



**INFORMING
FUTURES**

1625 Independent People

PSYCHOLOGICALLY INFORMED ENVIRONMENTS (PIE)

A framework for delivering
Psychologically Informed
Environments for young people

This resource is part of the Informing Futures toolkit www.informingfutures.co.uk, a free online resource for practitioners seeking to understand and support care and custody experienced young people.

For more information or queries on any of the topics covered in this toolkit, or to find out about training and consultancy we can offer please contact enquiries@1625ip.co.uk

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INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

This framework provides a summary of 1625 Independent People's (1625IP) approach to delivering a psychologically informed environment (PIE), and how we implement this operationally on a day-to-day basis. It draws on the work of Robin Johnson and Rex Haigh, including the Good Practice Guide on Psychologically Informed Services for Homeless People.

Overall, the framework aims to support young people to move away from the effects of damaging events in their lives, so they can realise their potential through a belief in themselves and the future. The framework shows how we work to support vulnerable and sometimes chaotic young people to develop the personal resources that support them to achieve positive outcomes and protect them from future homelessness.

The nature of our work requires understanding, empathy and sensitivity. It is critical that our services, activities and partnerships provide opportunities for young people to experience positive trusting relationships and develop the self-belief and aspiration they need to succeed in their lives.



CENTRAL ASPECTS OF 1625IP'S PIE

- i. We operate as a learning organisation - in which managers, direct colleagues, volunteers and young people are encouraged to value and share a culture of learning and enquiry, so that together we can achieve our objectives for young people.
- ii. Managers, direct colleagues and volunteers are supported to develop, model and learn from reflective practice, training and support.
- iii. Our services and interventions are informed by a range of psychological approaches that underpin psychological awareness, central to which is an understanding of how trauma and disruptions to young people's attachments impact on their lives, their experience and their ability to trust.
- iv. We use relationships with young people to provide the primary 'tool for change'.
- v. Our services provide physical environments that support emotional well-being.
- vi. We encourage young people to take ownership of their choices and behaviour and actively participate in decision- making.
- vii. Our services foster positive pathways and spaces of opportunity for each young person, enabling them to develop the potential for a meaningful and fulfilled life.

These seven central aspects form an interconnected web and each element relies on the good functioning of the others to work effectively as part of a whole.



OPERATING AS A LEARNING ORGANISATION

As a learning organisation 1625IP is committed to promoting mutual respect and reflection:

- a) Valuing and appreciating colleagues for their ability to bring insight, knowledge and experience that supports positive outcomes and helps us achieve our aims.
- b) A commitment to continuous development and evaluation – driven by the humility and positive belief that we can do better.
- c) Structuring work as a learning process and promoting a culture of learning and enquiry – the central question is: what can we learn?
- d) Supporting regular reflective practice, and feeding learning into service improvement and development.
- e) Contributions are encouraged from everyone – including commitment to airing differences and working through conflicts.
- f) We seek to learn from young people's feedback and set out to ensure that their diverse and different needs are met.
- g) Organisational structures, roles, and ways of working with young people are enabling structures and habitats for growth that are regularly reviewed with the ability to be creative, flexible and responsive to changing demand and needs.
- h) Creating habitats for growth and spaces for opportunity through collaborative cross-organisational learning in which we aspire to work in partnership with other organisations, not in competition with them.



OPERATING AS A LEARNING ORGANISATION

Evaluation is one of the cornerstones of a learning organisation because of its value in demonstrating the impact of our work, and underpinning a learning environment that promotes a culture of enquiry for colleagues and young people. By tracking young people's progress, and understanding which approaches work, and which fail, we are able to improve the way in which we work with individuals and as a service.

Involving young people and colleagues in evaluation is critical to ensuring that our approaches meet their needs and increases confidence, skills, knowledge and pathways towards fulfilling lives.

We use a combination of internal and external evaluation to capture learning, including:

- **Young Person's Outcome Star:** Developed in collaboration with young people, measuring "distance-travelled" in key areas of young people's transition towards independence - including health, how they feel, and choices and behaviour. The Young Person's Star is designed to put young people in control and enable meaningful self-reporting by them on their progress.
- **Psychological Evaluation:** using tools for measuring wellbeing.
- **Hard Data Evaluation:** Including data on evictions, behaviour (e.g. sanctions, warnings) and planned move-on.
- **Evaluation of Reflective Practice:** : Since incorporating RP groups across the charity (2014), we have developed our evaluation framework to include surveys of participants and facilitators, informal learning through clinical supervision and operational review, an annual learning review and development of a qualitative development tool to support group and facilitator development.



OPERATING AS A LEARNING ORGANISATION

We are committed to ensuring evaluation is an on-going process, with each stage of data collection and analysis informing the next, thereby increasing the potential for service improvements. We are committed to learning from other organisations and sharing learning to improve practice externally.

