

# CHILD AND FAMILY FOCUS SA

Welcome!

Please enjoy your lunch and fill out our short survey.



*We acknowledge that this land that we meet on today is the traditional land of the Barngarla people. We respect their spiritual relationship with their country. We also acknowledge that their cultural and heritage beliefs are still as important to the living Kurna people today.*

*We welcome the cultural wisdom of any Aboriginal colleagues here today.*



*'Reconciliation' by Hamish and Kobe Collins*

## CAFFSA's Core Business

- ▶ **Leadership:** We are a **conscious thought leader**, informed by and advocating with the best available research and evidence
- ▶ **Advocacy:** We **prioritise the needs of children and families connected with or at risk of entering the child protection system**, and advocate to the highest levels of government for policy changes that have positive impact
- ▶ **Policy:** We are instrumental and proactive in **driving, developing and responding effectively** to key policies and legislation.
- ▶ **Practice Development:** We **promote practice approaches that are trauma responsive, culturally safe**, and we work with sector partners to **promote and deliver training and development opportunities that are trauma responsive**

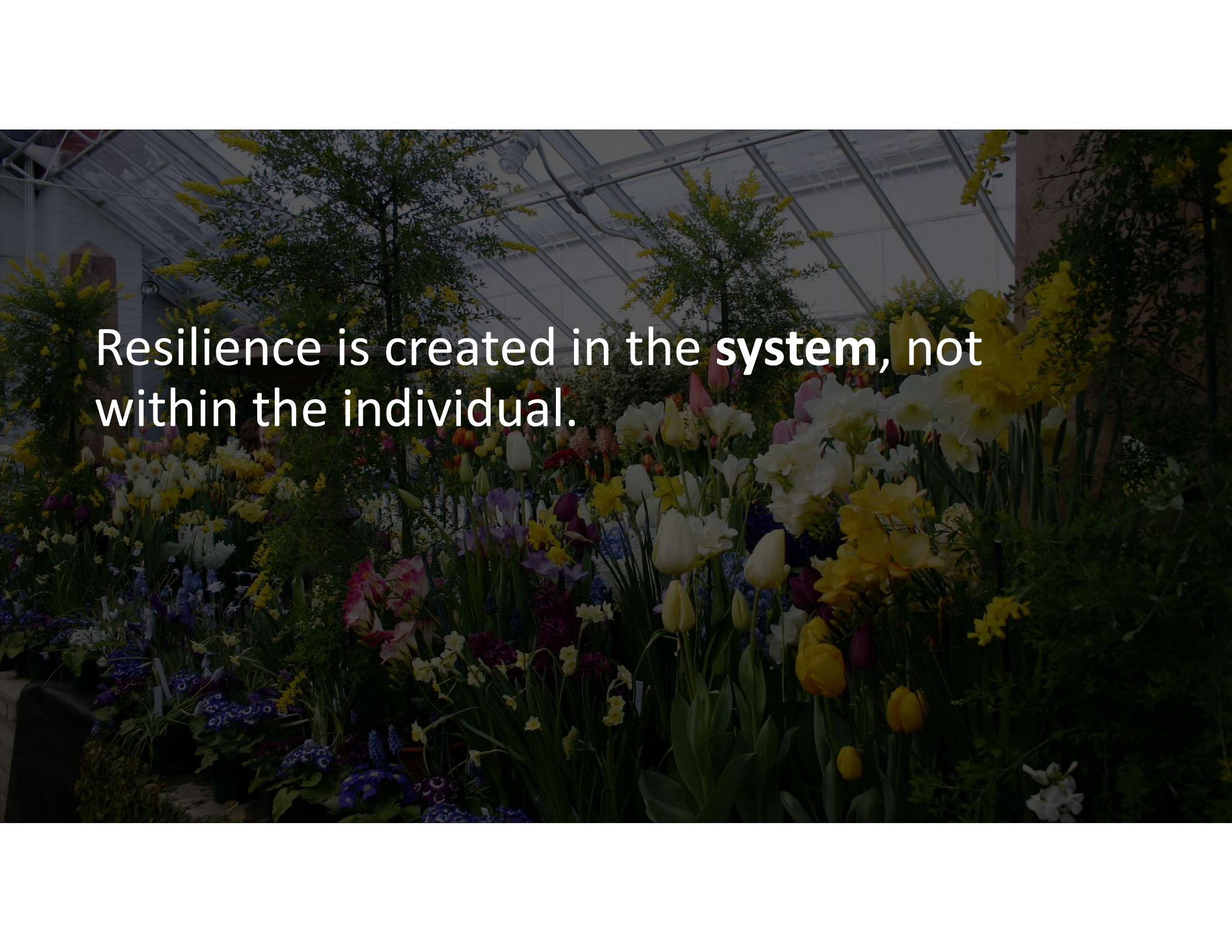
## Background



Average turnover in child protection and family support in South Australia is **1-1.5 years** (DCP, 2024).

Further, promoting resilience in child protection practitioners is **more effective** when the influences of the **context and organization are the focus of interventions** rather than only the individual (Russ et al., 2020).

Terms such as 'burnout' can therefore imply **personal deficiency when someone 'fails' to be resilient** (Dean et al., 2019). These approaches may blame and **shame practitioners** and reinforce toxic environments.

