

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in Wales

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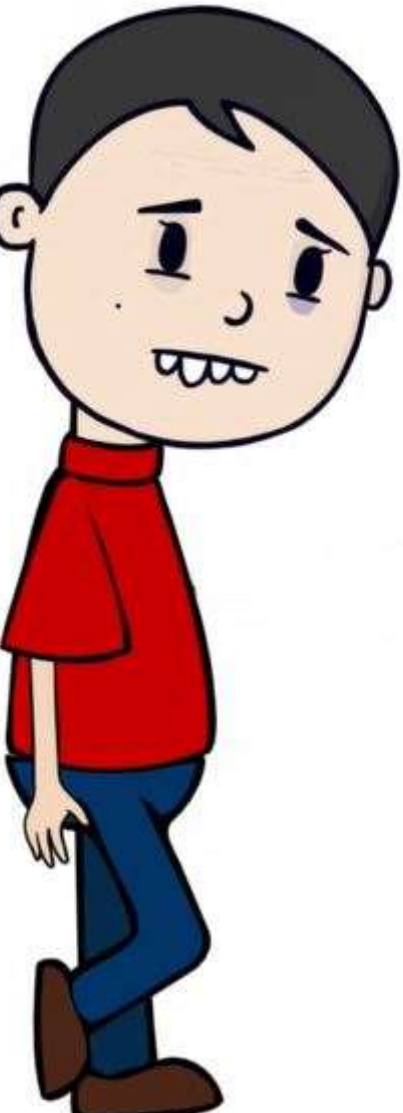
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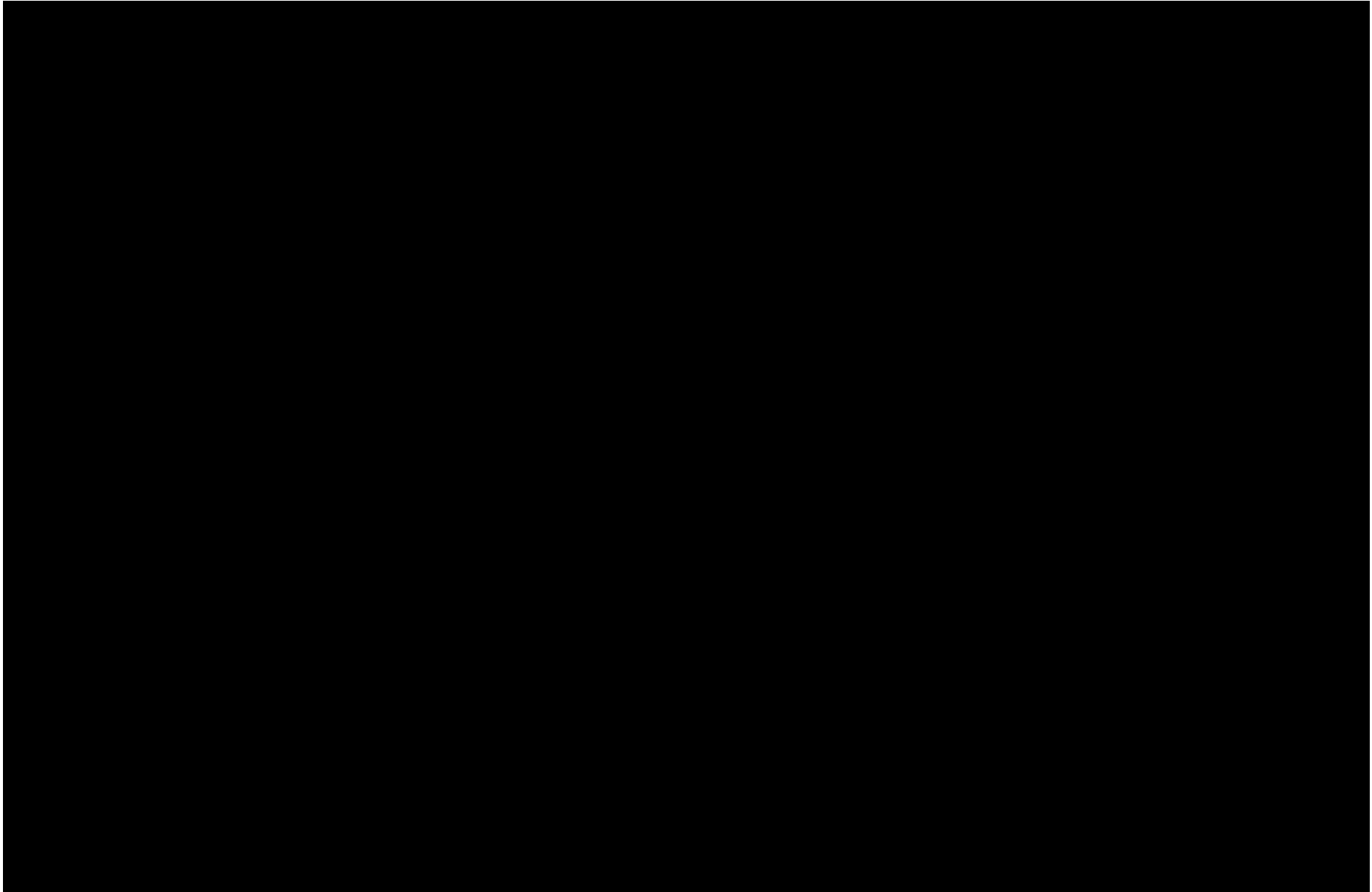
What are ACEs?



