

# TRAFFIR



TRAFFIR: Trauma  
Awareness For First  
Responders

Addressing skills gaps in critical incident stress and trauma  
intervention.

## Case studies

Project Reference 2019-1-UK01-KA202-061447

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## “Who helps those who help?”

### Alejandro Ponce

*Psychologist*

*"Psychologist by vocation and trainee therapist, I currently dedicate a large part of my time to education and training."*



#### What have you learnt after the delivery of the webinars/modules?

I have learned several things, many, I would say, but I want to highlight the most important ones: the concept and components of Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM), as well as its development in different stages and its application at different times. The difference between psychotherapy and psychological first aid. The Gibbs Reflective Cycle, all its elements and its application in different settings. And finally, above all, I have learned to express myself in a language that is not my own, as the interaction during the webinars is one of the clearest advantages of this project.

#### What direct benefits do TRAFFIR materials have on first responders?

Clearly, an improvement in their quality of life. First, the simple fact of taking first responders into account and dedicating a space for training and support already provides a direct benefit: they feel valued, they are not only counted on when they are needed, but projects like this should motivate them to continue doing their work. Secondly, the study of the materials provided increases their own capacity for emotional self-management and their practice leads to an increase in the tools available to them to deal with their daily problems. Finally, I believe that it will also benefit them in the sense of bringing them closer to each other, an increase in their level of companionship, since learning to cope in a healthy way with such a hard - and at the same time rewarding - job facilitates attention and care for others.

#### Why would you recommend TRAFFIR to anyone?

I believe that this project, and the resources at its disposal, are clearly useful for application in countless contexts and not only in first responders. The approach that has been taken, everything that has been developed during the courses, in addition to the webinars, is absolutely applicable to other areas: from a waiter to a senior executive, from people working

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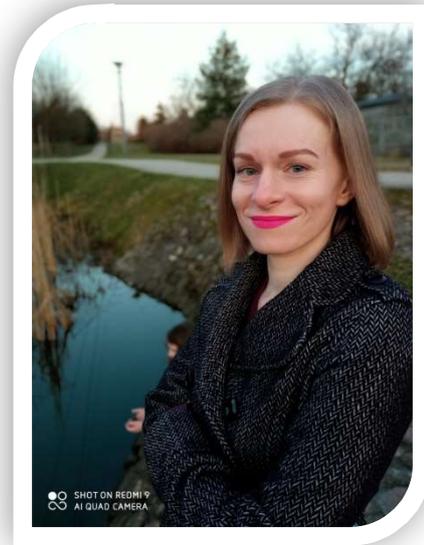
alone to families or even communities. That is one of the reasons why I would recommend it. In a work environment that is becoming more specialised, more demanding and yet more heterogeneous, we need communication channels that enable us to realise what is happening to others and to see that we are not so different from each other.

# “It is never too late – tomorrow is the first day of the rest of your life”

## Anna Tupiec

*Trainer*

*"Active and open-minded. Has worked on various topics and with many different target groups. She has organized numerous events, workshops, debates, trainings. A lifelong learning believer and promoter."*



### What have you learnt after the delivery of the webinars/modules?

I know that most of us are struggling with various problems, obstacles and adversities. We all have our own limits and borders. It is not precisely defined which factor might cause PTSD and when it might start. What is more, PTSD and depression are often not visible to even a close environment or relatives for a long time. That is way, we all should be attentive and try to look deeper into one's words and behaviours.

My second reflection was that we all might be forced to be a first responder someday. We cannot predict what and when might happen, if there is going to be an accident or other stressful situation around us. Thus, we all should be aware of it and, above all, aware that searching for help is nothing to be ashamed of.

### What direct benefits do TRAFFIR materials have on first responders?

The main benefit on first responders is their greater awareness and better understanding of the importance of protecting their mental health.

The aim of these materials is to provide first responders with the information about communication problems and stress that people with PTSD are struggling with, and also how to recognize such symptoms among one's colleagues. It will also help people learn to self-regulate so that they can function more effectively mentally, emotionally and physically.

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Materials will aim to fully understand that many people are facing same mental health problems and challenges. Thus, first responders will be equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to provide information on how communities, policies and individual people can prevent and treat these mental health complications. It will ultimately widen participation and increase trauma awareness, emotional self-regulation and preparedness for response to any traumatic event.

