



Comisiynydd
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Cymru

**Future
Generations**
Commissioner
for Wales

The Future Generations Report 2020



Let's create the future together

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Chapter 5

Areas of focus

Future Generations Report 2020

Areas of Focus: Adverse Childhood Experiences

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Adverse Childhood Experiences

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are specific traumatic events that have happened to someone under the age of 18. They include problems such as physical, emotional and sexual abuse, growing up in a home where there is drug abuse, alcohol abuse, domestic violence, parental separation, incarceration or mental illness.

Preventing and mitigating the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences is a cross-cutting theme and is essential to future generations' health and well-being.

By preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences, we would significantly reduce harmful behaviours in future generations. Prevention should be the priority, but where they have happened, we should focus on building resilience and preventing them from being passed on through generations.

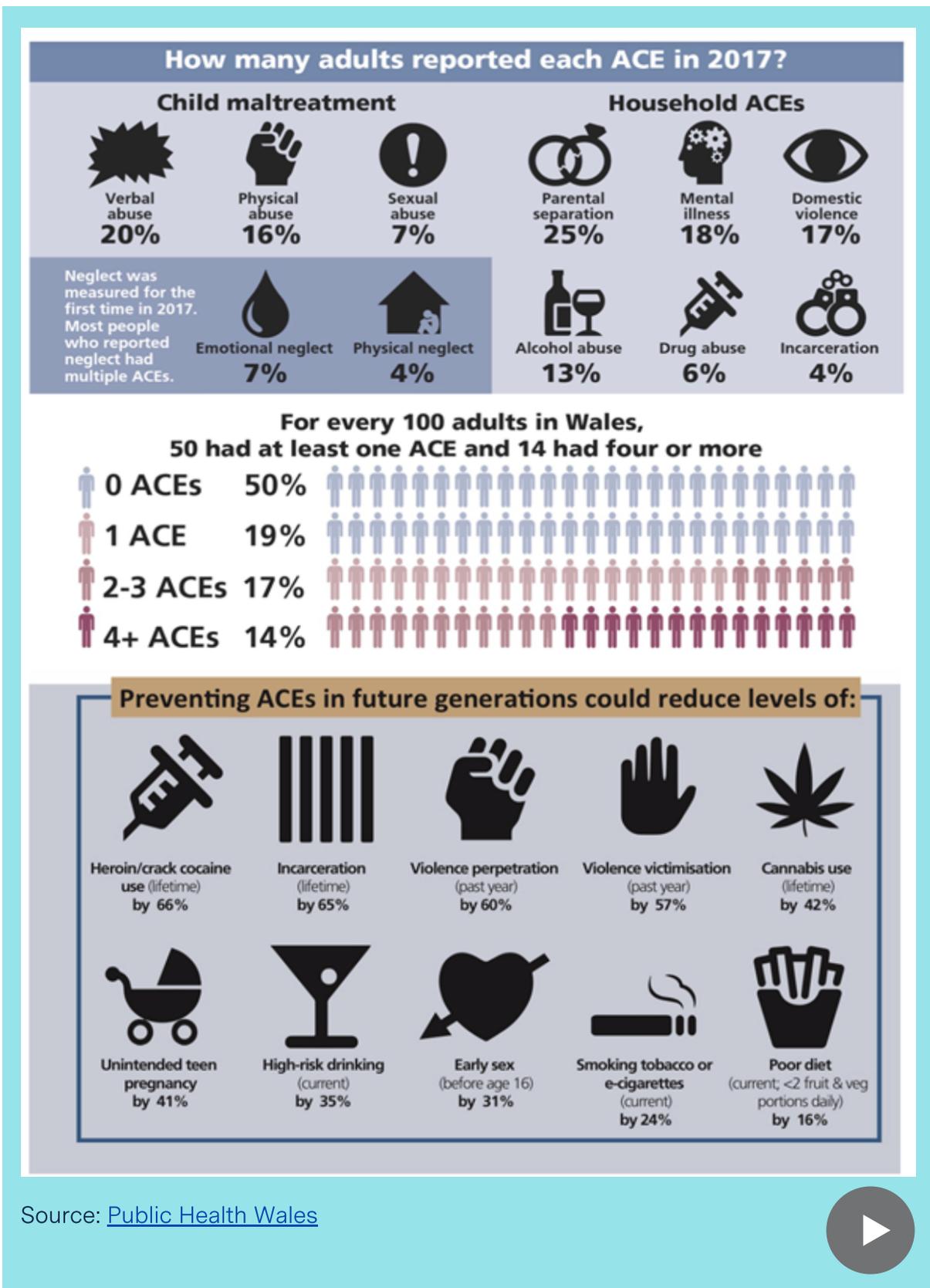
These are complex issues that need to be addressed collectively, as no one can resolve or respond effectively to Adverse Childhood Experiences and their impact, in isolation.

Since the release of the first Public Health Wales reports on [Adverse Childhood Experiences in 2015](#) and 2017 (which confirmed the prevalence of 'ACEs' in Wales and added additional categories of emotional and physical neglect), there has been a surge in activity. Organisations have trained staff to be 'ACE aware' and trauma informed in practice; conferences have focused on 'ACEs'; some Welsh Government policies has been aligned to tackling them; and there has been a £1.2 million investment in coordination of these activities over three years through the establishment of the Wales ACE Support hub. The four Welsh police forces and partners have also taken forward a programme of work, from £6.8 million from the Home Office Police Transformation Fund, to deliver systemic change in policing and criminal justice.



The Welsh Government budget strategy and decision-making process are a fundamental part of driving change across public services in Wales as it frames a significant proportion of decisions by public bodies.

Prevalence and definition of Adverse Childhood Experiences in Wales



Adverse Childhood Experiences

The predicted future of Adverse Childhood Experiences

Due to the nature and broadness of this topic, predictions for the future are hard to make as they depend on a lot of different factors, including social changes, education and cultural change.

Trends to watch:

- The number of children in care and on child protection plans in the UK has risen since 2013 at a rate that outstrips the growth of the child population.
- In Wales, the number of children on the child protection register because of sexual abuse has declined by 28% between 2007/08 and 2017/18.
- In Wales, the number of children being cared for by local authorities due to emotional or physical abuse or neglect in 2019 has increased by 6% compared to 2018.
- There has been an 83% rise in domestic abuse-related crimes recorded in Wales over the past four years (but this could be due to better recording)
- In Wales, the rate of people under 18 being admitted for alcohol-specific conditions per year is decreasing. The consumption of alcohol by adults under 45 in Wales is also decreasing.
- Deaths due to drug poisoning in England and Wales have been increasing since 2012, reaching 4,359 deaths in 2018. This is the highest number and the highest annual increase since the time series started in 1993. Wales has seen an 84% increase in drug-related deaths over the last decade.

Predictions for a possible future:

- Social care budgets will continue to be insufficient to meet demand, causing a reduced provision of services that prevent family crisis.
- Relative child poverty in the UK is projected to rise to 36% in 2021-22.
- Divorce rates in the UK are predicted to fall 5% within ten years.
- Alcohol abuse is predicted to kill 210,000 people between 2012 and 2032.



The Vision – A Wales without Adverse Childhood Experiences

“ACEs and their effects on a person’s life and behaviour is becoming more widely understood by various different agencies and the wider public. I believe this is a positive step in the direction of reducing the number of people who are affected by ACEs. My hope is that we will continue to move in this direction and raise further awareness of ACEs and the effects.”