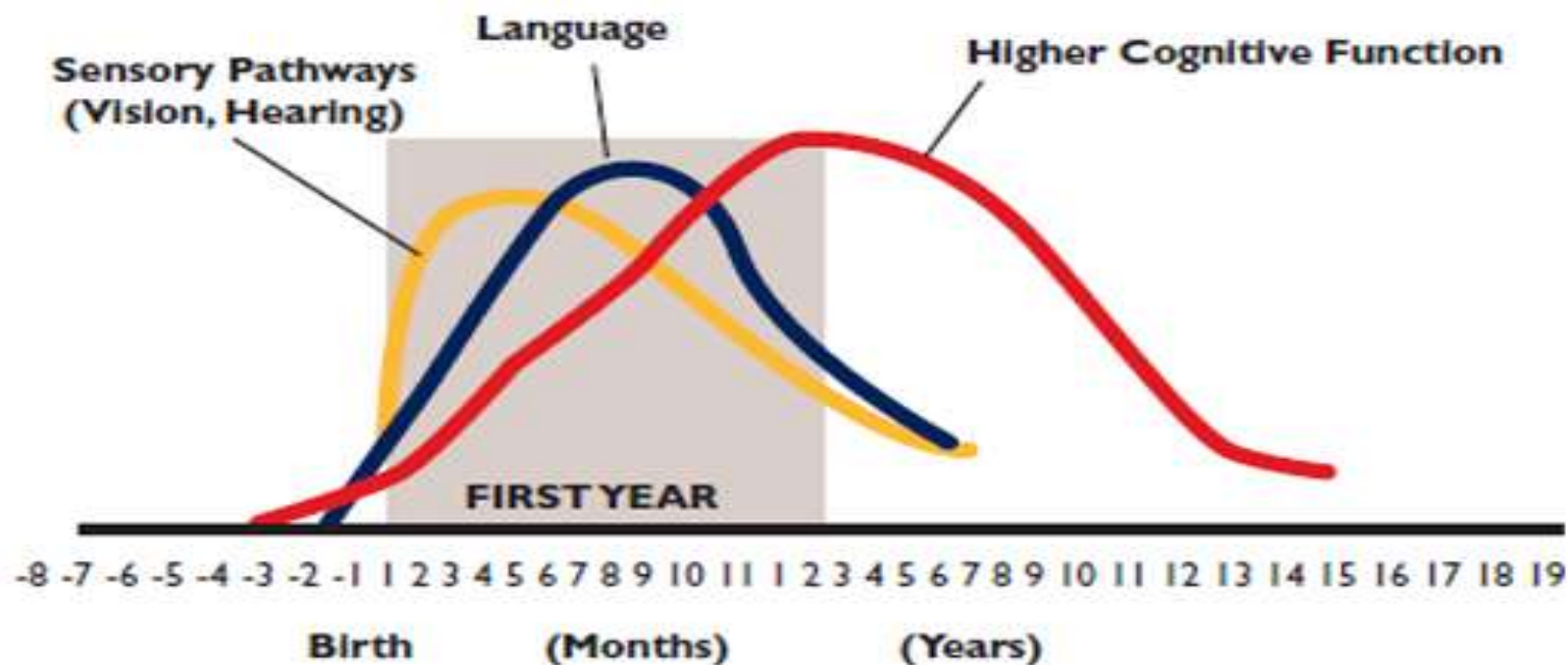
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are stressful experiences occurring during childhood that directly harm a child (e.g. sexual or physical abuse) or affect the environment in which they live (e.g. growing up in a house with domestic violence)'

Bellis et al 2016

ACES Animation (1)



ACEs – The Critical Years



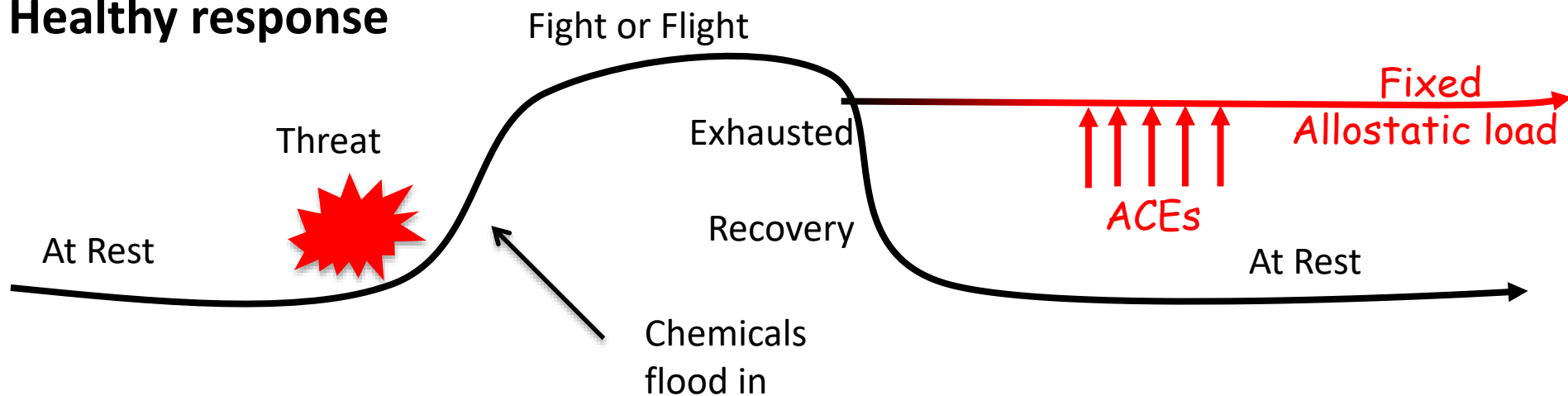
Data source: C. Nelson (2000); Graph courtesy of the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University

- In the first 2 years a baby's brain grows from 25% to 80% of its adult size
- Development continues in childhood learning empathy, trust and community