A photograph of a greenhouse filled with a variety of colorful flowers, including tulips and daffodils. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, and the greenhouse structure is visible in the background. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Resilience is created in the **system**, not within the individual.

# **RESISTING 'BURNOUT' WITH JUSTICE DOING**

WITH VIKKI REYNOLDS, PHD, RCC

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graph TD; A[Two research projects:] --- B[National child protection and family support workforce]; A --- C[South Australian NFP workforce];
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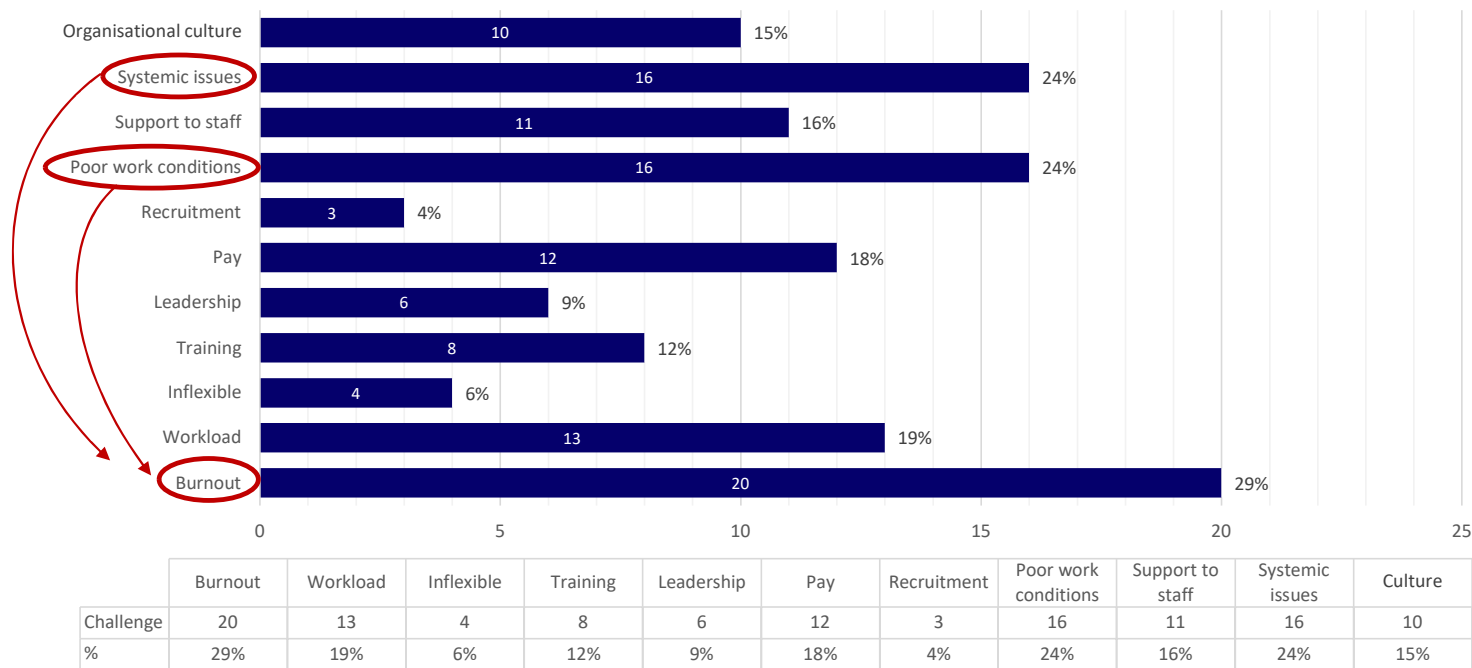
**Two research projects:**

**National child protection and family support workforce**

**South Australian NFP workforce**

- What qualifications do staff hold in the sector?
- What are the recruitment pathways into the sector?
- What contributes to poor recruitment and retention?
- How can we promote resilience within systems?

# Why do people leave their roles?



Number and percentage of respondents



**Burnout isn't the reason people leave their role - burnout is a symptom of not leaving their role sooner.**

# Different psychological harms require different strategies

**Burnout** - a state of mental, physical, and emotional exhaustion that's usually caused by **chronic** workplace **stress**.

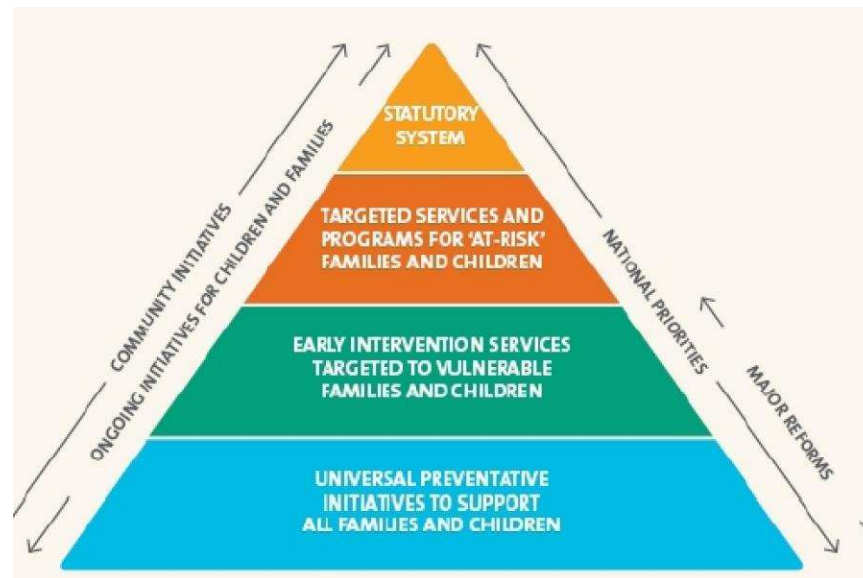
**Vicarious trauma** - the emotional and psychological stress that results from being exposed to the **traumatic experiences of others**.

