Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)



(Public Health Wales,2017)

Firstly, what are Adverse Childhood Experiences?

Aces are: Early life experiences which may be negative or positive that will affect the development of a child's brain. Adverse childhood experiences or ACEs are then traumatic life events that children are exposed to directly and indirectly before they turn 18. ACEs found to impact children were:

- **Abuse (physical, sexual or verbal)**
- **Neglect (physical or emotional)**
- **Being exposed to adults with drink or drug problems**
- **Being exposed to adults with mental health problems**
- **Witnessing domestic violence**
- **Having parents separate**
- **Having parents incarcerated**
- **Living in poverty or a deprived area**

As well as these ACEs children can be exposed to other adversities in childhood too. These experiences then negatively affect a child's development physically as well as emotionally, and the more ACEs exposed to a child the bigger impact it will make on their wellbeing in adulthood.

(Bellis et al., 2015)(Nhs,2018)(K.Hardcastle , et al,2018)(Scottish Government,2018)(Public health Wales,2017)

But how will ACEs impact, later in adulthood?

In 2015, Public Health Wales carried out a survey , on 2028 participants both male and female, aged 16 through to 69. Aiming to find out and estimate how many people have been affected by ACEs within Wales question such as the number of ACEs Which affected them , Along with health questions to see how ACEs can take toll on a person health where asked,

The study found that compared to adults with no ACEs that, those with four or more would suffer with physical and mental health problems later on in life and the likelihood of having drug or alcohol problems where doubled ,compared to those without ACEs.

The likelihood of engaging in risky behaviors was increased this meant many participants where 20 times more likely to be imprisoned and be a part of violent situations as a victim and inflicting them. These factors can then cause issues with gaining employment as well as being able to run a home.

The study also found out that in childhood those with four or more ACEs:

- **Had increased absences from school**
- **suffered poor health in childhood**
- **Would be prone to digestive problems**
- **Suffered headaches in childhood**
- **Were also more prone to asthma**

The **study found overall (47%) of adults in Wales are likely to experience at least one ACE. Furthermore 14% of adults experienced four or more ACEs.**

(Ashton, K. Bellis, M. Hughes, k.2016),(NHS Wales 2018)(Public Health, Wales ,2017)

How can we prevent ACEs and what is being done to prevent them?

By adults and those working with children noticing signs of abuse or cause of concerns early enough, early interventions can take place. Improving circumstances for the child through supporting families, parents and children. Support could be delivered through schemes such as: Flying Start, Families First as well as Team around the Family.(Families First,2018)

Through having support and developing resilience in childhood, mental health disorders in adults with four or more ACEs was halved from 29 per cent to 14 per cent. This indicates that by gaining resilience through support whether it be a friend or adult. As well as activities within the community, such as sports, reduced the risks of developing mental illness; even in those who experienced four or more ACEs.(Public Health Wales,2018)

Within Wales there are two key policies helping to shape children's and young people future called 'The Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014' and 'Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015'. Both Acts aim to improve early interventions as well as supporting families in need of support, improving well-being of children. (Future Generations of Wales Commissioner,2018),(Care Council For Wales,2017

As ACEs prevention and building resilience is the key to improving issues for children, Wales is already thinking about the future steps of declining ACEs of children. It can be seen children spend a significant amount of time within school, Wales have recently conducted a research evaluation of how ACEs are dealt with in schools. Helping to implement policies and procedures in the future across all schools in Wales, so teachers and staff are ACEs aware by staff training and supporting pupils at risk of developing ACEs. It can be seen improving well-being of children does improve academic outcomes. Government policy is now underway to address ACEs in education. (Public Health Wales,2018)

Where to go for help and support

Whether you're a professional working with someone with ACES

know someone who is at risk of being affected by ACEs

have been affected by ACEs personally as an adult, child or young person there are services to help all listed below:

NSPCC – If your concerned about the welfare of a child call for support and guidance on what to do :0808 800 5000.

Victim Support- supporting anyone impacted by any reported crime call: 0808 168 9111

Women's Aid- a charity helping to end domestic violence against women and children. Phone :0808 168 9111

Live Fear Free- a support and information service for anyone affected by domestic abuse. Call 0808 20000 247

Talk to Frank –if you have a problem with issues related to drugs on 0300 123 6600

Alcoholics Anonymous: if you have a drink problem and would like support call :0800 917 7650

MIND Cymru: provides support to anyone with mental health issues or think they have issues call 0300 123 3393 or text 86463

If you're a Child or young person call:

Childline – who can provide Help and support 24/7 on 0800 11 11

MEIC – can give information and advice or advocacy via freephone 0808 8023 456 or text 84001 (only open till 8pm)

If you feel you yourself as a child or young person or worry for the well-being of a child in danger do not hesitate to call 999.

Rationale

The content of the leaflet is based on Adverse Childhood experiences , aiming to educate individuals of all ages on what they are and how they impact brain development of a growing child as found by Bellis *et al*. (2015). Also included was a list on some of the different types of aces which can affect people (Scottish Government ,2018) .