ACEs – Brain Development

Trauma response and the impact of ACEs on brain development

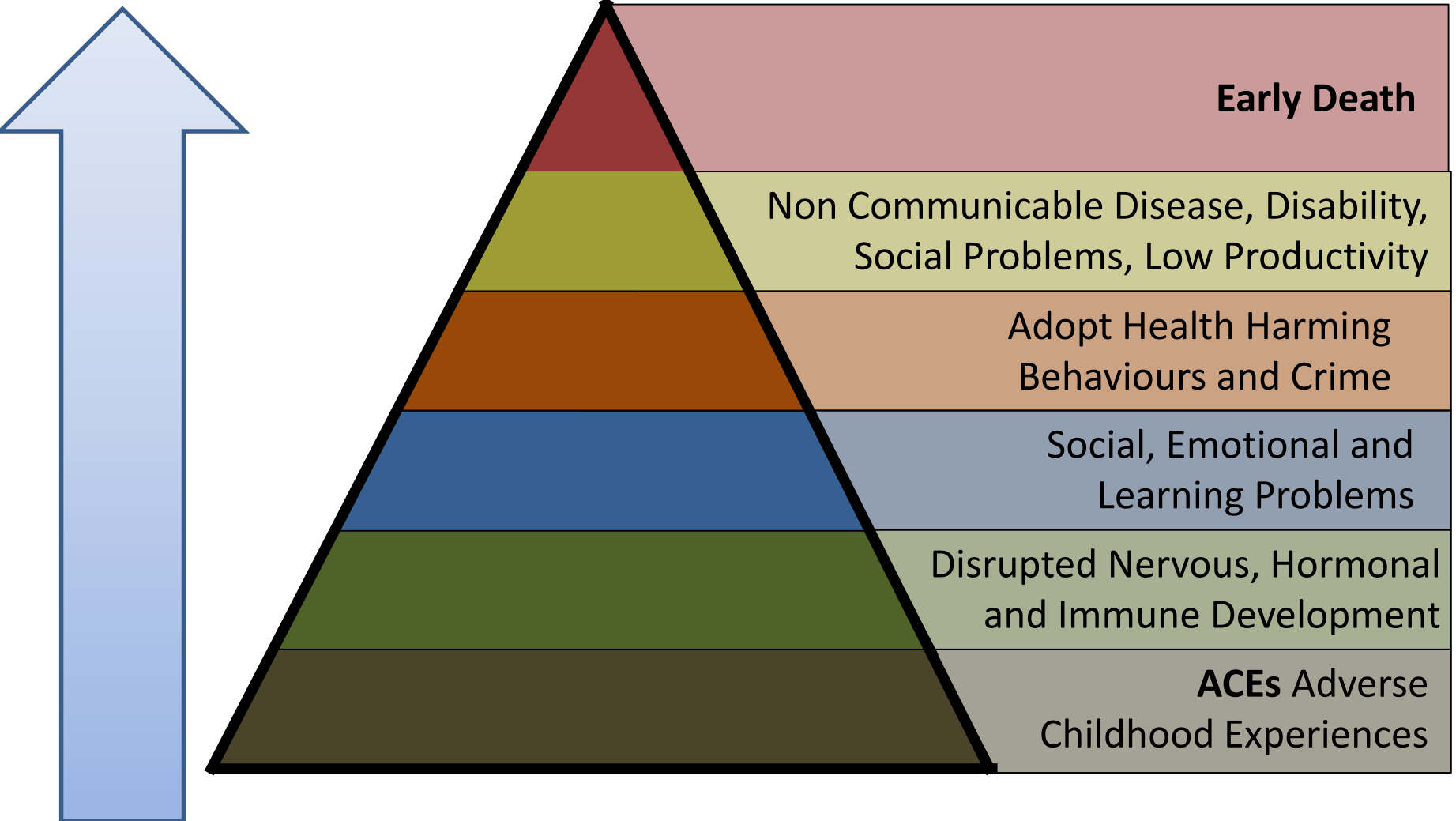
Healthy response



Chronic Stress from ACEs over-develop 'life-preserving' part of the brain.

