possible - the child will feel safer when they are reassured and know what to expect.
2. Help the child to understand what's happening by explaining the truth, giving facts about the situation.
3. Make sure the child understands you are available to talk when the child is ready, don't avoid the subject.
4. The child may find using dolls or toys, or even drawing pictures to help understand what's happened.
5. Answer questions truthfully, but keep them simple. The child may ask questions several times, which could be the child's own way of accepting what's happened.
6. If someone has died, make sure the child understands what this means, that it is permanent. Avoid statements such as 'David has gone away', instead say, 'David has died' and keep repeating if necessary, if the child keeps asking about the person.

If the child is still giving you cause for concern, speak to your ROAR/MHFA member of staff for further advice.

Further information can be found at www.liverpoolcamhs.com/need-advice