On page 2 of the leaflet Results of a Public Health Wales survey including the way it was conducted was included into the leaflet, as this gives readers actual statistics on how ACEs can impact health in adulthood and how they coincide with childhood impacts. Showing the more ACEs a child is presented with the more problems may occur.

As shown on page three a key factor in preventing ACEs was by early intervention of services supporting children and families, improving wellbeing (Flying Start, 2017). It was also found by Public Health Wales and Bangor University that by having a support network such as friend, mentor would decrease the chance of being impacted by ACEs later in life. Furthermore, the policies 'The Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014 (Wales) as well as 'The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 (Wales) was included to the leaflet, highlighting the significance of ACEs within Wales and how future improvements are already in progress by training those who educate children on ACEs.

The final page of useful contacts was added as many people whether parents or children may not realize, they have been directly impacted and that by reaching for support will empower them to improve the outcomes of their ACEs. Contact numbers were added for both child and adult for support as ACEs impact all.

Reference list

Ashton, K., Bellis, M. and Hughes, K. (2016) 'Adverse childhood experiences and their association with health-harming behaviours and mental wellbeing in the Welsh adult population: a national cross-sectional survey', *Policy, Research and Development Public Health Wales*. Available at: https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S0140-6736%2816%2932257-7 (Accessed: 4 November 2019).

Care Council for Wales (2017) *Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014: The main principles underpinning the Act: voice and control, prevention and early intervention, well-being, co-production and multi-agency.* Available at: https://socialcare.wales/cms_assets/hub-downloads/Principles-Resource-Guide_March-17.pdf (Accessed: 4 November 2019).

Families First (2018) *Putting Families First in Wrexham*. Available at: https://www.wrexham.gov.uk/assets/pdfs/social_services/families_first/directory_of_services.pdf (Accessed: 4 November 2019).

FRANK (no date) *Worried about a friend?* Available at: https://www.talktofrank.com/get-help/worried-about-a-friend (Accessed: 4 November 2019).

Future Generations Commissioner for Wales (2018). *#ACEsDecember Putting ACEs front and centre with the Well-being of Future Generations Act.* Available at: https://futuregenerations.wales/news/acesdecember-putting-aces-front-and-centre-with-the-well-being-of-future-generations-act/ (Accessed: 4 November 2019).

Future Generations Commissioner for Wales (2019) *Adverse Childhood Experiences*. Available at: https://futuregenerations.wales/priority_areas/adverse-childhood-experiences/ (Accessed: 4 November 2019).

Hardcastle, K., Bellis, M.A., Ford, K., Hughes, K. Garner, J. and Ramos Rodriguez, G. (2018) *Measuring the relationships between adverse childhood experiences and educational and employment success in England and Wales: findings from a retrospective study.* Available at: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0033350618303032 (Accessed: 4 November 2019).

Meic (2019) *Get Help*. Available at: https://www.meiccymru.org/get-help/ (Accessed: 4 November 2019).

National Health Service (2018) *Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Housing Vulnerability- Report and Evaluation of ACE-informed Training for Housing.* Available at: http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/888/5%20ACE%20Informed%20Training%20for%20Housing.pdf (Accessed: 4 November 2019).

NSPCC (2019) *Helplines.* Available at: https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-we-do/ (Accessed: 4 November 2019).

Public Health Wales (2017) *Ace Animation.* Available at: http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/888/page/91667 (Accessed: 4 November 2019).

Public Health Wales (2018a) *An evaluation of the Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE)- Informed Whole School Approach.* Available at: https://www.rsph.org.uk/uploads/assets/uploaded/d998fcce-a6a9-4ba3-b13a241070c88fdb.pdf (Accessed: 4 November 2019).

Public Health Wales (2018b) *Cymru Well Wales: Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).* Available at: http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/888/page/88524 (Accessed: 4 November 2019).

Public Health Wales (2019) *Asking about adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in health visiting-Findings from a pilot study*. Available at: http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/888/Asking%20about%20ACEs%20in%20Health%20Visiting%20-%20Pilot%20Evaluation%20Report.pdf (Accessed: 4 November 2019).

Public Health Wales (2019) *Responding to Adverse Childhood Experiences: An evidence review of interventions to prevent and address adversity across the life course.* Available at: https://www.bangor.ac.uk/news/documents/RespondingToACEs-PHW2019-english.pdf (Accessed: 5 November 2019).

Scottish Government (2018) *Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Action to prevent adverse childhood experiences where we can and tackle their impact.* Available at: https://www.gov.scot/publications/adverse-childhood-experiences/ (Accessed: 4 November 2019).

Welsh Government (2017) *Families First Programme Guidance: Section 2.1, 2.5*. Available at: https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/Living/Social%20Care/Families-First-Programme-Guidance-April-2017-English.pdf (Accessed: 4 November 2019).