ACEs – The Life Course

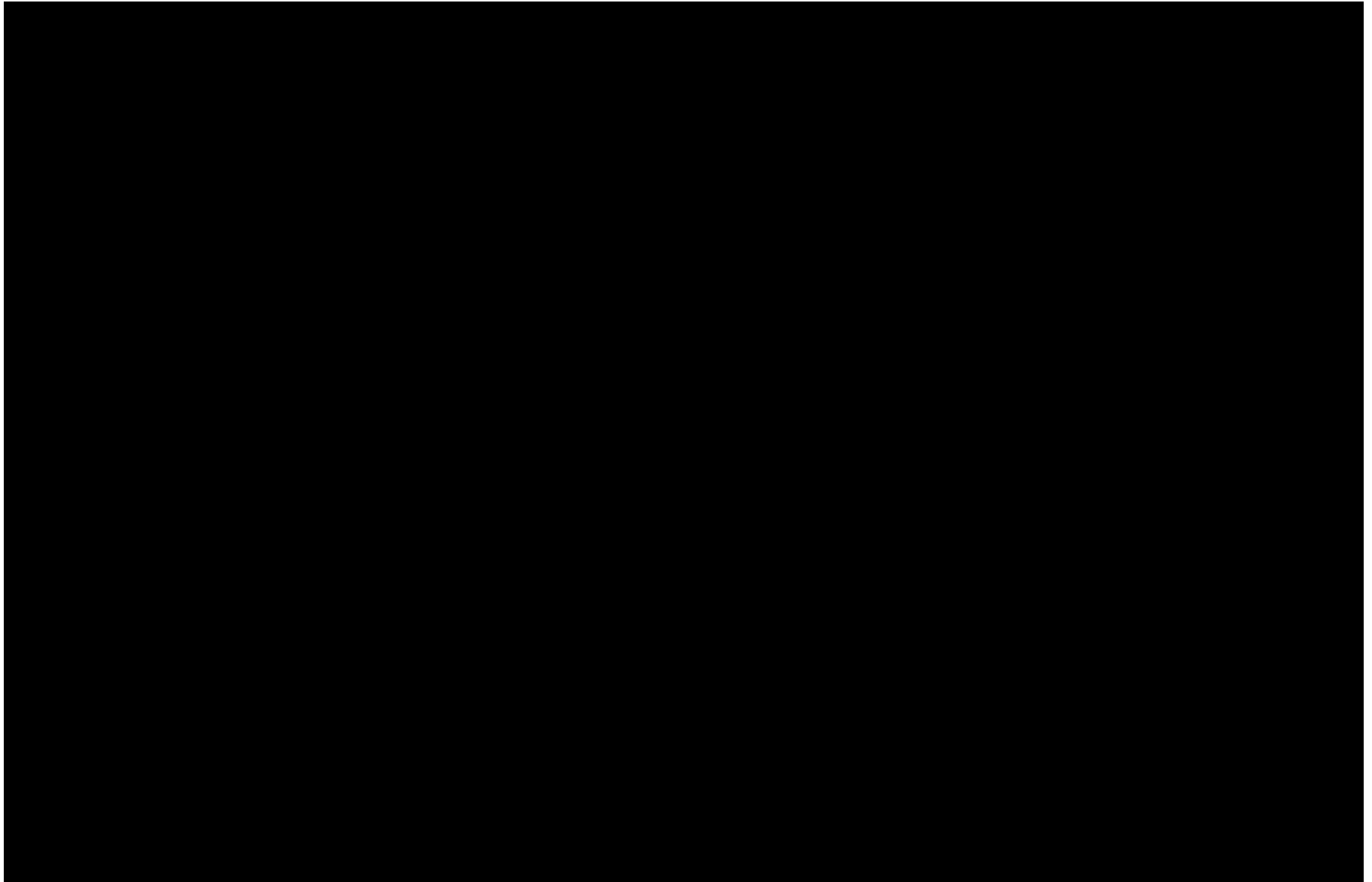
DEATH



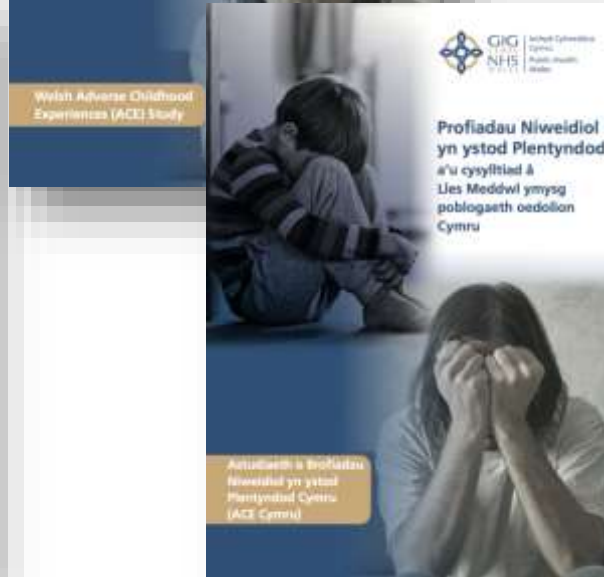
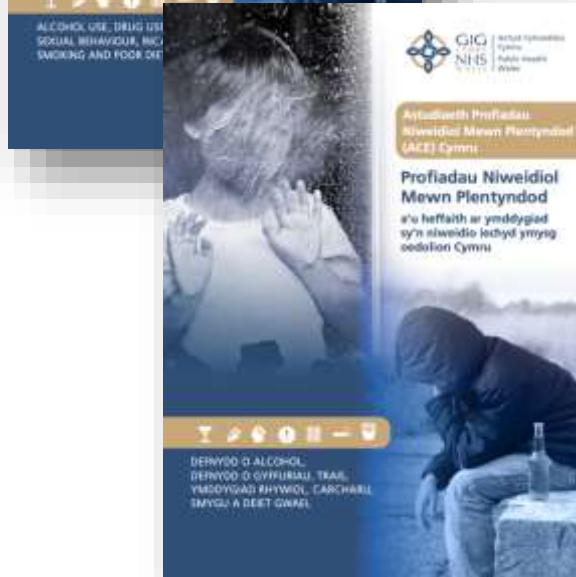
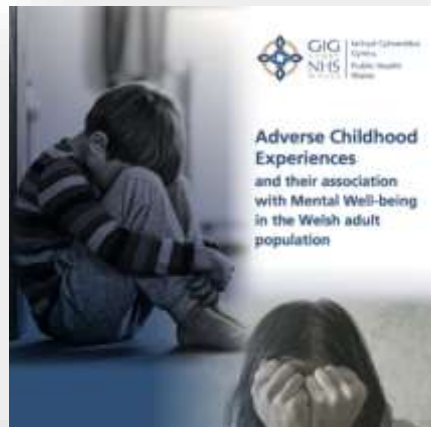
BIRTH

Developed from Felitti et al. 1998

ACES Animation (2)