### Why would you recommend TRAFFIR to anyone?

As I said before, most of us are struggling with various problems, obstacles and adversities. Moreover, anyone can be challenged to be a first responder someday as we cannot predict what and when might happen. Thus, we all should be aware of threats, we all should gain new knowledge, and, above all, we all should be aware that searching for help is nothing to be ashamed of. I would recommend TRAFFIR materials to anyone as the information and knowledge gathered make it valuable and useful material not only for trainers, psychologists or first responders themselves, but for all of us.

## “Mental Health First Aid for Depression”



### **Doina Chirap**

#### **Chief nurse in the psychiatric department**

*Working in the psychiatric department of the County Emergency Hospital “Sfântul Ioan cel Nou” Suceava, with a wide experience in providing psychiatric services in the community, and promoter of mental health.*

#### **What have you learnt after the delivery of the webinars/modules?**

I have to say for me it was the first English webinar, something new and special, unfortunately, because of the COVID pandemic. I have lived in situation where people have become isolated, they have run from each other. We have lost faith in ourselves; in those we consider our neighbor. We forgot to talk and see to each other, to ask for help and to help. So, we become safe victims of insecurity, isolation, lack of relationships, self-help, social and behavioral disabilities.

I know that this webinar was the first step, real and safe, in our preparation, of those who have to help and get involved in providing quality care.

#### **What direct benefits do TRAFFIR materials have on first responders?**

We know that the overall management of people with mental problems is often far from ideal, but now we have procedures in place to limit the risks that will make the delivery of care adequate.

We will certainly receive the answers after life tries to return to what we believe is normal.

Do we know what it will normally mean after this crisis?

#### **Why would you recommend TRAFFIR to anyone?**

We listened to the specialists involved in this project who pointed out with great accuracy and purpose the objectives and strategy, taking into account the diversity of problems that may arise in the management of situations. Last but not least, they worked as a team, which, in addition to being professional, ensured their success. Well done!

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## “Helping people help themselves”

### Inma García

#### Psychologist

*"Psychologist, postgraduate degree in educational neuropsychology and studying a master's degree in Third Wave of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) as well as a specialization in trauma intervention with EMDR. I currently work with elders and children with learning difficulties."*



#### What have you learnt after the delivery of the webinars/modules?

I have increased my knowledge in the field of psychological first aids, especially about the techniques and tools that professionals and first attenders can use to help themselves when they must work and cope with emergency and traumatic situations. As professionals we tend to help the others, usually forgetting that we can be vulnerable at the traumatic events too. Thus, the importance to learn that we can count with the support of other professionals and techniques to keep our mental health in the best condition to help the others.

#### What direct benefits do TRAFFIR materials have on first responders?

Absolutely. There are many significant benefits that can be expected. Equipping professionals with more knowledge and better techniques to help themselves and their colleagues is very beneficial. On a first and general level, there is a direct impact that influences an increase and improvement of their mental health and quality of life thanks to the new knowledge and techniques they learn. Therefore, they feel better about themselves, they learn about their own reactions, their own possibilities and even their own difficulties, and this self-knowledge and self-responsibility translates into a direct impact on the improvement of the care provided to others, both to end-users and to their own colleagues.

#### Why would you recommend TRAFFIR to anyone?

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The main reason is that we all can be able to act as a first responder because life circumstances often do not allow us to choose where we are or things that happen to us, but we can choose how we can act. Sometimes, normal people are pushed to offer support while professionals arrive and that first aid is also essential, hence the importance of being well trained. Also, sometimes it is simply a matter of small challenges and difficulties in our daily lives and other contexts and this knowledge can be useful for personal use as well as for helping family, colleagues, friends, neighbors, etc.

## “We are all first responders in some way or another”

### Laura Redfern

*Nursery Manager*



*"I am a nursery manager who works with children at risk, vulnerable families and worked through the Covid 19 Outbreak to look after children whose parents were keyworkers and on the front line of the pandemic."*

#### What have you learnt after the delivery of the webinars/modules?

These sessions allowed to me to see that first responders are more than just the emergency services; traumas are not necessarily an accident, and the impact is different on everyone. How people cope/react is not necessarily what is expected, the impact of a trauma can also be spread to other people in the first responder's life. It's also important to know how to deal with someone else's trauma if in that position

#### What direct benefits do TRAFFIR materials have on first responders?

The amount of material is available means there is some information for all people, the material breaks down the types of stress, certain individual circumstances someone may face e.g. an autistic child, mental health and even the importance of self-care. The training modules were very specific and even pointed out the outcome of leaving mental health untreated including suicide and physical symptoms to help people come to terms with what they may be facing and the importance of being honest and seeking help.

