

Course: BSc (Hons) Health and Social Care

Module: Independent Project (BMHP6020_LON)

Component 1: Element 1 - Project Proposal

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Date of submission: 20 October 2026

Word count: 533

Element 1 - Project Proposal

My project title: The impact of adverse childhood experiences on mental health and wellbeing in adulthood in the UK.

1) **Aim:** To explore the impact of adverse childhood experiences on the mental health and wellbeing of adults in the UK.

2) Objectives:

- To discuss the main types of adverse childhood experiences.
- To analyse the link between childhood adversity and adult mental health.
- To evaluate how early intervention can reduce these effects.
- To recommend how health and social care services can support adults affected by childhood adversity.

3) Background/Rationale:

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) include harmful experiences such as abuse, neglect and household violence (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2026). Research has linked ACEs to adult mental health conditions, including depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Liu *et al.*, 2026).

Childhood is a crucial stage of emotional, psychological and social development. Trauma during this period may affect emotional regulation, cognitive functioning and wellbeing in adulthood (Fan and Kang, 2025). An umbrella review identified associations between ACEs and adult mental health problems, including depression and anxiety (Abate *et al.*, 2025). Thurston *et al.* (2025) conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis examining long-term mental health outcomes associated with childhood adversity.

This project will explore the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and adult mental health and well-being, focusing on the long-term effects of childhood adversity.

4) Methods:

This project will conduct a systematic literature review of peer-reviewed primary research examining associations between adverse childhood experiences and adult mental health. Sources will be identified through the university library and Google Scholar, with a focus on original research based on primary data.

Keywords: Searches will include terms such as 'adverse childhood experiences', 'childhood trauma', 'adult mental health', 'depression', 'anxiety', 'PTSD' and 'emotional wellbeing'. These terms will be combined where appropriate to identify relevant studies.

Inclusion criteria: Peer-reviewed primary research studies involving adults aged 18 and over, using UK-based participants or data, examining adverse childhood experiences and mental health or wellbeing outcomes in adulthood, and published in English.

Exclusion criteria: Studies using data from outside the UK, studies that are not peer-reviewed, studies focusing exclusively on children or adolescents, studies that do not examine adult mental health outcomes, and articles published in languages other than English.

The findings will be compared and analysed to identify key themes and potential long-term effects of childhood adversity on mental health and wellbeing in adulthood.

5) Resources:

- University library
- Google Scholar
- PubMed
- NHS website
- UK government reports
- Health and social care organisations
- Microsoft Word for organising and writing the research

6) Timescale:

Chapter:	04-12-2026	12-02-2027	26-02-2027	12-03-2027	19-03-2027
Chapter:1 Introduction					
Chapter 2: Background					
Chapter 3: Methods					
Chapter 4: Results and Decisions					
Chapter :5 Recommendations and conclusions					

7) Self-reflection as researcher

One of my strengths as a researcher is my interest in health and social care and in understanding how childhood experiences can affect mental health and wellbeing in adulthood. This should help me remain motivated and engaged throughout the research process.

A potential challenge may be understanding the different ways adverse childhood experiences can affect adults, while ensuring that I do not make assumptions about their experiences. I will address this by using reliable academic sources and considering different perspectives throughout the research.

References

- Abate, B.B., Sendekie, A.K., Merchaw, A., Abebe, G.K., Azmeraw, M., Alamaw, A.W., Zemariam, A.B., Kitaw, T.A., Kassaw, A., Wodaynew, T., Kassie, A.M., Yilak, G. and Kassa, M.A. (2025) 'Adverse childhood experiences are associated with mental health problems later in life: An umbrella review of systematic review and meta-analysis', *Neuropsychobiology*, 84(1), pp. 48–64. doi: 10.1159/000542392.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2026) 'About Adverse Childhood Experiences'. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/aces/about/index.html> (Accessed: 7 October 2026).
- Fan, L. and Kang, T. (2025) 'Early childhood trauma and its long-term impact on cognitive and emotional development: a systematic review and meta-analysis', *Annals of Medicine*, 57(1), 2536199. doi: 10.1080/07853890.2025.2536199.
- Liu, X., Hu, M., Varline, J., Yang, H., Bo, A. and Mersky, J.P. (2026) 'The effects of adverse childhood experiences on adult mental health across gender, race/ethnicity, and economic status in the United States: A systematic review and meta-analysis', *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1177/15248380261433022.
- Thurston, C., Murray, A.L., Franchino-Olsen, H., Silima, M., Hemady, C.L. and Meinck, F. (2025) 'Prospective longitudinal associations between adverse childhood experiences and adult mental health outcomes: Systematic review and meta-analysis', *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 27(4), pp. 1700–1718. doi: 10.1177/15248380251358223.