Welsh ACE study - PHW Reports



Welsh ACE study - Exposure

CHILD MALTREATMENT



Verbal abuse
23%



Physical abuse
17%



Sexual abuse
10%

CHILDHOOD HOUSEHOLD INCLUDED



Parental
separation
20%



Domestic
violence
16%



Mental
illness
14%



Alcohol
abuse
14%



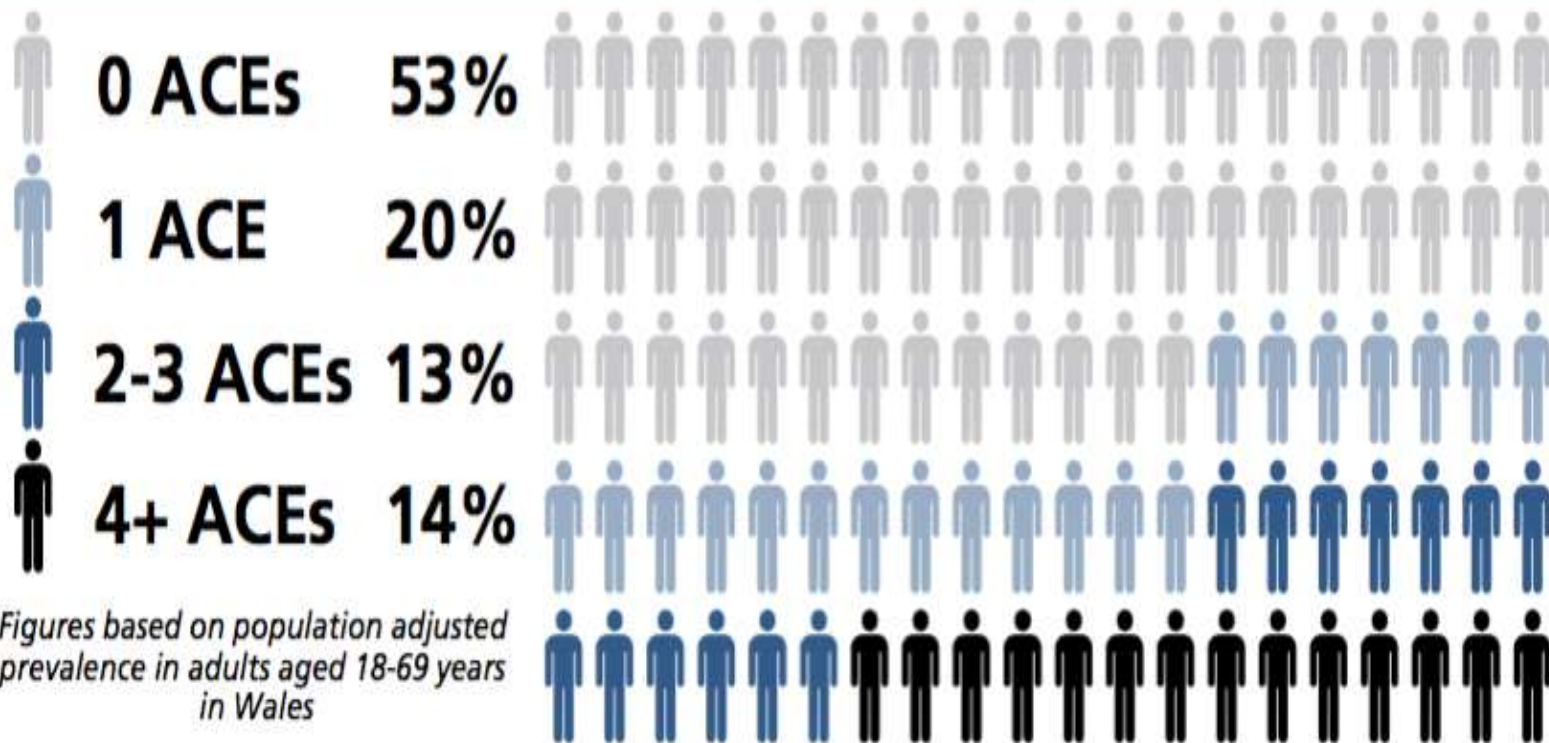
Drug
use
5%



Incarceration
5%

Welsh ACE study - Prevalence

For every 100 adults in Wales 47 have suffered at least one ACE during their childhood and 14 have suffered 4 or more.



ACEs – The Increased Issues

Compared with people with no ACEs, those with 4+ ACEs are:

- 4 times more likely** to be a high-risk drinker
- 6 times more likely** to have had or caused unintended teenage pregnancy
- 6 times more likely** to smoke e-cigarettes or tobacco
- 6 times more likely** to have had sex under the age of 16 years
- 11 times more likely** to have smoked cannabis
- 14 times more likely** to have been a victim of violence over the last 12 months
- 15 times more likely** to have committed violence against another person in the last 12 months
- 16 times more likely** to have used crack cocaine or heroin
- 20 times more likely** to have been incarcerated at any point in their lifetime

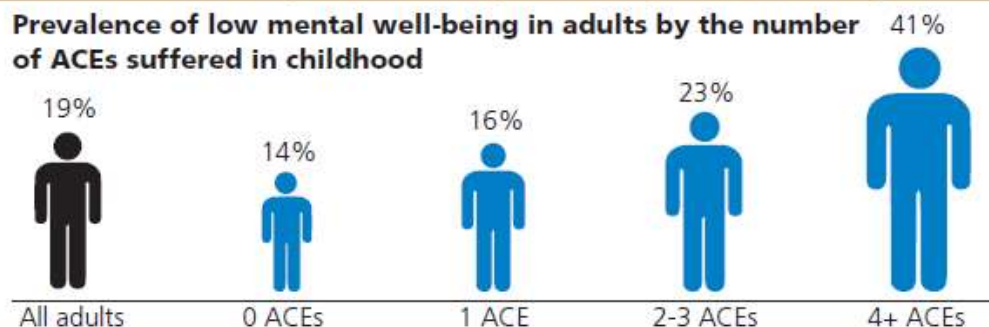


ACEs – Mental well-being

The prevalence of low mental well-being in adults increased with the number of ACEs suffered in childhood

Mental well-being was measured using the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (SWEMWBS) which includes seven questions to assess mental wellbeing over the last two weeks. Scores for these questions are combined to provide an overall mental well-being score ranging from 7 to 35. Individuals scoring below 20 were categorised as having low mental well-being.*

Prevalence of low mental well-being in adults by the number of ACEs suffered in childhood



*Low mental well-being was classified as >1 standard deviation below the mean overall mental well-being SWEMWBS score of all respondents (mean = 24.47, SD = 4.57, low <20).