**Moral distress** - a psychological state of distress that occurs when someone **knows the right thing to do but is prevented from taking that action**. It can be caused by many factors, including:

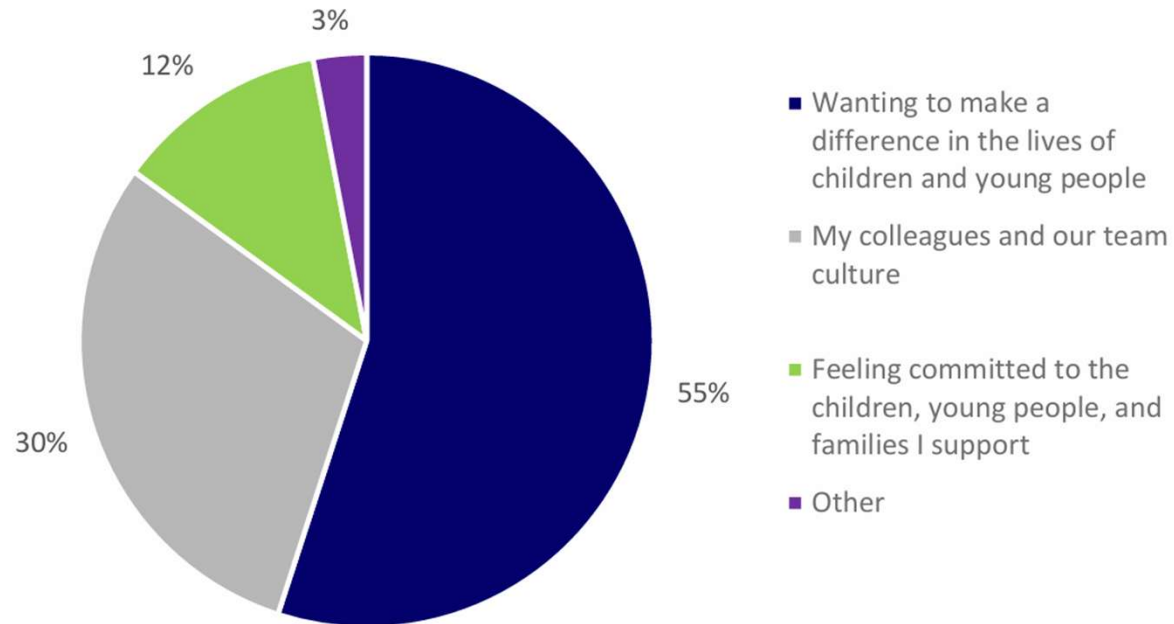
- Lack of power or agency
- Structural limitations, such as insufficient staff, resources, training, or time
- Institutional constraints
- Witnessing moral transgressions by others

## Talk to a partner:

What are some of the systemic factors that cause moral distress for staff in your agency?



# Why do people stay in their roles?



*I enjoy the work. As I have been around for a while there is quite a lot of autonomy, I work with a great team who all have similar values (purposefully employed in this way). The whole team want to make the world a better place. this continues to support and drive me.*