Reflective Practice enables everyone to play a part in 1625IP as a “learning organisation” that strives to deliver the best outcomes for young people (please see next section)



REFLECTIVE PRACTICE, TRAINING & SUPPORT

The safe transition of young people into independence is dependent on our services responding to young people's emotional as well as practical needs.

We recognise the importance of equipping colleagues with an understanding of how disrupted attachments and trauma can shape a young person's relationships and behaviour and condition their reactions to life's challenges.

We are committed to supporting colleagues to develop the skills and awareness, including some of the therapeutic skills, to enable young people to develop self-regulation, self-understanding, and positive self-esteem. This understanding enables colleagues to reflect and interact empathically with young people, and enables young people to develop emotionally strong, reciprocal relationships within 1625IP and beyond. We aim to promote a culture in which a critical measure of success is the quality, value and integrity of the relationships between workers and young people.

Reflective Practice and Supervision

Collective reflective practice, and high-quality leadership and supervision, are critical to the outcome of our work, creating consistency through teamwork, and ensuring mutual support through the emotional challenges of our work.

At best, the process of reflective practice enables us to recognise our achievements; it supports good practice, promotes creative and non-defensive attitudes within working relationships and it values our differences and diversity, upon which work with young people thrives.

A key resource for reflective practice is the Gibbs Model. This provides a framework for thinking about what challenges us, and a cycle that enables us to evaluate the impact of those challenges, analyse our responses, and arrive at new ways of doing things.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE, TRAINING & SUPPORT

Reflective Practice enables us to improve our practice and skills by:

- Exploring alternative ways of approaching case work, reflecting on successful and unsuccessful interventions
- Critically analysing and evaluating experiences and relationships
- Seeking solutions and effective responses to challenges
- Recognising achievements.

We are committed to providing regular facilitated reflective practice groups for all colleagues, peer supporters and community mentors, alongside a model of reflective supervision that offers support and enquiry into practice. 1625IP's Guidance on Reflective Practice and Supervision provides further details on our Reflective Practice model.

Key features of our RP model are that groups are peer facilitated and groups are integrated; that is that they are made up of colleagues from across our different services.

The use of peer co-facilitation has felt key to the success of our model. This has enabled us to create RP champions, offering learning and development opportunities and providing an inclusive and supportive framework for colleagues.

Moving from service and team-based groups to mixed colleague groups was a development in 2017, based on colleagues' feedback. The intention was to share learning and support relationships across teams, reflecting 1625ip's integrated model of service delivery and the way in which young people experience our services.

Our services and interventions are informed by a range of psychological approaches, central to which is understanding how trauma and disruptions to young people's attachments impact on their lives, their experience and their ability to trust



REFLECTIVE PRACTICE, TRAINING & SUPPORT

Disruptions to attachment, trauma and struggling to trust

An understanding of this is central to our PIE and our approach to our work and developing and sustaining relationships with young people.

Other psychological approaches

We are committed to our support services being informed by thinking from different therapeutic approaches. This may include: psychodynamic approaches, systemic approaches, humanistic approaches, and behavioural approaches.¹

We do not see these approaches as being in competition and appreciate that they can be used in ways that are complementary. Fundamentally they build a flexible model of psychological awareness that recognises the way that our emotional lives loop through and are co-created in many different spaces; our inner world, social spaces, workspaces, built spaces, green spaces and political and legislative spaces. The psychological awareness of the PIE sets out to create habitats for growth and opportunities for fulfilling lives in all these interacting spaces.

Therapeutically informed support

A variety of therapeutically informed support is offered to young people. Our direct support colleagues, including mental health practitioners, will offer this, reflecting their existing skills and training, supported by further training, supervision, reflective practice and project leadership.

Over recent years, specific services have looked at piloting and modelling their work informed by specific therapeutic approaches; The Future 4 Me programme (2012-2019) piloted the use of the Trauma Recovery Model² with care experienced young people. The Reboot West programme (2018-2022) is structured around the use of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT).³

Further therapeutic interventions are provided by partner organisations.



REFLECTIVE PRACTICE, TRAINING & SUPPORT

- 1 Psychodynamic approaches – where negative early experiences that shape behaviour and emotions are resolved through the dynamics of the helping relationship.

Systemic approaches - focus on how behaviour and emotions are shaped by the dynamics of family and wider systems including peers, community, school, social environment and how these mutually influence each other.

Humanistic approaches - work from the belief that we have an innate ability to self-heal and that the true self can be liberated from harmful patterns of emotion and behaviour that are underpinned by presiding beliefs that are negative and damaging to who we authentically are.