Alexandra Fitzgerald, Future Generations Leadership Academy

In 2050, Wales will be a place where all people understand how childhood can shape life courses, and that the experiences that connect us are the most valuable in terms of our future health, well-being and our ability to thrive as individuals and communities. Kindness and compassion will be supported and promoted on a public policy level. Wales will place a high level of importance on developing problem solving skills, emotional literacy and community connection. (A Wales of Cohesive Communities and A Prosperous Wales)

Schools will be psychologically informed environments and a new curriculum will support teachers and the wider school community to recognise and intervene to prevent and mitigate Adverse Childhood Experiences. Parents, families and the village it takes to raise a child will be valued for the work they do. Parental leave will be well supported, the Childcare Offer will be generous, parental support and education will be bustling, diverse and easily accessible to all and not just for those who are on the verge of crisis or those able to pay for therapy. (A Prosperous Wales and A More Equal Wales)

Children and young people will understand what a healthy relationship looks like.

The [Safe Dates programme](#) in the USA, is typically delivered to adolescents in schools to promote resilience and protect against intimate partner violence. It aims to raise awareness, increase knowledge, change gender stereotypes, challenge violence norms. In Wales, the requirement to deliver education on healthy relationships as part of the new curriculum will set a clear path towards meeting this. Families, workplaces and communities will naturally develop a healing focus, thus enabling people to know, understand and address the impact of their life histories, before they are a parent.

The [Family Nurse Partnership](#) programme in England is an evidence-based, preventive programme for vulnerable first-time young mothers, with the aim to help them have a healthy pregnancy, improve their child’s health and development and plan their own futures.

[Start4Life](#) - Led by Public Health England’s, this programme delivers advice and practical guidance to parents-to-be and families with babies and under-fives, to help them adopt healthy behaviours and build parenting skills.

The [Better Start Partnership](#) in Blackpool brings together families, communities and organisations from the public, private, and third sectors. They aim to transform children’s futures by enabling them to receive all they need for healthy development during the first three years of life and to be in a [strong position to start school](#).



Children and young people will have easy access to clubs and groups that enable them to explore their talents and experience being part of a tribe. This will be possible because people will volunteer and invest their talents locally as vehicles for connection and nurturing children and communities. (A [Wales of Cohesive Communities](#))

All communities and places will be built with access to greenspace, opportunities for active travel, and participation in sport and community activity in mind, which will reduce inequality and [help to mitigate the effect of Adverse Childhood Experiences](#). Land use planning will ensure that we are building inclusive and integrated places that eliminate the separation between deprived and wealthy communities. Everyone, no matter where they are from, will be breathing clean air. (A [More Equal Wales](#), A [Healthier Wales](#), A [Resilient Wales](#)) (Please see the sections on [Planning and Transport](#) in Chapter 5 for more information.)

Communities will be active and invested in themselves and supporting each other. As a result, demand for public services will be reduced, allowing the funding currently spent on dealing with the after-effects of adversity, to be spent in other key areas like education and culture. (A [Prosperous Wales](#))

All services will be trauma informed and behaviour will be considered in the context of an individual's life experience and what it means to them. Social, health and other services will not be working in silos and treating only a specific aspect of the issue but the whole individual, eliminating the need for multiple social workers and 'placements'.

Services will be re-designed to be relational at their core, recognising the golden windows of opportunity for healing and changing life courses. The workforce will feel valued and invested in and children will be able to build long-term relationships with trusted adults, breaking the cycle of 'ACEs' for their children. (A [Prosperous Wales](#) and A [Healthier Wales](#))

The [NSPCC Together for Childhood](#) partnership is developing a place-based approach to preventing abuse, seeking to address problems locally by integrating communities, families, professionals and services. The place-based approach is designed to build community capacity, identify local needs, and make use of multiple access points, to tackle a problem that is itself usually multifaceted.

In [Wales](#), the [ACE Support Hub](#) was created as a programme of work under the [Cymru Well Wales partnership](#). Funded by the Welsh Government it is sharing expertise on tackling Adverse Childhood Experiences and developing a trauma informed whole-system approach, intended to support public bodies, community and society to build an 'ACE-aware' nation. The hub has entered into a partnership with the criminal justice system through a part-time secondment with Her Majesty's Prisons and Probation Service in Wales.

The [Troubled Families Programme \(England\)](#) aims to support families with multiple problems, including crime, anti-social behaviour, truancy, unemployment and mental health problems. Local authorities identify 'troubled families' in their area and usually assign a key worker to act as a single point of contact.

The [Big Brothers Big Sisters](#) programme is implemented in several countries (including the [USA](#), [Australia](#), [Canada](#), [India](#), and [New Zealand](#)). It is delivered in communities and aims to provide children with a positive role model. The programme has led to improved family and peer relations and [reductions in violence and alcohol and drug use](#). Similar pilots are being tried in Wales. For example, Elevate's [Near Peer Coaching](#) in [Vale of Glamorgan](#) and [Cardiff](#).



Nurturing schools will be at the heart of every community, becoming places that belong to the children and families who live there. Schools will go beyond delivering on the curriculum and hitting exam result targets and will recognise that without safety and connection, no child can learn or develop to be an adult that can offer the same for their children. ([A Prosperous Wales](#) and [A Healthier Wales](#)) (Please see the section on [Skills in Chapter 5 for more information](#))

Cultural sports and physical activity will be available to everyone regardless of social background. All children will participate in sports and partake in cultural events and these services will be 'ACE aware' and focused on giving them a safe space and trusted adults to turn to. ([A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh language](#) and [A More Equal Wales](#)) (Please see the section on [A Wales of Vibrant Culture & Thriving Welsh Language in Chapter 3 for more information](#))

Culture will be used as an outlet, that allows children and young people to express themselves and feel valued. Through culture, children will have the opportunity to deal more effectively with what they are going through, thus creating more resilient adults. ([A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh language](#))

Tackling the presence and impacts of Adverse Childhood Experiences will give all children the best start in life, reduce health and skill inequalities between areas and communities, and reduce or even eliminate poverty in the long-term. Child deaths due to deprivation will be a thing of the past. ([A More Equal Wales](#), [A Prosperous Wales](#) and [A Healthier Wales](#))

Tackling adversity will also significantly reduce unhealthy habits like drinking, smoking and drug use. It will reduce violent behaviours and lead to a decrease of crime and incarceration. ([A Wales of Cohesive Communities](#) and [A Healthier Wales](#)).

Cultural and linguistic interventions will be valued as mechanisms for social change and seen as key tools for addressing inspiring change ([A Wales of Vibrant culture and Thriving Welsh language](#)).

[Education Scotland](#) has developed a tool, [Applying Nurture as a whole school approach](#), to support the self-evaluation of nurturing approaches in schools and early learning and childcare settings.

In 2017, the [Scottish Government](#) piloted [Baby boxes](#): gifting a box of essential items, such as clothes, nappies and books, to every new-born baby. Each box is also designed to be a suitable place in which babies can sleep. This programme is based on the Finnish 'maternity package' scheme, which has been running since 1938.

[Liverpool's Royal Court](#) is collaborating with Merseyside Police and Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner on [Terriers](#): a theatre project that tells the difficult stories of young people growing up with different Adverse Childhood Experiences. This has been found to be an effective crime prevention method and has successfully reduced gun crime in [Merseyside](#).