Adults with 4+ ACEs were five times^s more likely to have low mental well-being than those with no ACEs

Over the past two weeks, compared to people with no ACEs, those with 4+ ACEs were also:

- 3 times more likely to have never or rarely felt relaxed
- 3 times more likely to have never or rarely felt close to other people
- 4 times more likely to have never or rarely been thinking clearly
- 5 times more likely to have never or rarely to have dealt with problems well
- 5 times more likely to have never or rarely been able to make up their own mind about things
- 6 times more likely to have never or rarely felt optimistic about the future
- 6 times more likely to have never or rarely felt useful



ACEs – The Health Service Impact

Up to the age of 69 years, those with four or more ACEs were 2x more likely than those with no ACEs to be diagnosed with a chronic disease*^s

For specific diseases they were:



4x
more likely to develop
Diabetes (Type 2)



3x
more likely to develop
Heart Disease



3x
more likely to develop a
Respiratory Disease

Levels of health service use were higher in adults who experienced more ACEs*[#]

Over a 12 month period, compared to people with no ACEs, those with four or more ACEs were:



2x
more likely to have
frequently visited a GP**



3x
more likely to have
attended A&E



3x
more likely to have stayed
overnight in hospital



ACEs – Prevention

Preventing ACEs in future generations could reduce levels of:



**Heroin/crack cocaine
use (lifetime)
by 66%**



**Incarceration
(lifetime)
by 65%**



**Violence perpetration
(past year)
by 60%**



**Violence victimisation
(past year)
by 57%**



**Cannabis use
(lifetime)
by 42%**



**Unintended teen
pregnancy
by 41%**



**High-risk drinking
(current)
by 35%**



**Early sex
(before age 16)
by 31%**



**Smoking tobacco or
e-cigarettes
(current)
by 24%**



**Poor diet
(current; <2 fruit & veg
portions daily)
by 16%**

ACEs – Prevention

Preventing ACEs in future generations could reduce levels of:



Low mental
well-being
by 27%



Not feeling optimistic
about the future
by 43%



Not feeling
useful
by 48%



Not feeling
relaxed
by 38%



Not dealing with
problems well
by 31%



Not thinking
clearly
by 34%

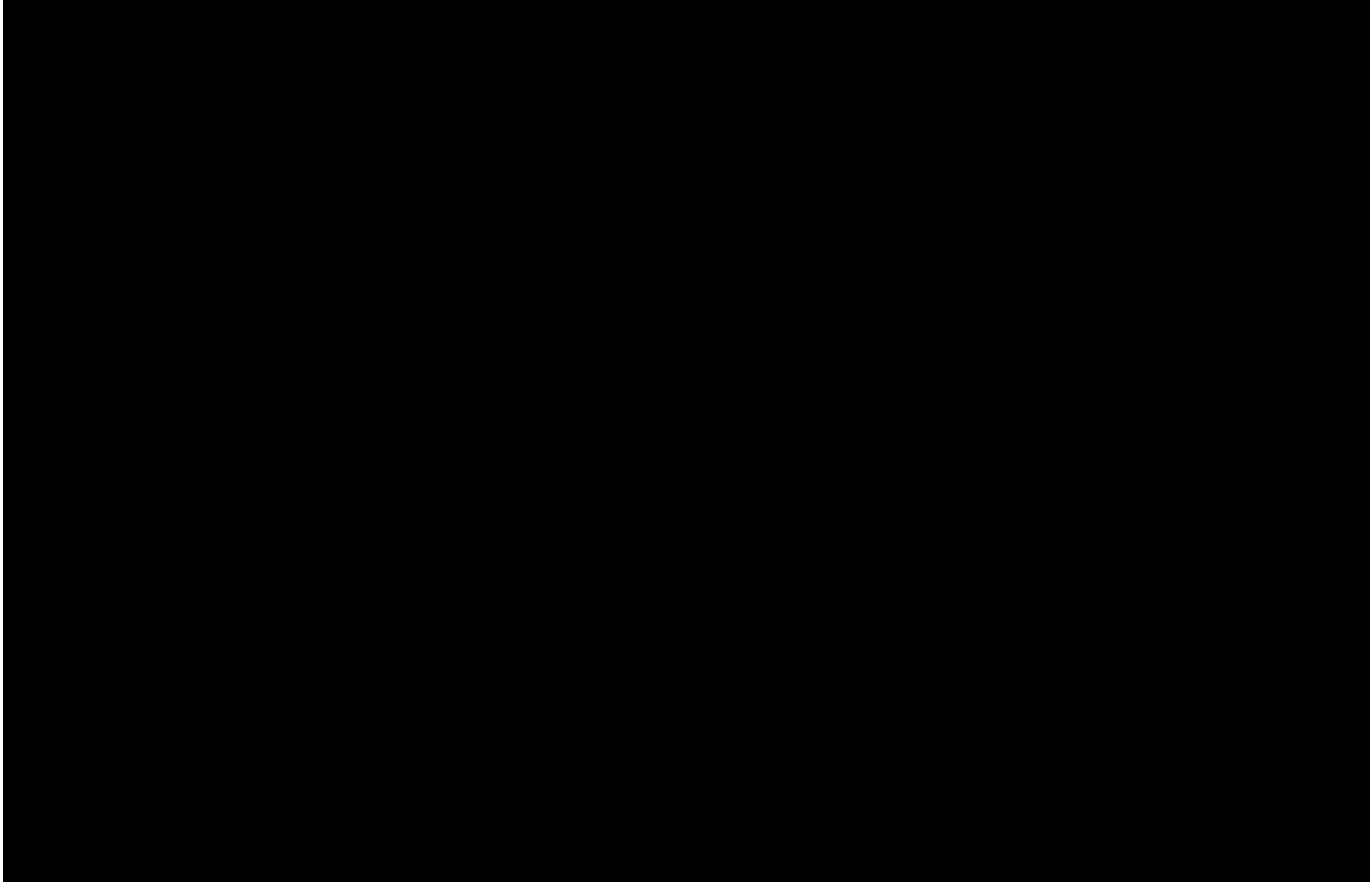


Not feeling close
to other people
by 25%



Not being able to make
their mind up about things
by 26%

ACES Animation (3)