Behavioural approaches; e.g. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy: a talking therapy that focuses on one's thoughts, beliefs and attitudes. The approach is collaborative, focusing on trying to change current problems, by bringing underlying processes to light and supportively challenging them.

- 2 The Trauma Recovery Model is a composite model combining theories of child development, attachment and neuroscience with hands on practitioner skills.
- 3 Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) is a live, action-based approach that works by developing flexibility, tolerance and acceptance of thoughts and feelings and life situations that have been experienced as negative and overwhelming.



TRUSTED RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships as the primary tool for change

We use trusting relationships as the primary tool for change, providing a “secure base” from which YP can develop stability, trust, skills and social networks. This enables YP to progress towards independence and long-term outcomes. Our approach is young person centered underpinned by our ethos of ‘keeping young people being at the heart of everything we do’





PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Development of the Physical Environment and Spaces of Opportunity

The PIE recognises that the quality of the physical environment affects young people's and colleagues' emotional wellbeing and can affect their behaviour and expectations.

We are committed to on-going, planned work to improve physical environments, actively involving young people, our Youth Board and colleagues in improvements. We are also committed to opening up spaces of opportunity for young people - these are both physical environments and social and emotional environments that create pathways and opportunities toward fulfilling lives. These commitments include:

- Systematically auditing and improving young people's accommodation.
- Carefully planning future accommodation.
- Involving young people in the on-going maintenance and management of their own properties and learning about basic maintenance through good working relationships with maintenance workers.
- Creating appropriate meeting space for personal development and group work, including places for young people to meet informally and eat together.
- Creating appropriate, friendly and confidential spaces for meetings with workers.
- Providing outdoor opportunities that can broaden young people's experience and enable them to explore their identity.



OWNERSHIP, PARTICIPATION & DECISION MAKING

We encourage young people to take ownership of their choices and behaviour and actively participate in decision-making.

Participation

Young people's participation is a core aspect of the PIE. Participation of young people helps colleagues and the organisation to understand and better meet young people's needs, and at a psychological level it can lead to a shift in identity from a service "user" to becoming the primary agent of their own change. We provide a range of opportunities for young people to be involved in decision-making, from decisions about their individual support and opportunities through to organisational and service level decision-making.

Managing behaviour

Rather than managing their behaviour for them, direct support colleagues use skills that begin to enable young people to "self-manage". This requires the ability to challenge young people to own their behaviour, and the capacity to work flexibly and consistently with sanctions. Colleagues model positive relationships that acknowledge the co-ownership of power and that is clearly negotiated. These are managed by colleagues in such a way that opportunities for emotional learning emerge from these interactions such as managing conflict, working through the consequences of ambivalent feelings and developing the ability to tolerate and stay with the peaks and troughs of intense emotions.

When sanctions are experienced as consistent, but also as flexible and negotiable, young people begin to appreciate that negotiation is a part of relationships; and that they have to find a way through in a way that can be brought into line with their 'desires'. To enable this to happen, direct support colleagues engage young people skilfully in ways that mix "generic" support skills and "psychologically-informed" thinking.

Part of this is providing clear but graded sanctions that can "flex" to individual need in response to unwelcome behaviour within services.



OWNERSHIP, PARTICIPATION & DECISION MAKING

Risk management

The challenging difficulties faced by the young people we support means that our services also have to be able to manage risk proactively and responsively. Risk management requires us to assess and manage risks dynamically, so that vulnerable young people, including those with chaotic lifestyles, drug use, mental health issues and poor physical health are carefully thought about and not excluded from our services. We aim to offer individually tailored strategies to contain and modify behaviour, which are developed by, and shared with, the whole “team around the young person”.

We operate ‘elastic tolerance’ so that behaviour that might otherwise lead to eviction and exclusion are tackled creatively and with flexibility. The key is to address the behaviour without rejecting the individual.

Colleagues will encourage young people to understand the consequences of their actions, and address behaviours that are impulsive or self-destructive. Of key importance to this is our ability to help young people feel comfortably familiar with their “inner selves” and to accept, tolerate and manage their emotions in ways that are positive, realistic and ultimately life affirming.

Restorative Approaches

Restorative approaches mean embedding a culture that enables us to think about the motivations behind behaviour and addressing these as well as the behaviour itself in the response.

Our beliefs about restorative approaches are:

- Everyone has an equally valued opinion and should be listened to.
- Our thoughts affect our feelings and vice versa so we should talk about our thoughts and feelings.
- When we do something harmful, we should think about the effects on others.
- When our needs are met, we can get on best with our lives.
- The people most involved in an incident are the ones that should decide the way forward.