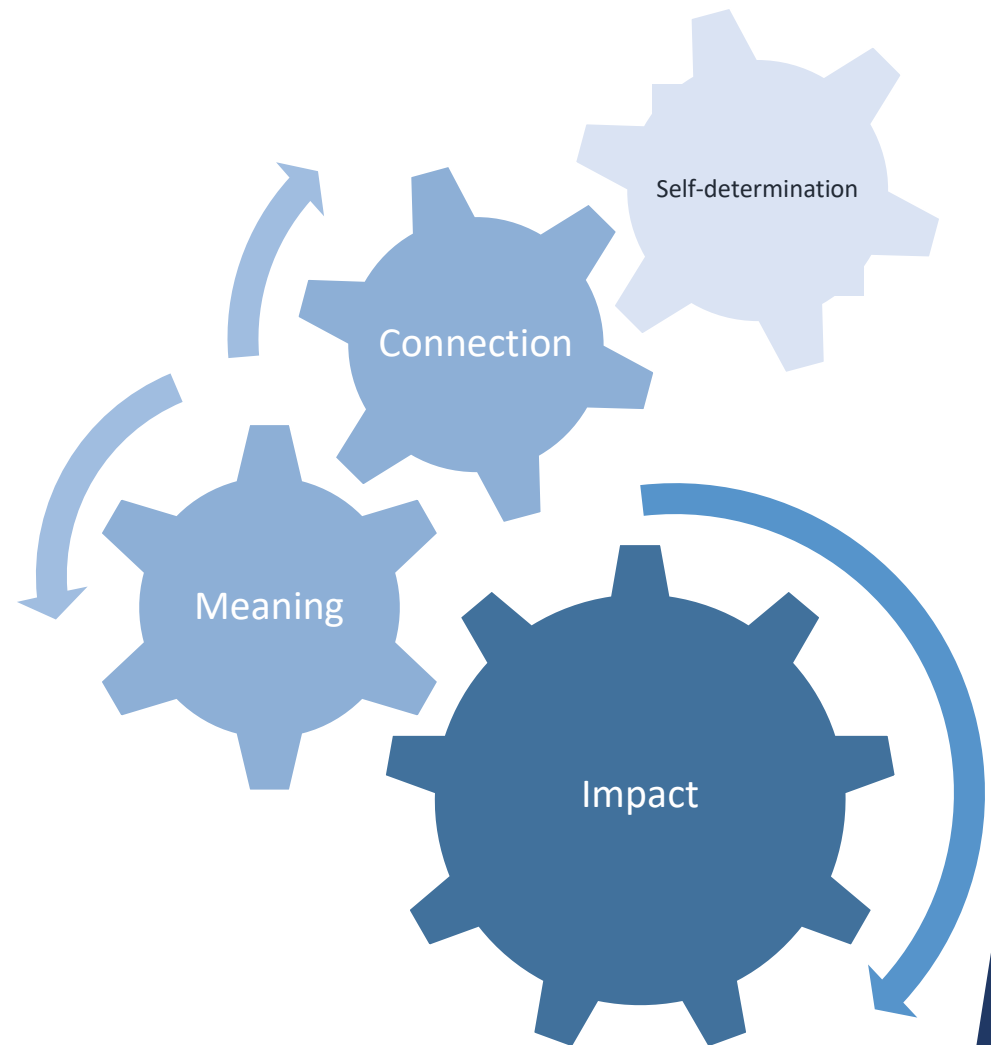
Survey Respondent

**Impact** = make a difference in the lives of children and young people

**Meaning** = relationships with children, young people, families and carers

**Connection** = relationships with colleagues

**Self-determination** = some autonomy and independence



# Psychological Empowerment

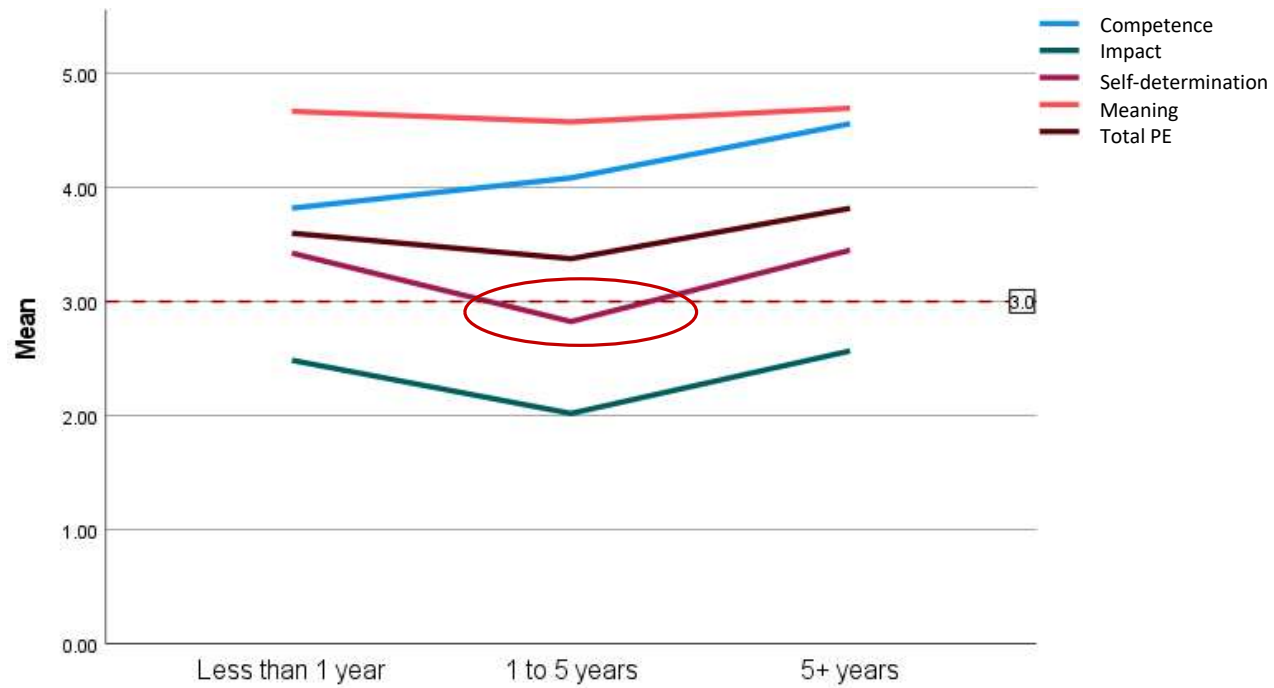
Competence – knowledge and skills to do the work