[Washington State in the USA](#) has prioritised work to assess and understand the prevalence of 'ACEs' in its adult population and use this to inform prevention action. They have supported state-specific 'ACE' data collection and used their data to inform prevention efforts in all sorts of arenas – for instance, altering how young offenders are handled in the justice system, and developing a Compassionate Schools initiative which supports [affected children and strengthens families](#).



People will be healthier and will no longer be more likely to develop long-term illness (such as liver and heart disease) due to experiencing Adverse Childhood Experiences. Mental health issues in both children and adults will decrease significantly (A Healthier Wales)

Child labour will be a thing of the past and children will be taught from early on about responsible buying and ethical production, which will help them understand their place in the world and feel more connected (A Globally Responsible Wales)

[Innovation fund to help children of dependent drinkers](#) - a UK Government package of measures designed to help identify at-risk children more quickly and provide greater access to support and advice for both children and parents. This is backed by £4.5 million funding to help an estimated 200,000 children in England living with alcohol-dependent parents and develop interventions to reduce parental conflict within those families.

To support the achievement of the well-being goals in relation to Adverse Childhood Experiences, I have:

Worked with others to secure Government support for the ACE Support Hub

Advised Public Services Boards on steps to take to address Adverse Childhood Experiences

Monitored progress and provided advice to public bodies on addressing Adverse Childhood Experiences

Delivered a 'Live Lab' focused on gaining better responses to Adverse Childhood Experiences within Cwm Taf Public Services Board

See Chapter 6 'My Focus' for more information.



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People's perception of Adverse Childhood Experiences

Listening to what people think and believe is an important part of involvement. That is why, in this section, I want to give a flavour of what people have told me, since the beginning of my term and in relation to this report.

While most feedback in the events I held and the People's Platform did not reference Adverse Childhood Experiences specifically, there have been comments and views which are relevant to children, their early experiences, parents, breaking generational cycles and the importance of perinatal services. Services act at crisis points and in the short term rather than preventatively and long term.

- Services tend to be created and delivered top-down where they should be bottom-up and informed by service users
- There needs to be better collaboration between services and pathways
- There has been a reduction in community-based facilities such as youth services and this is having a negative effect on young people
- There should be recognition of the role that cultural activities can play
- The causes and effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences are wide ranging
- They think certain demographics are more at risk of experiencing Adverse Childhood Experiences or falling between the gaps of services such as those less financially-stable, experiencing mental health issues, Service families, looked after children, and Black, Asian and minority ethnic

- There is a lack of data on demographics and 'tracking' individual's journeys
- There is a gap in young people being able to identify a role model/safe adult
- There should be more support for early years and young people, especially in relation to mental and emotional resilience

"I believe the most important issue currently facing Wales is the issue on how we can break the cycle intergenerational transmission of poverty. This work can only be achieved with a focus on the significance of perinatal services in Wales attempting to break the cycle of 'insecure' 'disorganised' attachment styles being transmitted from generation to generation. This work is pivotal as it will assist all children born in Wales to have some 'resilience' which will assist them in overcoming all ACEs they may be faced with. We cannot change the environment into which children are born, but we can assist them in coping with it more effectively, through building resilience."

"The belief/perspective/feeling that certain things in life are not for them, eg, education, housing, employment etc is something that needs to be dispelled. Only with children having the resilience to break through the social barriers of what they can expect in their life, will more children access education and gain more valid occupations in their communities. We know that mental health is significant in the areas of Wales with high deprivation, unemployment, low educational attainment, crime, substance misuse, etc Perinatal services can, through building resilience in the children in Wales can also assist in bridging the inequalities prevalent in considerable areas of Wales."

The People's Platform



In addition to this involvement, I also have carried out my statutory duty to monitor and assess progress by public bodies in meeting their well-being objectives and the requirements of the Act in general. As a result of these activities, I have identified the following opportunities and challenges.

Challenges and opportunities for change

Create a joined up system focused on early intervention and prevention

What future generations need

Focus should continue to be placed on strengthening early years, parenting and family programmes and the legislative frameworks that support them. These programmes can both reduce Adverse Childhood Experiences and support the development of resilience in children. However, we must bring together (consistently and collaboratively) the parts of the system which prevent and mitigate Adverse Childhood Experiences. This must be based on approaches that are evidenced to work in early intervention and prevention and built from the perspective of the service-user, ensuring that services do not become about ticking boxes and reaching targets.

Where are we now

Wales has a powerful context for prioritising the building of resilience across the life course, joining up the system and preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences

I would like to thank the following people and organisations who have contributed to my work and thinking in this area

I would like to thank the Wales ACE Hub and, in particular Joanne Hopkins who was involved in the development of this chapter from the very first stages; Charlotte Waite, who helped me with the vision for the future of Adverse Childhood Experiences; and Samaritans Cymru who contributed to this chapter



PROFIADAU NIWEIDIOL MEWN PLENTYNDOD
ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

I would also like to thank Public Health Wales for their work in this area and on the First 1000 Days; Cymorth Cymru who have undertaken work on this area; Millbank Primary School; the ACE team in Bridgend who have shared their exceptional work and Cwm Taf Public Services Board who worked with my team on the ACEs Live Lab.

Best practice from Wales

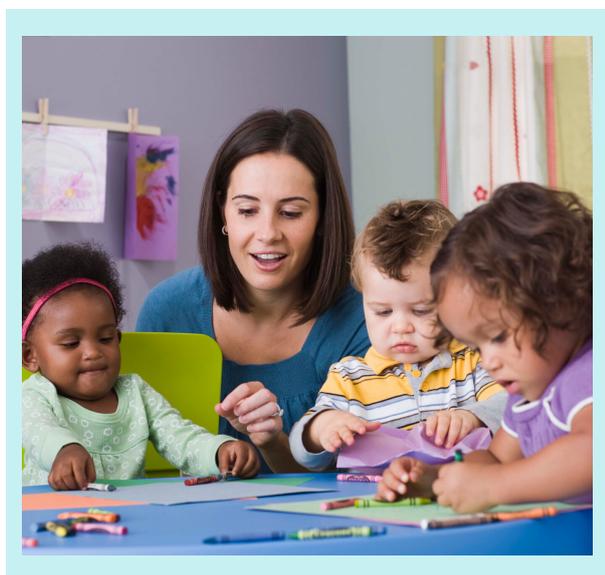
Wales was the first nation of the UK to establish a national support hub to collect and disseminate good practice and to co-produce evaluated resources. We have developed a public health approach to policing and criminal justice, that was cited as best practice in the UK Government Serious Violence Strategy in 2019, and at the launch of the College of Policing Seven Principles for Policing for England and Wales. Wales is the only nation in the UK, and potentially globally, to undertake a public awareness campaign on the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences.



The current policy and legislative context in Wales is supportive of addressing Adverse Childhood Experiences, with the Well-being of Future Generations Act providing the foundation for all public services to work collaboratively towards an integrated, life course approach to well-being.