OWNERSHIP, PARTICIPATION & DECISION MAKING

We therefore seek to frame housing management approaches and agreements in terms that relate to the underlying needs of young people so that everyone knows each other's expectations, rather than a punitive approach of what 'cannot be done'. It also means we come together to talk about difficulties between people and agree on a way forward. This can also be used to make agreements before things escalate, again so that everyone knows each other's expectations.

Our teams are trained and supported to use Restorative Approaches in our services and the principles underpinning this work are:

- Intervene early to prevent or resolve incidences
- Empower all involved parties in deciding the outcome
- Provide service users and colleagues with a greater sense of safety, inclusion and respect.
- Provide an opportunity for social and emotional learning, especially problem solving
- Reduce warnings and evictions
- Reduce incidents / crime
- Bring closure for those involved

Different restorative approaches are used by 1625ip teams dependent on the situation, including restorative conversations, shuttle mediation through to full restorative conferences, involving other professionals where applicable.





FOSTERING POSITIVE PATHWAYS

Our services foster positive pathways for each young person.

We are committed to working in collaboration with other agencies to develop opportunities for meaningful work, education and leisure opportunities alongside positive community relationships.

Positive pathways are developed in several ways including:

- Support Planning, with attention to individual pathways.
- Group work.
- Support from our Education, Employment and Training workers.
- Peer support and community mentoring.
- Collaboration with community resources and partner organisations.

Informal learning and Social Activities

Our Participation and Learning Team provide a range of opportunities that promote wellbeing through social and informal learning activities. These activities create habitats for growth which provide opportunities for emotional and social learning. For example, cookery, arts and sports groups, 'participation' groups (co-delivering activities), and pre-tenancy skills workshops all bring therapeutic benefits. They enable young people to develop a sense of identity and belonging and offer safe emotional environments in which they can deepen their relationship skills. We also offer 'psycho-education' groups that enable young people to be more informed about life skills and mental health issues, and groups with more explicit therapeutic aims, such as reflective practice and mindfulness-based groups. Delivery of these groups is supported by a combination of our specialist mental health practitioners and external partner agencies.



FOSTERING POSITIVE PATHWAYS

Peer Support and Community Mentoring

Peer led groupwork and community mentoring provide emotional and social habitats where positive peer influences enable young people to develop a sense of themselves and their potential to lead fulfilling lives. They offer environments where young people can support and learn from each other, overcome isolation and develop a sense of identity and wellbeing grounded in the ability to co-create emotionally robust relationships.

Partnership working with other Local Health and Social Care Organisations and Resources

Close relationships with general and specialist health services enable pathways for young people to develop that open up opportunities for individual, group work and self-help groups within their services and within the wider community. Partnership work also supports the development of therapeutic and group work within 1625IP. Partnerships contribute to our organisational learning, reflective practice and service developments, and also influence the strategic development of services.

These close relationships with partners will be achieved by:

- Collaborative work with mental health, counselling services and substance misuse services, including specialist therapeutic input from colleagues
- A Monthly Case Review panel operated through our MAPS service where young people who are struggling to find or sustain accommodation are referred and agencies work together to find creative solutions.
- Direct support colleagues seeking and creating opportunities for joint working between our workers, service users and partner organisations
- Collaborative working, for example, through colleges, arts and sports projects.



PIE CONCLUSIONS

The underpinning values of the PIE are based in reflective practice and in establishing a commitment to a learning culture at 1625IP.

These provide the basis for establishing strong and trusting relationships with young people as the principal 'tool for change'. Each of the separate elements of the PIE can work on its own, but together they contribute to the success of the other components.

In many ways homelessness is a symptom of the fact that the young people we support have experienced overwhelming needs that have not been met. This framework aims to bring together the resources of young people, direct support colleagues, managers, partner organisations and the wider community to support young people to achieve positive outcomes.

The success of our work can be measured in a number of ways: through positive outcomes that are evaluated against the baseline of needs and vulnerabilities the young person presented when they first made contact; through reduced vulnerability to future homelessness; and through young people's experience of good relationships across all aspects of their lives - their relationships with themselves, with others, and with the wider community, and through their felt sense that opportunities have opened up that will allow them to lead lives that are emotionally secure and fulfilled.





FURTHER READING

- An academic article describing 1625IP's framework in more detail is published in the Housing Care and Support Journal
- Also please see the Good Practice Guide to Psychologically Informed Services for Homeless People.
- PIE link NET - sharing conversations about homelessness
- Trauma Recovery Model (TRM) – for more information about the TRM and its use with young people, visit TRM Academy
- Acceptance & Commitment Therapy (ACT) – for more information on ACT and its use with young people, visit Thriving Adolescent.

This framework was developed by Jeremy Woodcock & Jamie Gill, reviewed in July 2014 and updated by Jeremy Woodcock, Dawn Taylor and Jamie Gill 2019.