#### Why would you recommend TRAFFIR to anyone?

TRAFFIR not only shows research and coping skills but also that anyone can and should ask for help as there is a massive response to a first responder dealing with a trauma especially if this is an ongoing situation e.g., emergency services. people should also be given the tools to

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learn challenges they may face - especially at the start of a career - and ways to prevent negative outcomes.

## “One day you will thank yourself for never giving up”

### Magdalena Bednarek

Trainer

*"An energetic, communicative, full of optimism and creative ideas, mother of three children. A firm and consistent woman who never gives up. An eager fighter for justice. She loves people and life. She tries to live full-time, with passion and full commitment."*



#### What have you learnt after the delivery of the webinars/modules?

I realized that this is a more difficult and stress-inducing job than I expected. It usually casts a shadow on family life. As a matter of fact, no one is able to predict which factors determine the occurrence of PTSD in first responders, who I guess, are typical lifeguards and their efforts are frequently underappreciated.

I also realized that depression is very hard to diagnose especially when a person wears "a mask". It is also very hard to help them, which may lead to a stalemate. Therefore, first responders should listen to one another very carefully, observe and spot any alarming behaviours. As well females as males should understand that seeking help is not something they should be ashamed of.

#### What direct benefits do TRAFFIR materials have on first responders?

The main benefit of TRAFFIR materials lies in full understanding of what PTSD is. Besides, first responders should be more aware of how important the protection of their mental health is.

As I mentioned before, sometimes it is very hard to diagnose PTSD. That's why it is crucial to have at least some basic knowledge of its first alarming symptoms. It is commonly known that first responders may face a lot of mental health problems and challenges, so such knowledge and skills will vastly help this group, at the same time preventing from more serious consequences. The knowledge of how we can handle a PTSD problem and what

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mitigating techniques we can apply may even eliminate any traumatic experiences and boost self-regulation skills. A very significant thing is mental preparation to any potential traumatic event as a kind of preventive measure. TRAFFIR materials respond to all above mentioned issues.

### Why would you recommend TRAFFIR to anyone?

I believe TRAFFIR materials are very valuable to trainers, psychologists, psychiatrists, first responders for sure, and any professionals who have ever happened to work with this vulnerable group or any professionals who are planning to do so. Furthermore, we, as ordinary people not being specialists, never know what may happen - perhaps the knowledge or skills acquired within the course will turn out to be very useful in our lives.

## “Stress is addictive ”

### Nedko Tagarev



*Nedko Tagarev PhD - Sen. Assist. Prof. Assistant in the Department of National and of National and Regional Security of University of National and World Economy with more than 400 hours of lectures and exercises per year in the following disciplines: Information Technologies, Economic Analysis and Defense and Security Planning, Corporate Security, Information*

*Security, Current Problems of Defense and Security and Cybersecurity etc.*

#### What have you learnt after the delivery of the webinars/modules?

I learned quite interesting facts related to how to recognize and treat mental health in the Community, i think that I improved my personal skills in managing mental health and I find that burnout prevention is really important.

#### What direct benefits do TRAFFIR materials have on first responders?

I would say that I have learned a lot of useful things about mental health, which has proved extremely important in recent months, given the crisis with Covid-19 and educational institutions. The project helps me to have a deeper look at the behavior of students and their reactions.

#### Why would you recommend TRAFFIR to anyone?

Of course, I have already sent a link to the official website of the project to several colleagues and partners in the field of higher and secondary education, well-known psychologists, children's teachers and others first responders.

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## “Understanding is everything”

### Irena Atanasova



*Irena Atanasova is a philologist, she is actively involved in teaching Portuguese to adults and children, she is also involved in organizing large-scale international conferences, team building and various trainings. She has always worked with people in a dynamic environment, participated in a number of volunteer missions related to disadvantaged children.*

#### What have you learnt after the delivery of the webinars/modules?

In my work I often encounter situations that require a quick and adequate response in terms of first aid. In this point of view, I can definitely say for myself that some of the modules for basic first aid were extremely useful to me. I thought I knew the basics, but I definitely deepened and enriched my knowledge.

#### What direct benefits do TRAFFIR materials have on first responders?

Each of us in our daily lives may face the need to provide first aid or find signs of irritation, stress or depression. We need to know and learn more about these conditions that can have a detrimental effect on a person, lead to serious health problems, problems at work or at home. All the materials I came across were very good structured, understandable and useful.