ACEs – The Effects

ANXIOUS

ALWAYS PREPARED TO FIGHT OR FLEE

POOR LEARNER

IMPLUSIVE

DISENGAGED

EDGY, HOT TEMPERED

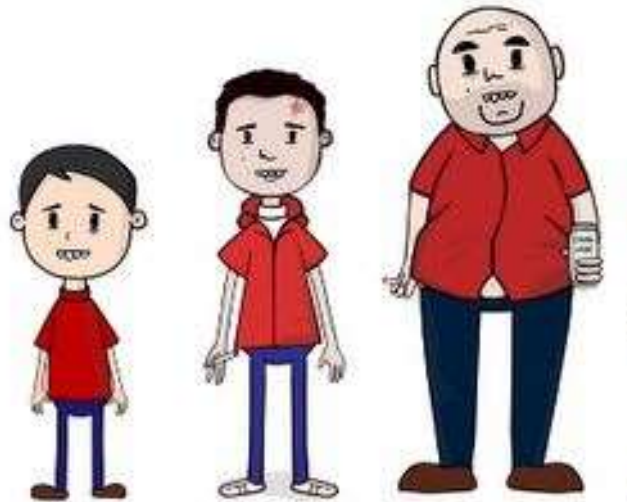
HYPER-VIGILANT

DIFFICULTY BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

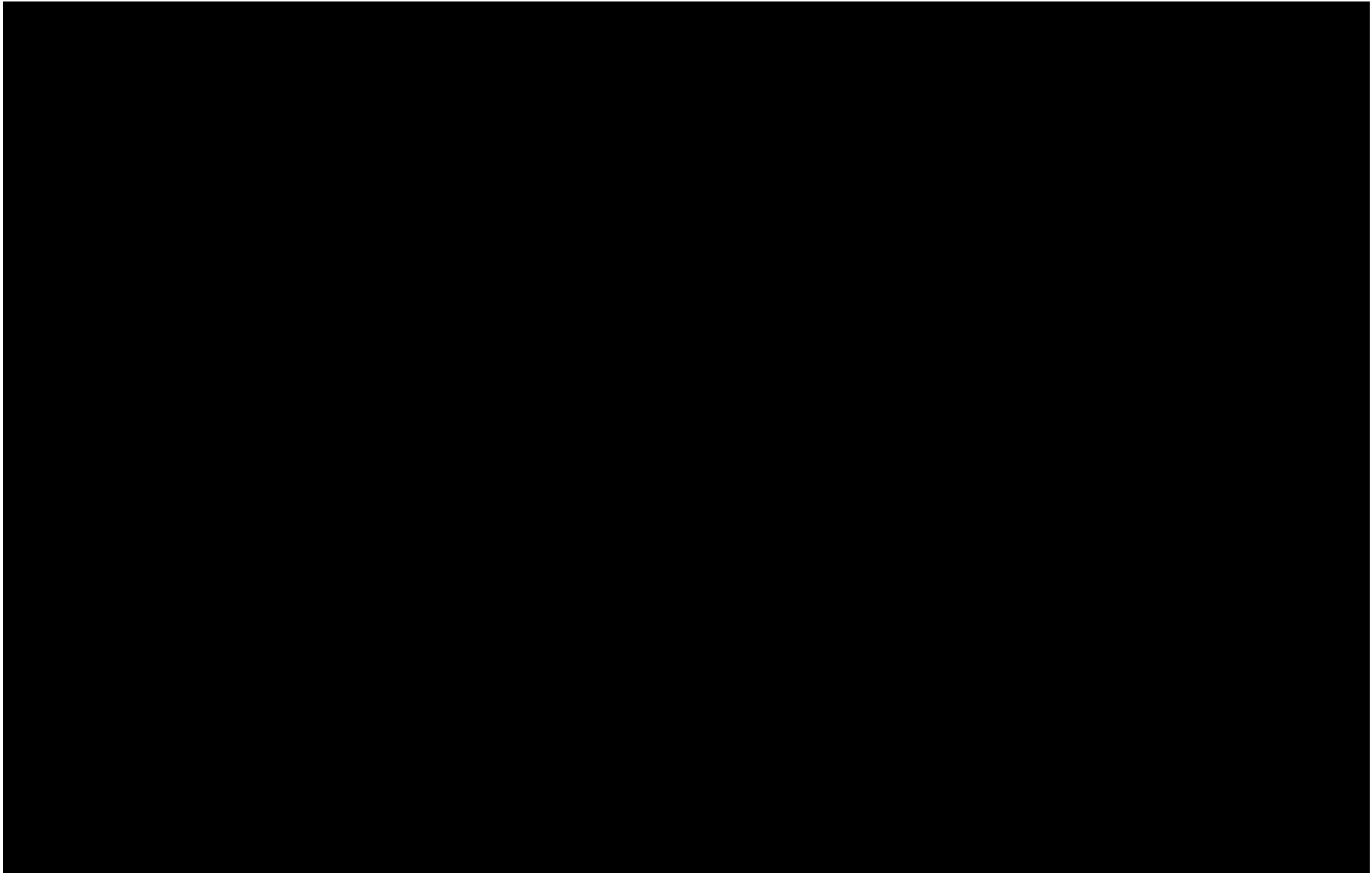


Police and ACEs

At the moment, though, their processes and training don't always allow for them to respond effectively to these complex issues, like mental health problems and these situations, where most of the incidents are domestic violence and general anti-social behaviour. Early intervention for these agencies to become involved, and they are just logged