Additionally, Welsh Government's national strategy for lifelong well-being '[Prosperity for All](#)' sets out commitments for 'investing in early years' and the prevention of Adverse Childhood Experiences through the creation of 'ACE-aware' public services. '[A Healthier Wales](#)' is the plan for health and social care and recognises the lifelong importance of addressing adversity experienced in childhood. Furthermore, the Assembly has just passed legislation to end the physical punishment of children, which also provides a helpful piece in the jigsaw of tackling Adverse Childhood Experiences

This context and policy direction alongside input from Public Health Wales, Cymru Well Wales and my office appears to have made an impact of the priorities set by public bodies and Public Services Boards, with sixteen of the nineteen Boards setting objectives around tackling 'ACEs' in their well-being plans, demonstrating a level of awareness and commitment that has not been seen before.



Parts of the system in Wales have taken advantage of this strengthening their focus on early intervention and prevention, particularly in the early years, but there are implementation gaps

The most recent Child Protection Register figures for Wales show that children under the age of one-year old and children aged between one and four are more at risk of neglect, emotional abuse and physical abuse, than older children. This is likely to be only the tip of the iceberg as it is estimated that for every child on a child protection register, another eight have suffered maltreatment but have not come to the attention of the authorities. Research shows the importance of intervention in the first 1,000 days to ensure optimum health and well-being into adulthood. We know that children in Flying Start areas receive enhanced health visiting, parenting support and childcare. However, it is such a crucial time in child development and we need to ensure that children outside Flying Start areas also receive the right support and early intervention. There are a number of services and policy areas that could help prevent and mitigate Adverse Childhood Experiences.

'[Flying Start](#)' is the Welsh Government's targeted Early Years programme for families with children aged less than four years of age. It offers families access to enhanced health visiting services, free part-time childcare for two to three-year olds, parenting support, and support for the development of speech, language and communication. The programme has been targeted at defined geographical areas within each local authority according to measures of relative disadvantage, including the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, free school meals and the proportion of children under four-years living in households in receipt of income-related benefits.



This way of targeting families has been criticised as missing some families, particularly those with Adverse Childhood Experiences.

[‘The Healthy Child Wales Programme’](#) is a universal programme that was introduced in recognition that children and their families in the early years need support by universal and specialist services across the NHS and its partners. These services range from families’ first point of contact, the family GP, to a wide range of services including: maternity, health visiting, school nursing; mental health, including community perinatal mental health services; social services; education; NHS Wales Direct; emergency services (A&E); dentistry; Flying Start; etc. It is essential that all these services work together and take every opportunity to engage, advise and support families and children during this crucial period of their development. The focus of this work so far seems to have been on standardising the number of contacts families and their children have with healthcare professionals and recording this contact.

The [First 1000 Days Programme](#) is delivered by Public Health Wales on behalf of Cymru Well Wales and aims to support the early years system to ensure that we are collectively doing all that we can to support families at this pivotal time in a child’s development. This includes working to build and disseminate the best available evidence for improving outcomes and reducing inequalities during pregnancy and to a child’s second birthday.

The programme aims to influence three main outcomes:

- Optimal outcome from every pregnancy for mother and child
- Children achieve their developmental milestones at age 2
- Children are not exposed to multiple adverse childhood experiences in the first 1,000 days

These outcomes are influenced by a complex system of inter-related child, parent, family and wider environmental factors, set out in the image below.



The First 1000 Days Programme has commissioned and disseminated parental insights work to inform the development of effective and accessible parental information resources and to shape understanding of what an effective system should look and feel like for families. This is a good example of involvement and will hopefully be replicated for other parts of the system.

Their work to describe the complex system of factors which influence outcomes in the first 1,000 days alongside their development of model for a holistic, public health approach to supporting parents, is also helping to improve understanding of why a prevention focused, whole-system approach is needed to give children in Wales the best start in life.

The programme is providing leadership by promoting evidence-based practice. The Evidence into Practice Guidance is helping stakeholders understand the key components of effective action to improve outcomes for families. The first of these has focused on the critical importance of supporting positive family relationships in the first 1,000 days.

[Parent-Infant Partnership UK's report](#) highlighted the work of the First 1000 Days Programme as an example of the positive work beginning to taking place in Wales to promote the well-being of our youngest children and to make the case for a greater focus on infant mental health in policy and practice. Public Health Wales have also collaborated with Welsh Government to test the feasibility of asking about Adverse Childhood Experiences in health visiting. This is promising work but needs amplifying, long-term investment and scaling-up where there is evidence that it works. Implementation seems fragmented and highly variable across Wales, with inadequate and ineffective oversight

mechanisms from Welsh Government to monitor what local authorities are delivering.

There is no clear, overarching national strategy targeting Adverse Childhood Experiences, early intervention and prevention. Coordination between the different departments in Welsh Government, whose areas of responsibility relate to childhood adversity or associated problems, could be improved. This lack of coordination means we do not have a comprehensive picture of which local authorities are providing early interventions and whether these are based on the best available evidence. There seems to be a plethora of initiatives and groups operating across Wales with little monitoring, integration and collaboration.

“Increase development of early intervention and prevention programmes, tackling low level cases/concerns.”

Our Future Wales response,
Neath Port Talbot PSB

Taking a public health approach can help kick start the change needed and ensure any change is based on evidence of what works

A deep dive by Public Health Wales into the current system of identifying vulnerability in policing, highlighted system failures to identify and protect the most vulnerable, wasteful use of resources, and frustration among public service professionals. This resulted in investment of £6.78 million from the Home Office Police Transformation Fund, and along with other partners, they have driven integration of services to provide an Adverse Childhood Experiences and trauma-informed early help systems. [‘Early Action Together’](#), delivers a multi-agency, 'ACE-informed' approach that enables early intervention and root cause prevention.



The programme will scale-up the approach that has been taken by the Maesteg Early Help Hub, where the police, local authority, health sector and schools have been working together to intervene earlier and prevent children from experiencing Adverse Childhood Experiences.

See my visit to the Early Help Hub



Early Action Together seems to have transformed community policing by training a large number of police staff and partners across Wales and embedding this training to seek to change systems to enable an early help response. However, the problem remains that while some areas have made great strides to pool budgets and collaborate, despite difficulties such as limited resources and challenges around data sharing, the traditional approach to silo based working and resourcing which still features in some areas does not enable the shift that we need to see.



We are not always joining the dots between evidence-based interventions which are already in place, how they support the prevention of Adverse Childhood Experiences agenda, and how they should be scaled across Wales

“There is a proliferation of targeted and short-term initiatives being funded.”

Our Future Wales conversation, Carmarthen

Across Wales there is a tendency to support pilot projects, but we are not always learning from these and scaling-up. Identification and Referral to Improve Safety is an evidence-based specialist domestic violence and abuse training, support and [referral programme for General Practice](#). It is recognised by many as one of the key ways to break the intergenerational cycle of Adverse Childhood Experiences in the short-term. It uses GP visits to trigger early identification of domestic abuse, rather than waiting for the point of crisis and police intervention, which is often too late given that evidence suggests that victims experiences 36 incidents of domestic abuse on average before they contact the police.

The Identification and Referral to Improve Safety initiative has been successfully introduced across two health board areas in South Wales as a result of initial funding from the police. The results have been transformational. Within five years, GPs in these health boards have gone from identifying ‘no victims’ of domestic violence and abuse to identifying more than a thousand and fast tracking them to the right support. Of these cases, 60% of victims have children at home and 60% are first time disclosures.

This demonstrates how joining up the dots between services can support earlier intervention, help break intergenerational cycles of harm, and fast-track victims to the right support. This programme has been operational for five years and is a good example of something that works. It has evidenced to be value for money and yet, it has not been scaled up and across Wales.