Impact – sense of being able to make a difference

Meaning – personal satisfaction aligned with values

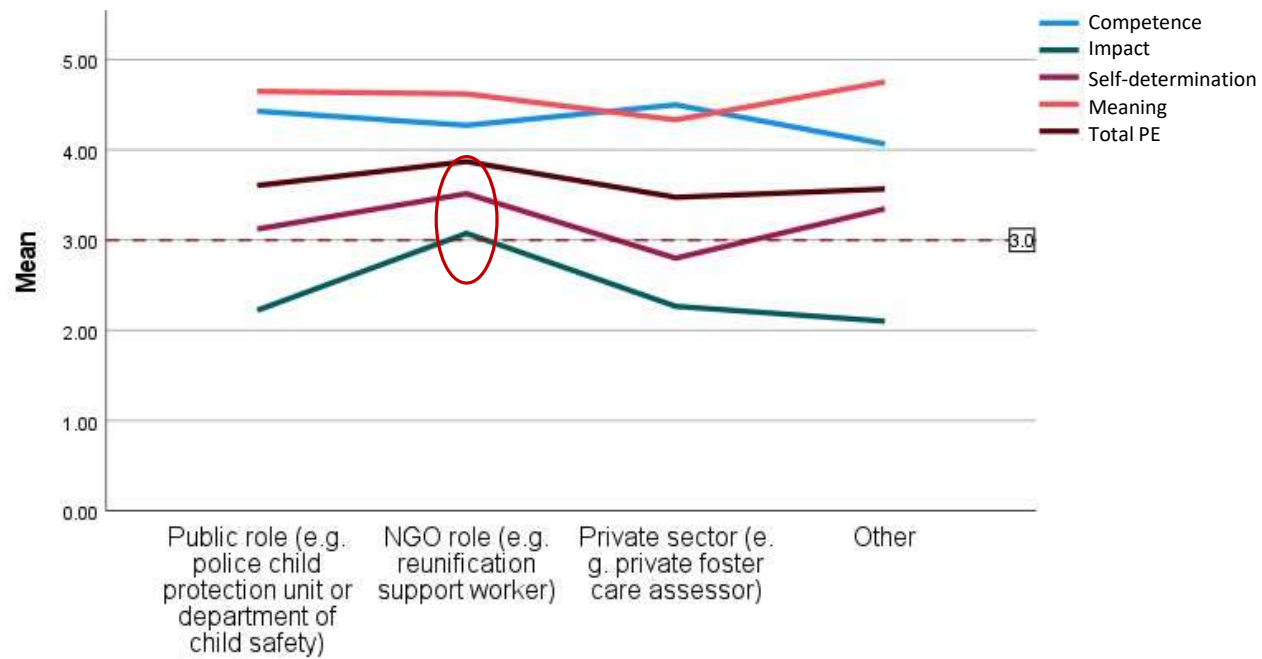
Self-determination – having influence over one's work life

# The greatest risk for turnover is after the first year



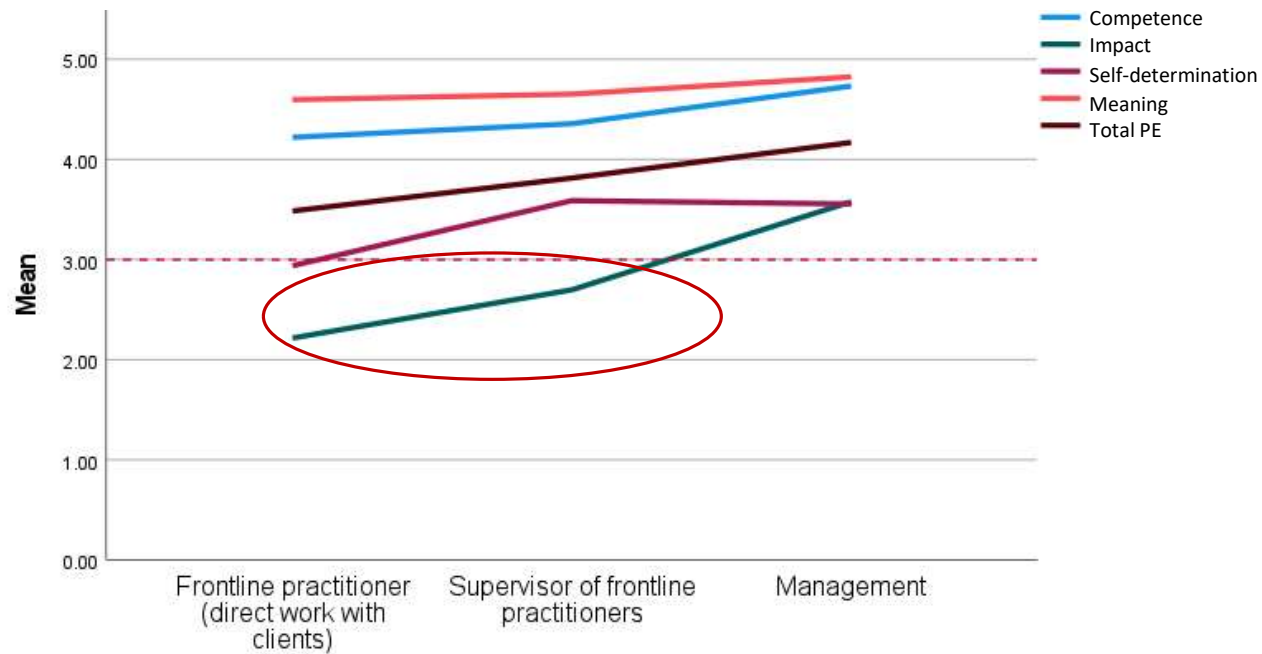
Psychological empowerment scores by length of employment

