

Course: BSc (Hons) Health and Social Care

Module: Independent Project (BMHP6020_BIRM)

Component 1: Element 1 - Project Proposal

Student ID: 2329698

Student Name: Anika Jabeen

Lecturer Name: Joanne Davies

Element 1 - Project Proposal

Exploring the Impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) on Adult Mental Health and How Healthcare Professionals Can Provide Effective Support in UK

This study aims to investigate the effects of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) on the mental health and general well-being of adults. While taking into account the broader factors that may contribute to these experiences, it will look at how childhood adversity can affect people's long-term psychological, emotional, and social outcomes. Additionally, the study will assess how social workers and health care providers can effectively support people impacted by ACEs in a person-centred, trauma-informed manner. This will entail evaluating pertinent laws, regulations, professional standards, and evidence-based methods critically in order to pinpoint best practices, recognise possible drawbacks, and take into account how services can enhance individual outcomes. While critically evaluating the effectiveness of their approaches to assisting individuals and upholding professional standards of care.

Objectives

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 - Analyse statistics to gain a better understanding of the effects of mental health and social isolation, as well as how loneliness affects people's mental and physical health.
 - Examine how medical health care professionals apply relevant legislation and policies.
 - Conduct thematic analysis to assess mental health and ACE programs and policies.
 - Offer evidence-based solutions for enhancing support systems and reducing loneliness among adults

3) Background/Rationale:

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are potentially traumatic occurrences that occur during childhood (ages 0-17). Examples include experiencing violence, abuse, or neglect, witnessing violence in a household or neighbourhood, or having a family member attempt or die by suicide. Aspects of the child's environment may also undermine their sense of safety, stability, and bonding. Substance abuse difficulties, mental health issues, and instability resulting from parental separation (Public Health Wales)

It has been demonstrated that routine or targeted ACE inquiry using the "REACH" paradigm is practical and acceptable to both staff and service users in a variety of settings in England, including promoting pathfinder work in general practitioner practices (Larkin and Cairns, 2020). Nearly 1 in 9 adults (11%) has experienced four or more ACEs — the threshold at which risk of serious harm becomes particularly pronounced. People with 4+ ACEs are 4 times more likely to develop depression and anxiety (Mentalhealthfirstaidcourse.co.uk, 2026). According to Hughes et al., (2020), drug usage had the greatest ACEs 58.8% in Wales and 52.6% in England. Health and social care professionals have reported feeling uncomfortable or unwilling to enquire about childhood trauma and adversity (Safeguarding-guide.nhs.uk, 2024).

4) Methods:

This research will adopt a secondary analysis approach:

- **Data Sources:** Peer-reviewed journal articles, reports from organisations such as PubMed, NCBI,PMC, BMJ, CDC and GOV.UK.
- **Inclusion Criteria:** Studies published within the last 10 years, focusing on childhood trauma which therefore effects adults mental health and how health care professionals provide support.
- **Exclusion Criteria:** Non-academic sources, articles outside the UK context.
- **Analysis:** A thematic analysis will be carried out to recognize essential patterns and themes, as well as the efficacy of interventions.
- **Ethical Considerations:** All sources will be properly cited in Harvard referencing style, academic integrity, appropriate paraphrasing, objective representation of evidence.
- **Search terms:** Adverse childhood experiences, childhood trauma and long term health effects

Resources:

- Databases: PubMed, NCBI, PMC, BMJ, CDC
- UK based organisations: NHS England GOV.UK and NICE
- Research and evidence: Systematic reviews, policies, legislations, thematic approaches
- Software: MS Word for report writing and formatting
- Academic Support: Lecturer feedback, Library resources Peer support groups

6) Timescale:

Week	Task
15-17 Sept	Think and finalise the title
20-28	Conduct a literature search and collect data.
4 th Oct	Draft and submit the research proposal.
12–15 Jan	Draft Chapter 1: Introduction.
20-25 Jan	Draft Chapter 2: Background.
28-29	Complete Chapter 3
1-4 Feb	Academic Methods Poster
6-10 Feb	Draft Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis.
15-20	Write Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations.
21 Feb	Draft and feedback before submission
1-5 Mar	Dissertation submission.

7) Self-reflection

The advantages would include a schedule established to determine when a task should be finished and any expertise and understanding regarding ACE and mental health overall. The main obstacles encountered in this dissertation would involve thematic analysis if the researcher were unfamiliar with how to carry it out. The timeline and the method for managing it alongside other academic obligations. To address this obstacle, the researcher can establish a timeline, lecturer support, study skills, library support, structure tracking, regular dissertation planning and practice with thematic analysis.

References

Hughes, K., Ford, K., Kadel, R., Sharp, C.A. and Bellis, M.A. (2020). Health and financial burden of adverse childhood experiences in England and Wales: A combined primary data study of five surveys. *BMJ Open*, (available at) 10(6), p.e036374. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2019-036374 (Accessed at: 30 Sept. 2026).

Larkin, W. and Cairns, P. (2020). Addressing adverse childhood experiences: Implications for professional practice. *British Journal of General Practice*, [available at] 70(693), pp.160–161. doi:10.3399/bjgp20x708929 (Accessed at: 28 Sept.2026).

Mentalhealthfirstaidcourse.co.uk. (2026) *ACEs statistics UK: 2026 facts, data & key insights*. Available at: <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaidcourse.co.uk/blog/aces-statistics-uk> (Accessed: 30 September 2026).

Public Health Wales, *Adverse childhood experiences*. Available at: <https://phw.nhs.wales/topic/policy-and-international-health/adverse-childhood-experiences/> (Accessed at: 18 October 2026).

Safeguarding-guide.nhs.uk. (2024). *Ask, listen, do - NHS safeguarding*. Available at: <https://safeguarding-guide.nhs.uk/context-of-NHS-safeguarding/s2-07/> (Accessed 30 Sept. 2026).