Likewise there are emerging programmes such as DRIVE which works with domestic abuse perpetrators and has secured significant reductions in harm and which should be recognised and adopted elsewhere ([see section on A Wales of Cohesive Communities in Chapter 3](#))

In terms of interventions in schools that are designed to build resilience and focus on mental health, the National Assembly for Wales’ Children, Young People and Education Committee have recommended that:

“Welsh Government should undertake a review of the numerous emotional and mental well-being initiatives underway in Wales’s schools, with a view to recommending a national approach for schools to adopt, based on best practice. The Welsh Government should work with exemplar schools such as Ysgol Pen y Bryn in Colwyn Bay to develop elements of this national approach, including but not limited to mindfulness.”

[Mind over matter report](#)

“As a student that has suffered a lot due to mental health, I often look back to those years in regret and pain. Yet I understand that now there's nothing to be ashamed of I also know that a lot of students suffer in silence and a lot of what's going on at home isn't reported, this affects their ability to study and live to their fullest.”

Peoples Platform



There are emerging examples of public services coming together to create an early help system for families, but some are still working in silos without anyone having a ‘helicopter’ view of how everything fits together

Because of the complexity of Adverse Childhood Experiences, it seems that not enough people see it as ‘their issue’ and specific public services only tend to deal with one part and leave the rest for others to deal with.

There is a need for a greater focus on collaboration and integration to look at the whole system – from childhood, to adulthood, to parenthood, to a new generation. Public Services Boards continue to tackle Adverse Childhood Experiences within the current programmes that exist in health, children’s services, education and community services. There is evidence of ‘thinking’ about a whole system for tackling Adverse Childhood Experiences across the life-course in some of the Public Service Boards’ well-being objectives, but the transformation of services in line with this thinking is not always evident. There is a need for services, who deal with ‘ACE’-related issues, to work more closely together and for an assessment to be made as to whether they are fit for purpose in terms of preventing on-going Adverse Childhood Experiences.

[Estyn’s thematic review of ACEs](#) found that the well-being of Welsh citizens, including children and young people, is high on the agenda of all local authorities and is one of the main priorities in their corporate strategic plans. Many local authorities make a clear commitment to the sharing of information through the ‘Public Protection Notice’ process or ‘Operation Encompass’, which means that schools should receive near immediate notice of police involvement with families with school-age children.

All local authorities have signed the [Wales Accord for the Sharing of Personal Information](#) that helps them to share personal information effectively and lawfully and allows services to work together to support people. However, the use of information sharing protocols between local authorities, other services and outside agencies is inconsistent. School leaders say that they do not always find out about important developments in children’s lives in a timely way. In some cases, this means that children can arrive at school following a significant, traumatic event that the school is unaware of and this prevents the school from preparing appropriately.

There does not appear to be a holistic way of measuring the impact of early intervention and prevention within the current system

The collection and analysis of appropriate data can help to monitor the impact of early intervention initiatives to ensure that they are achieving the desired effect. It will also help inform further improvements and support the identification of families that may benefit from early interventions. It is also imperative that we have the right systems and indicator frameworks in place to understand and track trends in population needs and monitor system level impact for families.

“Preventative support is needed and awareness of service families, we don’t capture data in Wales - track where families are and moving to like in England. It’s the same with looked after/adopted children.”

Our Future Wales conversation, WLGA roundtable



While we have the right policy in place, we need to ensure we also have the right performance measures. I would like to see more holistic measurements of well-being used and move away from the traditional medical model outputs. This issue of measurement is one which is common throughout this report. From my analysis of well-being objectives and steps, I know that some public bodies have commissioned more research or are taking a deeper look at the services to see the impact they are having. For example:

- 'Undertake research to inform policy around early-years'
- 'We will build on the findings of our multi-agency network event and ongoing learning from membership of the 1000 Days Collaborative Programme to develop a work plan which will help us improve the universal and targeted services that support children and parents in the first 1000 days of life'
- 'Understand more about our early-years'
- 'Develop an early-years roadmap that guides families to the right support'
- 'Ensure public services are ACEs ready'

“You don’t find out about things until it’s too late or you speak to the right person.”

Our Future Wales conversation with Parents Voices Wales



Ensure all public service professionals are Adverse Childhood Experiences aware

What future generations need

Understanding what Adverse Childhood Experiences are, their impact, and what to do to prevent them from happening is critical if we are to achieve a vision of an 'ACE-free' Wales. Public service professionals must also be equipped with the right knowledge and skills to take action within their individual roles and have the permission to do so. The knowledge and skills imparted to professionals must be quality-assured and based on evidence to ensure we have the most impact, but organisations themselves need to commit to cultural change and embed structural support to ensure that the commitment extends from the bottom-up and top-down.

Everyone needs to understand that Adverse Childhood Experiences are fundamentally linked to complex socio-economic factors, which also need tackling strategically, to allow knowledge and skills to have the most impact. Another essential part of building 'ACE-aware' public services is understanding the barriers that make it harder for them to reach those who would benefit most from personal and professional support. For example, the missing middle who fall below the threshold of public service or do not engage with them.

Public services need to build on their assets and strengths which are often found in the community; so that when people do engage they receive supportive and reliable responses that meet their needs.



Where are we now

There is increased strategic and operational focus on tackling Adverse Childhood Experiences in Wales

An understanding of Adverse Childhood Experiences has changed the conversation around the significance of childhood trauma and the importance of trauma informed services, which intervene earlier to prevent and mitigate effects.

The research undertaken by Public Health Wales in 2015 has been significant in raising the profile of Adverse Childhood Experiences in Wales and provided the evidence base from which to take action. The powerful infographics, showing the number and impact that Adverse Childhood Experiences have on people and services in Wales, made the information accessible to professionals across sectors. This has provided a platform for leadership at both national and local level with examples of leaders operationalising the research and developing strategic responses for their organisations and the people they support.

At a regional level, the South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner was one of the first to develop their partnership with Public Health Wales and promote the 'ACE lens'. This was then scaled to an all Wales partnership agreement between policing across Wales, criminal justice partners, the voluntary sector and Public Health Wales.

This work was developed further with a range of partners through [Cymru Well Wales](#), a group of senior decision-makers from across the public and voluntary sector whose priorities are:

- Acting today to prevent poor health tomorrow
- Improving well-being by harnessing activity and resources to amplify our collective impact

- Thinking and working creatively to tackle health inequalities
- Empowering our communities in all that we do
- Learning from others to design innovative action for the future

Cymru Well Wales' focus on tackling Adverse Childhood Experiences is to support public services to respond effectively to prevent and mitigate the harms from Adverse Childhood Experiences. In addition, Cymru Well Wales have also identified the importance of the first 1,000 days - the period from pregnancy to age two. There is strong evidence that the first 1,000 days is a time when action to improve outcomes and reduce inequalities has the greatest potential for impact and that positive and protective influences during this time can improve health and well-being outcomes across the life course.

With the Support of Cymru Well Wales the Welsh Government began to align policy to tackling Adverse Childhood Experiences and invested in the development of the Wales ACE Support Hub, which over the last three years has received £1.2 million of funding to deliver a best practice, transformational systems approach for Wales. Many other public bodies in Wales have included Adverse Childhood Experiences in their strategic plans, [including the Welsh Ambulance Service Trust](#).

The UK Parliament's [Science and Technology Select Committee's Inquiry](#) on evidence-based early years interventions heard evidence of how the Adverse Childhood Experiences framework is being used to help early years and health practitioners to identify children at risk.