# There is greater complexity in the statutory system



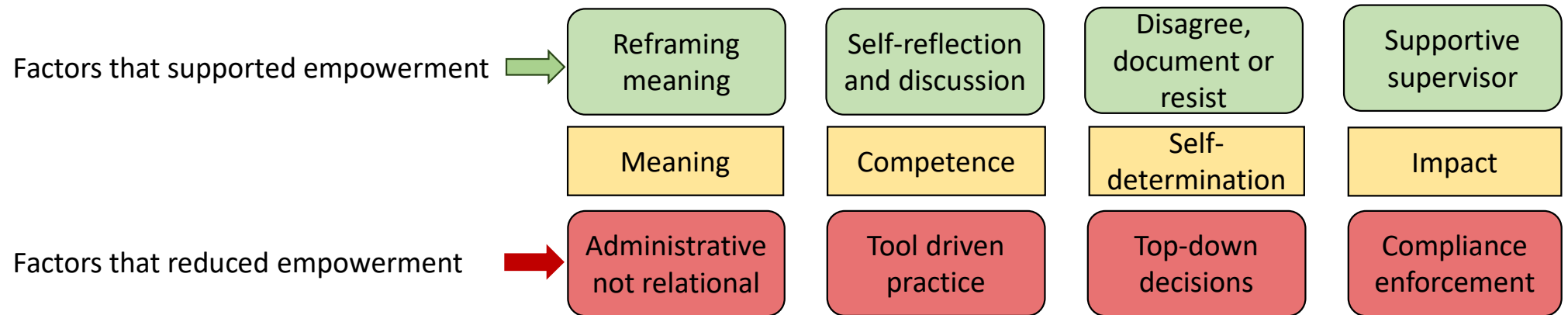


# Managers and supervisors can easily become disconnected from the experience of frontline staff



Psychological empowerment scores by role

# How can we promote resilience?



# What can help?

“But I knew that I was alone. So, I walked out feeling at least I voiced what I thought.”

Opportunity to be heard

“I think what's kept me resilient is reconnecting with people who have like values and ethics to me.”

Connection to values and ethics

“My direct manager was amazing. She was the buffer.”

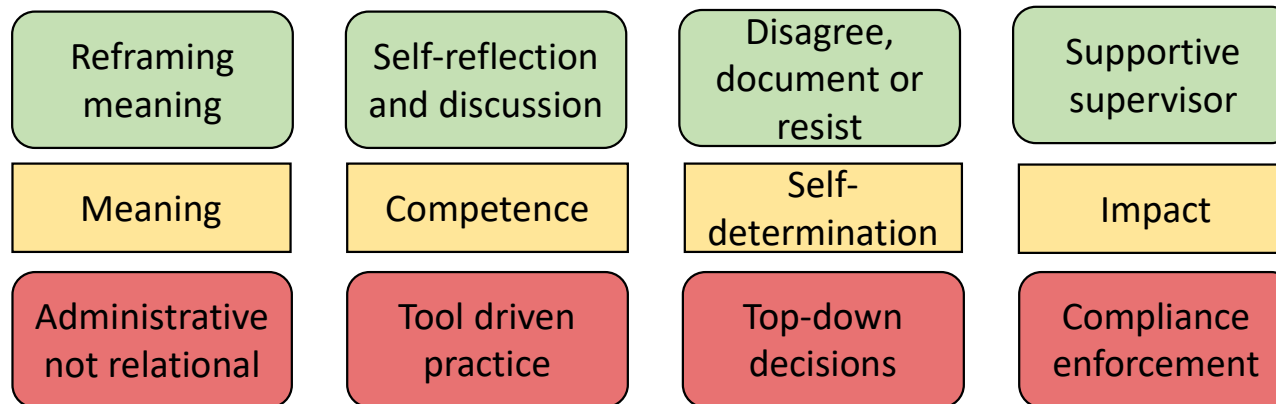
Safe leadership

“I feel like I stand out. I think a lot of people toe the party line. I advocate very strongly for the people I work for, which is my clients, my carers, and the children in their care.”

Advocacy

# Talk to a partner

How does your team, organisation, and the broader system support psychological empowerment?



Trauma  
informed  
principles

Safety

Trustworthiness

Choice

Empowerment

Collaboration

Culture

### **Safety:**

- Policies should focus on both physical and psychological safety.
- The question of “safety for whom” should be asked, because policy can sometimes privilege safety for one group at the expense of another.
- ‘No tolerance’ responses should instead focus on prevention and harm-reduction.

### **Trustworthiness:**

- Policies should be understandable, explainable, and easily accessible by staff as well as children, young people, families, and carers.
- Intended goals of policies should be clearly stated so that actions in them are put into context.
- Where possible, objective criteria and guidance should be written into a policy to help create a clear overview and reduce bias.

What does policy look like in your organisation?