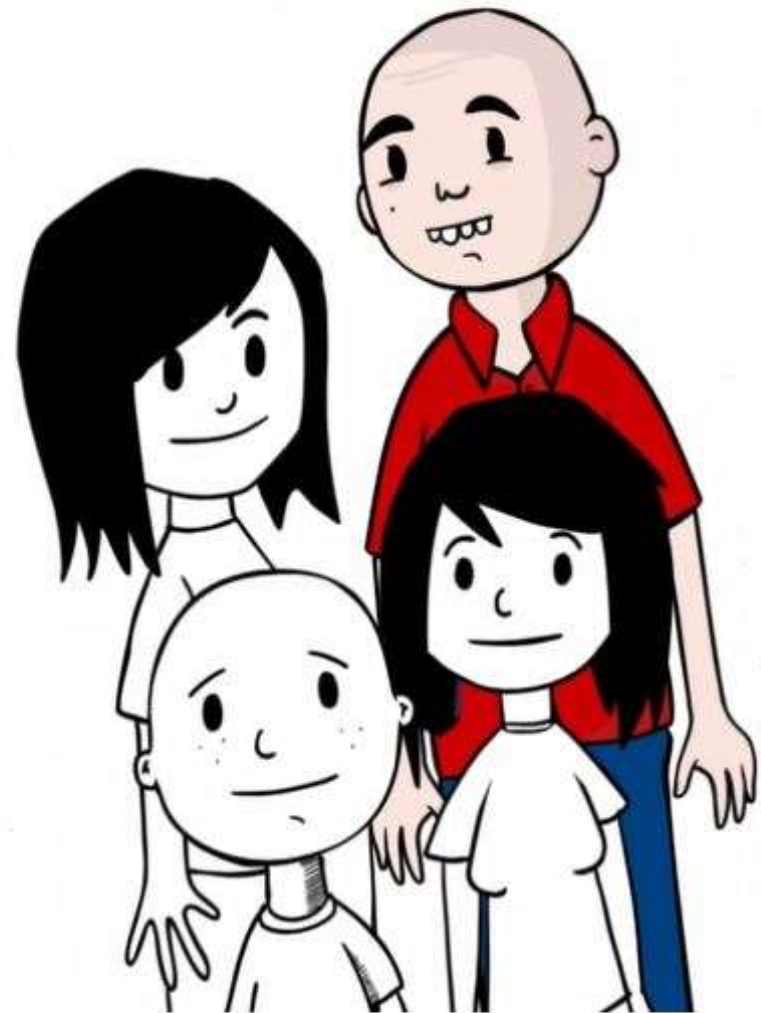


ACES Animation (4)



ACEs – Breaking the cycle

ACEs can last a lifetime but they don't have to!



- Healing can occur
- Safe, stable, nurturing relationships and other protective factors heal
- The cycle can be broken

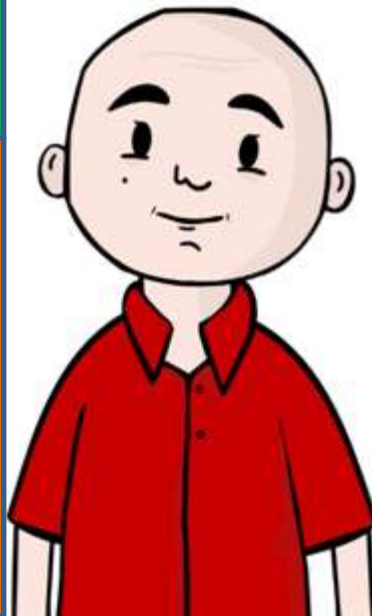
ACEs – Breaking the cycle

Protective Factors

The building blocks of resilience

One or more
stable, caring
child-adult
relationship

Equipped to
manage your
behavior and
emotions



Feel you can
overcome
hardship and
guide your
destiny

Involved and
connected

ACEs – Breaking the cycle

Strategic perspective: how can we respond?

- Ensure **ACE informed organisations, staff and practice**
- Develop a **universal and proportionate approach** to identifying and responding to ACEs – recognising prevalence, escalating response with higher ACE score
- Steer investment towards **first 1000 days of life**
- Increase the focus on **parenting** as a universal support
- Promote **resilience and emotional literacy** across the lifecourse
- Encourage broader engagement with all stakeholders to work towards an **ACE informed society**

ACEs – Breaking the cycle

Practitioner perspective: how can we respond?

- Integrate **routine ACE enquiry** into existing assessments
- Consider **ACE history** of parents, in addition to assessing risk of exposure to the child
- Consider **impact of ACEs** in non-specific symptoms or behaviour – in adults and children
- Identifying and maximising **local system assets and protective factors**
- Providing responsibility and permission to **act, not just refer**
- Take an ACE informed lens to your service – and how it **supports the core protective factors**

ACEs – Breaking the cycle

What can we all do?

**Spread the word - ACE
informed Professionals, Politicians
and Public**



**Identify ACEs, promote protective
factors, increase resilience**



**Address the root causes not the
symptoms**



Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in Wales

Opportunities to prevent and reduce the impact of ACEs



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ACEs – Opportunities for Action

- Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014
- Tackling Poverty Programmes
- Together 4 Children and Young People
- UN Convention Rights of the Child
- Cymru Well Wales

ACEs – Future Generations Act



- Groundbreaking legislation
- Presents an exciting opportunity
- Focus on prevention
- ACEs will be an important measure of success



Thank you

Cymraeg: www.iechydcyhoedduscymru.org/ACES

English: www.publichealthwales.org/ACES

Link to full ACEs animation (opportunity to help evaluate it!) : <http://www.aces.me.uk/video-survey/en/>

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