This led to the committee calling for the UK government to "match the ambition of the Scottish and Welsh Governments, and build on the example set by certain English councils, to make early intervention and childhood adversity a priority, and set out a clear, new national strategy by the end of this parliamentary session to empower and encourage local authorities to [deliver effective, sustainable, evidence-based early intervention](#)".

There has been a focus on training and raising awareness of Adverse Childhood Experiences in Wales resulting in good knowledge across certain sectors but public bodies need to go further in demonstrating how they are embedding Adverse Childhood Experiences training in their work

As a result of the evidence on the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences and their relevance to many sectors, there has been demand for training and increased awareness raising amongst a number of sectors including housing, education, the criminal justice system, health, and social care.

In 2018, I published [80 Simple Changes](#) that public bodies could make which would help them to meet the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Delivering training on 'ACEs' to all their staff was one of these. 27 out of the 33 public bodies who responded to a request for an update on the uptake of Simple Changes, have already adopted this or are currently developing it.

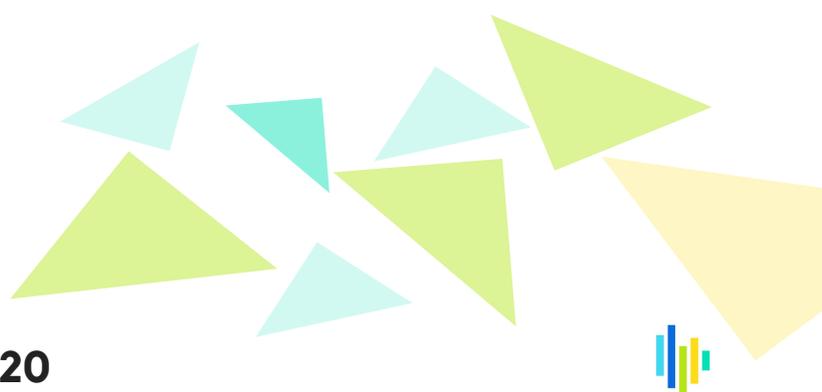
Training has been delivered across a range of sectors and has informed the practice of thousands of frontline professionals.

It has been predominantly led by the ACE Support Hub, who have developed a sectoral approach to delivery, partly as a result of limited resource, but more importantly in response to evaluation that showed that the most value is had from a co-produced package.

The package includes training but supports a systemic transformation for each sector or organisation. Key areas that the hub has worked with include education - two thirds of schools in Wales have received training by 31st March 2020 - youth services, housing and sport.

Policing and criminal justice in Wales have received training on Adverse Childhood Experiences and working in a trauma informed way through the 'Early Action Together' Programme. Funded by the Home Office Police Transformation Fund, it focuses on recognising and addressing the root causes of criminal behaviour, particularly when dealing with vulnerable people. Evaluations of the training have shown positive results in increased knowledge, and confidence in taking a trauma informed approach, intervening early and ensuring that people are signposted to the right services for the support they need.

The development of a skills and knowledge framework has also enabled the Hub to support organisational transformation to embed and sustain systems change. The hub has worked with public bodies who are looking to make that change.



Examples include helping Children's Services in Cardiff to develop an integrated model, and with Sport Wales to develop a comprehensive approach for coaches and those working in the community with children and young people.

[A baseline survey of professionals in Wales](#), was conducted in 2019 which measured knowledge of Adverse Childhood Experiences and how this changed practice. It showed that 75% of those who responded were 'ACE aware', and from education, youth services, housing and the NHS. The survey also noted that there was more to do to ensure that professionals felt confident in the use of this knowledge and that further work should focus on prevention and mitigation.

Continuing 'ACE awareness' and trauma informed practice across all public services should be seen as important for informing the systems change and the way services plan and respond to those who have experienced or are experiencing Adverse Childhood Experiences, creating a universal approach.

Whilst awareness of Adverse Childhood Experiences has increased, there are gaps in the knowledge and skills of public services professionals on what action to take in mitigating and preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences. This is evident when looking at the latest data from Welsh Government for school exclusions, which continue to be at an unacceptably high level across Wales, with children living in poverty disproportionately affected. The most common reason given for exclusion is disruptive behaviour and our knowledge tells us that disruptive behaviour is often a symptom displayed by a child experiencing Adverse Childhood Experiences.

“Based on surveys during six inspections by the HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales in 2017/18, 89% of children reported exclusion from school before they came into detention, 74% reported previous truancy, and 41% said they were 14 or younger when they last attended school”.

Samaritans Cymru report [“Exclusion from School in Wales - The Hidden Cost”](#)

“The link between inequality and exclusion from school is well known, and investment in prevention and early intervention has resulted in fewer children being excluded from school. Our report *Exclusion from school in Wales: the hidden cost* emphasises that we need to gain a much deeper understanding of the experiences of children and young people who have been excluded from school. We must do this with a strong focus on pupil voice; we must listen to pupils about their own experiences of exclusion, its impact on them and what could have been done differently.”

Samaritans Cymru response to a draft of this Report

An 'ACE aware' and trauma informed school would take action to be a protective factor in these situations and there are examples of where schools are getting this right in Wales.

[Estyn's report](#) on Adverse Childhood Experiences in [schools found good examples](#) of how some schools in Wales are supporting children who have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences.



Prestatyn High School, North Wales

This high school is proactively supporting pupils with Adverse Childhood Experiences and other vulnerable pupils, through Pastoral Support Plans. Welsh Government Guidance is for Pastoral Support Plans to be used when there is a risk of exclusion, but in this case they are used earlier and in a preventative way. They contain comprehensive information that support the pupil, staff and parents, including background information, areas of strength, and areas of concern, together with guidance on how to deal with common situations and strategies for staff on how to avoid conflict and potential problems arising. Targets are sensible and appropriate and review dates are consistent. Parents and many relevant agencies are involved in the creation and ongoing review of the Pastoral Support Plan. This has resulted in fewer exclusions and improved engagement with learning among vulnerable pupils.

Estyn have found that Primary schools are better, although there are some exceptional examples from high schools too, noting that “the quality and impact of support for pupils with ACEs tend to be better in the primary schools visited than in secondary. In many primary schools, teachers provide daily opportunities for pupils to talk about their feelings and share their worries. They offer practical help and moral support to vulnerable families and maintain a positive relationship with them. Although some secondary schools have strong processes to ensure that they gain accurate information from families, many have not established a close, trusting relationship with them”.

Millbrook Primary School, Newport

This award-winning school uses a universal nurturing approach and has targeted support for vulnerable pupils, enabling all to succeed in reaching their personal goals. The school’s on-going research and a strong focus on Adverse Childhood Experiences have been key to this success. International research in the USA and research on a national and local level have shaped the school’s vision and approach to supporting vulnerable pupils or pupils who may have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences. Staff at all levels have engaged in 'ACE aware' and trauma-informed training and research. There is a whole-school well-being charter, which supports all staff in ensuring that they consistently use the right approach for a child in need. There is consistent use of positive language to engage pupils and support their emotions. Staff recognise the importance of positive relationships in mitigating the impact of trauma. The school offers a bespoke package of support for pupil and family well-being, such as emotional coaching, emotional literacy support, and guided early intervention nurture sessions. As a result, nearly all pupils feel well-supported when they experience trauma. The school includes partner agencies in their Adverse Childhood Experiences training and trauma-informed practices to ensure consistency for families.