#### Why would you recommend TRAFFIR to anyone?

I would recommend everyone who works with children, adults, in a large or small work organization to visit the project site and get acquainted with the published materials, everyone can save lives, and everyone can protect a relative or colleague if familiar with the basics of mental health.

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## “The Paradox of Crisis Intervention. Between real needs and building false expectations”



### Tiberiu Rotaru Anghelescu

*Psychologist and psychotherapist*

*“Psychologist and psychotherapist, with large managerial and organizational experience. Working with people is for people.”*

#### What have you learnt after the delivery of the webinars/sessions?

Of course, this was not my first webinar and not my first webinar in English, but “the practice” of webinars exploded due to COVID situation. I think that working via a device when trying to explain the needs and limits of crisis intervention, especially in depression and PTSD makes it a little more difficult to dig and to arouse empathy to your listeners. In crisis intervention, especially in depression, but not only, it has a lot to do with a rightly evaluating the current status of the person in need, in particular and of the situation, in general. The risk of re-traumatizing the person or of not seeing the real pain the person is very high, so it takes a trained eye and a lot of empathy to do the right think. Secondly, you always have to consider doing what is right for the person in need and not for you. Sometimes, it is important just to give time and space to the person in order to adjust to the new reality and to leave a door open in order for the client to come to you if she or he feels like it. But the most important thing is to sooth the pain and to be there where and when you are needed.

#### What direct benefits do TRAFFIR materials have on first responders?

I think for all the professional any materials will provide a sense of the job well done and it will make you feel better as a professional and as a human being. It is important to understand that there are no safe and easy way in order to provide right help at the right time, and that the questions you might have been shared by the other professionals too. There is an inherent risk when you interfere in crisis situation and knowing and respecting basic, simple principles, as personal safety is the first that should come in your mind. Working with people is always

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exciting and mesmerizing, and saying the right sentences or asking the right questions from a manual are not guarantees that will have the right and immediate impact. This is the beauty in working with people, not all of us are dancing to the same tune, but having materials will only define a starting point for being creative and flexible for people in need.

## Why would you recommend TRAFFIR to anyone?

First of all, because of the team that stays behind it. It is great to see people with so many backgrounds and expertise that come together and develop a real “thing of beauty” that can be used by professionals and not only worldwide. Throughout my experience, I learnt that it doesn’t matter if you are the greatest specialist or scientist of the world, always is important to have a team by your side with whom you can share your ideas, concerns and questions. In this aspect, and not only, I believe that TRAFFIR is a real example of good practices. People that first saw each other learnt, almost instantly, to work together as a team, and most important to enjoy it. Secondly, I believe that these kinds of projects are very important for our times where crisis sparkles in all sorts of environments. There is not a 100% safe society and sincerely I hope there will never be one, but together we can become more prepared and stronger both for ourselves and the others in front of any problem that can occur. Together and better trained we can only be only stronger and more human.

## “We cannot be afraid of trauma – we need to bring it into the open”

Yasmin Carlilse



*Engagement worker*

*“Yasmin works with adults who have huge disadvantages in their lives, often caused by complex trauma in their past history.”*

### What have you learnt after the delivery of the webinars/sessions?

I attended the webinars and module training – I learnt a breadth of information on trauma awareness, supporting first responders to manage their mental health triggers, and how to use the Mitchell model – this was hugely interesting. I also developed further my understanding on PTSD, and in particular what we can do to prevent re-traumatisation of people who have had significantly negative experiences, often repeatedly. The materials were so easy to navigate and use, and

### What direct benefits do TRAFFIR materials have on first responders?

I believe they will see that they are not alone, and we are all working together to support them in their incredibly important role. We all rely on first responders, and therefore it is important that in our roles we can develop training and resources that will actively help them to stay mentally well. I would hope that the first responders would also benefit by being able to use the learning in their own daily practice, and to pass this on to their colleagues.

### Why would you recommend TRAFFIR to anyone?

Yes, I would. The resources could in fact cut across a wide range of sectors and topics – certainly they advance our knowledge on trauma, which is very much discussed now adays. The tools and techniques I have learnt through this could be applied to other areas of my professional and private life. Even if people don't want to engage in a lot of learning, TRAFFIR has a huge benefit in that is raising awareness of some very important topics in good mental health and wellbeing.

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