### **Collaboration:**

- Policies should be at least informed by, and at best created in collaboration with, the people who are going to be affected by the policy.
- Policies should have a relational focus, identifying lines of communication and where further guidance can be sought.
- Policies should show respect to the different expertise represented in the policy. This includes the expertise of staff, children, young people, families, and carers who have lived experience and are experts in their own lives.

### **Choice:**

- Choice should always be promoted to the greatest extent possible. This does not mean that the individual has the final say but it does mean that their input is maximised.
- The choices offered should be meaningful to the person making them rather than arbitrary.
- Where possible, there should be room for innovative solutions that can be tailored to the individual needs of staff, children, young people, families, and carers.

What does policy look like in your organisation?

### **Empowerment:**

- Policies should communicate hope and a shared vision for positive change.
- Policies should provide guidance on best practice along with tools for daily practice.
- A systemic view should be included, acknowledging that people operate in systems that influence their resources and responses.

### **Culture:**

- How visible is culture in your organisation? Do policies consistently reference culture?
- Is culture only framed as something experienced by 'others' or is it recognised as an aspect of everyone's identity?
- Is organisational culture recognised and promoted in policy?
- Is there reflection on how organisational culture may challenge or harm other cultural groups?

What does policy look like in your organisation?

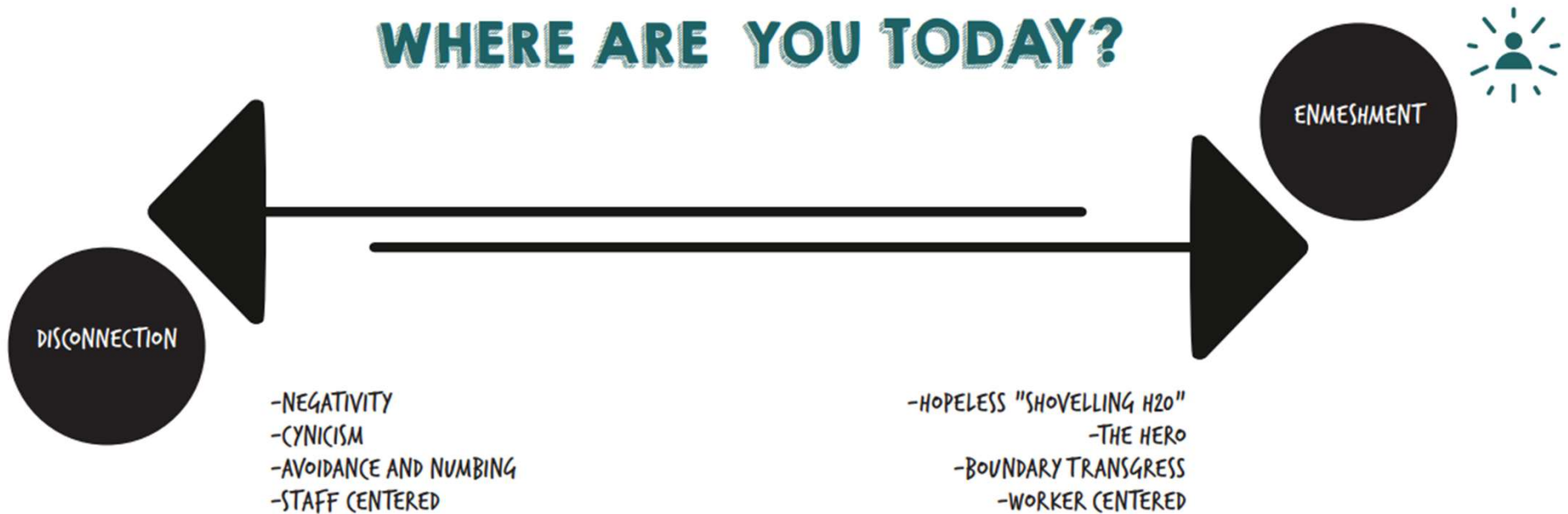


*The harms in our work most often stem from structures that are oppressive and don't allow for the resources needed to respond to human suffering.*