“They sometimes have an unrealistic expectation that pupils will approach staff with information or rely on other agencies to share information. In addition, they rely on information gathered from primary schools and do not build on this information as these pupils progress through the school”

“You don’t always know who’s having a problem so should support everyone, with awareness of what is available. I don’t know if I would have had the confidence to approach someone or a group like this when I was struggling, I would want someone to introduce me.”

Our Future Wales conversation with
4Winds



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However, what is clear is the lack of consistency or quality across Wales, with many schools being aware of Adverse

Childhood Experiences but not taking action to change practice, perhaps lacking knowledge or understanding of what action can be taken. The ACE Hub has established a ‘train the trainer model’ that so far has delivered ‘ACE awareness’ training to two thirds of schools across Wales, and there are plans to continue this with training scheduled for North Wales schools from September 2020. It is crucial that this is not just seen as a tick-box training exercise; a trauma informed approach needs to be embedded and sustained. The commitment by Welsh Government to deliver the ‘whole school’ approach to mental health and well-being provides the vehicle to achieve this. The approach should ensure that the foundations are built on to transform the education system as a whole to an ‘ACE aware’ and trauma responsive system, working with the wider communities and integrated public services.

It appears that many public service professionals have been frustrated by having knowledge of Adverse Childhood Experiences, early intervention and prevention but still having to work in systems focused on the crisis.

Initial training and awareness is important but public bodies must now show how they are embedding ‘ACEs’ training and using the [Skills and Knowledge Framework](#)’ developed by the ACE Hub.

My analysis of well-being plans shows the focus so far has been on training a wide range of staff and raising awareness of Adverse Childhood Experiences, plus mapping early years’ services across partner agencies. While this is a positive start, it seems that public services in Wales are still having difficulty with thinking about Adverse Childhood Experiences in a long-term and preventative way.



One-off training sessions will not be enough to affect the cultural and system change needed for achieving the vision of an 'ACE-free' Wales. If ACE training is not embedded, knowledge will get lost through staff turnover and a lack of focus. It also vitally important that there is consistency and quality in training which should be provided by the knowledge and skills framework. The framework was developed by the ACE Support Hub and sets out the knowledge and skills for three levels of the workforce:

- ACE-informed individuals build relationships with people, looking beyond symptoms and behaviours and demonstrate kindness, compassion and understanding
- ACE-skilled people are reflective practitioners and demonstrate their own role in tackling ACEs
- ACE 'Influencers' develop and sustain organisational culture and systemic support that enables informed and skilled people to flourish and give their best.

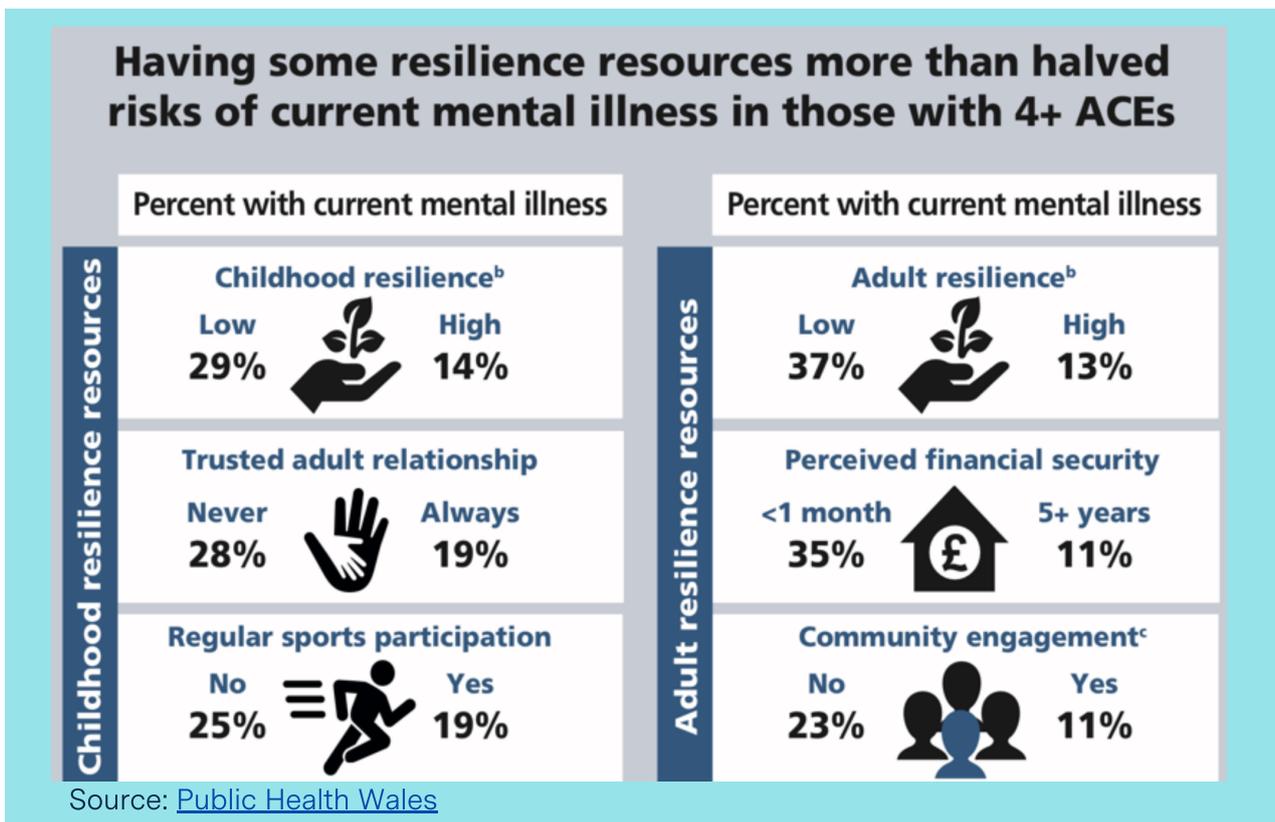
Ensure communities are supported through an equal/reciprocal relationship with public services to provide the building blocks of resilience

What future generations need

Resilience is a critical factor in the fight against Adverse Childhood Experiences and communities need to be aware of the assets they have to build resilience with children and young people.

Public services must recognise and support communities to amplify these resources which can mitigate and prevent Adverse Childhood Experiences.

Public Health Wales [have identified sources](#) of resilience which must be included in well-being plans with a purpose of preventing and mitigating Adverse Childhood Experiences.



These sources of resilience include:

- Support for social and emotional skills development
- Activities that create connectedness to schools and communities
- Regular sports participation and opportunities for creating friendship networks
- Engaging in cultural traditions.

These activities should be considered as investments in children’s lifelong mental health and not ‘nice to do’. Beyond having a positive impact on tackling Adverse Childhood Experiences these ‘softer’ approaches can also help to build skills around cooperation, empathy and emotional intelligence which are essential skills for the future; and can help with broader community resilience and cohesion amongst different groups. (Please see the section on Skills in Chapter 5 for more information)

“We need to ensure that all sectors in communities, especially the public statutory bodies, work collaboratively and corporately to promote, enhance and facilitate communities. [In Our Future Wales I would like to see] Community resilience and creating opportunities for all individuals.”