Vikki Reynolds



## WHERE ARE YOU TODAY?

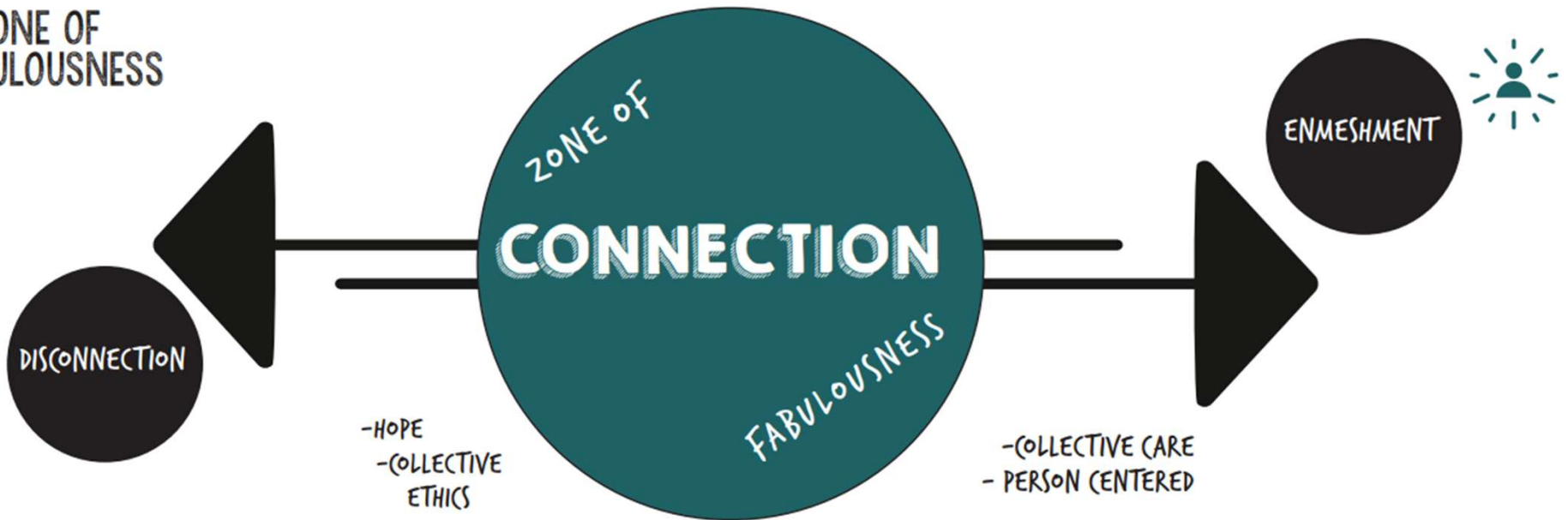


*When we are able to enact our ethics, even when it is heartbreaking, sustainability becomes possible.*

Vikki Reynolds



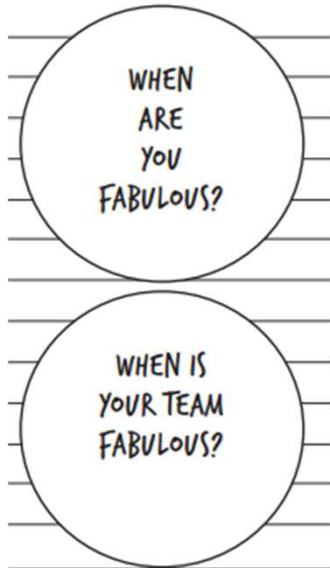
THE ZONE OF  
FABULOUSNESS





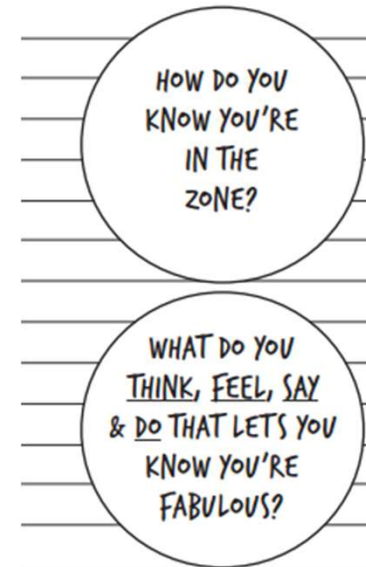
## Talk to a partner

How do you keep yourself fabulous in your work?



WHEN  
ARE  
YOU  
FABULOUS?

WHEN IS  
YOUR TEAM  
FABULOUS?



HOW DO YOU  
KNOW YOU'RE  
IN THE  
ZONE?

WHAT DO YOU  
THINK, FEEL, SAY  
& DO THAT LETS YOU  
KNOW YOU'RE  
FABULOUS?

# Conclusions

Relationships are the most important factor to protect against burnout, to create a sense of meaning, and to facilitate retention.

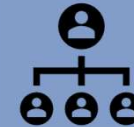


Try to create a solidarity team within your agency.

Support staff to notice their positive impact on others and to highlight their solidarity in helping to create safer and more nurturing communities.



Future leaders and managers require further support to ensure they are competent, confident, and remain in the sector. This will likely have a significant roll-on effect to help retain frontline staff.



Staff who have been in their role for one year require **ADDITIONAL** support to help them feel empowered.



Integrate trauma informed practice into all conversations, policies, and ways of being.



Provide staff with opportunities for advocacy and a sense that they are influencing the broader system.



## Additional resources

- [https://pcar.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdfs/trauma\\_informed\\_supervision\\_guide\\_508.pdf](https://pcar.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdfs/trauma_informed_supervision_guide_508.pdf)
- <https://vikkireynolds.ca/resisting-burnout/>
- [https://vikkireynolds.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/zof\\_digital.pdf](https://vikkireynolds.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/zof_digital.pdf)
- [https://www.childandfamily-sa.org.au/?page\\_id=226796&et\\_fb=1&PageSpeed=off](https://www.childandfamily-sa.org.au/?page_id=226796&et_fb=1&PageSpeed=off)
- <https://www.alisonintheuniverse.com/>
- <https://youtu.be/qnTDUCkYby0?si=EO79d2QV7tZjUm7X>
- [https://youtu.be/XLmxb2sc\\_Nc?si=fSK5VK\\_i8Ufqy66](https://youtu.be/XLmxb2sc_Nc?si=fSK5VK_i8Ufqy66)
- <https://youtu.be/ezxUvJ4HKm4?si=XI7jdoHYh282Jlvo>
- <https://youtu.be/UiCax0zvR-M?si=QvOlmb3oMuxPwqQi>
- <https://vikkireynolds.ca/speaking/>