Our Future Wales conversation Bangor

We must continue to foster a culture of kindness across Wales, making kindness the new norm and more culturally unacceptable to bully, harass, coerce or use violence.

Whilst resilience factors may provide some protection, they do not entirely counter the risks associated with exposure to multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences.

Primary prevention to avoid Adverse Childhood Experiences in future generations remains critical. It is key to also understand what the strengths and assets exist already in communities, and to strengthen and invest in them. There are many examples of good practice across Wales that we need to shine a light on and highlight to public services to ensure that we develop an approach that is fully integrated and enables ACE aware and trauma informed communities to develop and flourish.

A public sector with kindness at its core can improve well-being, build trust and confidence in public services and encourage behaviour change.

Where are we now

There are positive signs of national and local policies supporting interventions which will help to address the intergenerational cycle of Adverse Childhood Experiences

Whilst an overarching strategic approach to tackling Adverse Childhood Experiences is lacking, the Welsh Government have put in place a number of interventions to support the prevention and mitigation of Adverse Childhood Experiences..

The inclusion of education on healthy relationships as a mandatory part of the national curriculum is an important policy intervention to prevent intergenerational cycles of childhood adversity.



Sex education is currently only compulsory in secondary schools but from 2022 all children aged from five to sixteen will be taught Relationships and Sexuality Education, which is a positive development in early intervention to generate understanding amongst young people of what a healthy relationship looks like.

There has been an increased focus on the importance of programmes to support mental health and resilience amongst children, largely driven by the work of the ['Children, Young People and Education Committee and their Mind Over Matter Report'](#). In their budget for 2020-21 Welsh Government have included an additional £500,000 for the whole school approach to mental health. Through the Budget Improvement Plan they have identified that they will focus further on how they can support a shift in investment towards preventative action (including a focused application of the working definition of prevention) as part of the roll- out of the Together for Mental Health delivery Plan. This includes working with my office to explore [Social Impact Bonds as an outcomes-based investment model](#) to reduce entry into care for looked after children.



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Whilst there are likely to be many more interventions which are helping to prevent Adverse Childhood Experiences there is not yet a coherent strategy in place showing how this all joins up across government and other levels of public services delivery. Some services which could provide important support for breaking intergenerational cycles of Adverse Childhood Experiences, such as youth services, have experienced significant cuts.

“We have edge of care services, but what Universal services are available? They have born the brunt of the cuts e.g. Youth Services/Communities First, there is impact down the line. How do we invest in communities”.

Our Future Wales Conversation, Welsh Local Government Assc Roundtable

“[In Our Future Wales I would like to see] That decisions are joined up, take account the finite nature of resources and are made taking into account long term impact at both a micro and macro level.”

People’s Platform

There needs to be a more consistent understanding and focused action to develop 'ACE aware' communities.

The Ace Support Hub developed a public awareness campaign in June 2019, #timetobekind, which was the first of its kind in the UK. The campaign included a television advert and social media campaign that delivered the message that a simple act of kindness could transform a child’s life. The advert was shown during peak viewing times and the social media campaign was supported by a range of public and voluntary sector organisations.



The evaluation highlighted that the campaign had over 2 million impressions, where people had accessed material online or watched the advert. Further work is planned to build on this 'kick off' campaign to look at what could be done to encourage a societal behaviour change and ensure that tackling Adverse Childhood Experiences is everyone's business.

The language of well-being is prominent in policy and legislation but Government could go further in putting kindness and compassion at the heart of public policy and service delivery in Wales

Work to develop 'ACE aware', trauma-informed communities, has been led by the ACE Support Hub and has predominantly involved promoting #kindnessmatters. This is an initiative which brings communities across Wales together to help create kinder, more compassionate and resilient communities. There are already groups in Cardiff, Merthyr, Newport and Swansea creating a kindness revolution, from Kind Cafés, to Kindness Ambassadors.

The [Scottish Government](#) have placed 'kindness' within their core values and [National Performance Framework](#), meaning they are holding themselves and public services to account on designing policies and actions for kindness. I have recommended to Welsh Government that we place kindness and well-being at the heart of government and public policy in Wales to meet the challenges, like Adverse Childhood Experiences, and seek opportunities for current and future generations. (See Chapter 2)

Other local initiatives have included the screening of the film 'Resilience' in community settings. However, it is not just for the ACE Hub to lead this area of work; very few Public Services Boards have included developing 'ACE aware' communities in their well-being plans, so more action is needed.

There are opportunities for public bodies to build on other work they are taking forward such as dementia friendly communities which have been adopted in many areas of Wales. There is also a need to more clearly join up their well-being objectives and steps.

Despite evidence suggesting that 'belonging' to a community and having a trusted, stable adult in your life are ways to prevent and mitigate the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences public bodies are mostly focusing on existing service provision.

Very few public bodies or Public Services Boards have reported collaborating with other key services beyond more traditional public service partners, such as schools, sport clubs, religious institutions, youth clubs, community centres, in order to prevent Adverse Childhood Experiences and develop healthy child/adult relationships. Integration is lacking between well-being objectives to create 'cohesive communities' and well-being objectives to tackle Adverse Childhood Experiences.

The mini-police scheme, initiated by [Gwent police](#) is a strong example of involving children in their community, learning social and emotional skills and developing healthy child/adult relationships. Other public services in Wales, such as the ambulance and fire and rescue services, have similar youth schemes which could have a purposeful focus on building resilience in children who are experiencing Adverse Childhood Experiences.





It is positive that the ACE Hub have partnered with Sport Wales to consider how coaches can become 'ACE aware' and responsive and there is potential for this to be developed further particularly in terms of public bodies and Public Services Boards recognising and acting on these opportunities at a local level.

Public Services Boards have a critical role in supporting and working with communities and the link is not always being made between the various well-being objectives on how prevention and mitigation of Adverse Childhood Experiences is the golden thread through them all.

Public Services Boards have recognised community as being important in their well-being objectives. Some public body objectives are also making the connections between vulnerability and Adverse Childhood Experiences as a cause of inequalities later in life, so “giving children the best start in life” is seen as a preventative measure to reduce inequalities.

However, only a few seem to have linked this with being important to prevent and mitigate Adverse Childhood Experiences. For example, Cwm Taf Public Services Board want to develop 'well-coordinated community volunteers and public services with ACE informed and thriving communities'.

In contrast, [Blaenau Gwent Council](#), for example, have not made the connection between their objective of 'everyone to have the best start in life, ensuring early years of future generations are healthy, happy, free from harm and ready to succeed' and their objective of wanting 'safe and friendly communities, creating safer communities, where people feel safe and have good social connections, are socially responsible and have a good cultural life.'

Other examples include Public Services Boards' objectives relating to physical well-being and sport with no connection made to how this can help mitigate Adverse Childhood Experiences. Most Public Services Boards see sport and physical activity as having a benefit on physical health only. However, some have made this link: the [Vale of Glamorgan Council](#) are looking at best practice in engagement and community participation and plan to put particular emphasis on children and young people in deprived communities, developing opportunities through sport, culture and the environment.

Examples of intergenerational work as part of a solution to tackling Adverse Childhood Experiences are beginning to emerge in Wales but public bodies and Public Services Boards could be more explicit in making the connections.



Across most of the public body well-being objectives I have analysed, there are steps set out for tackling loneliness in older people and for supporting young people, yet these are not brought together through intergenerational work which would have broader benefits than being addressed in isolation. The Children’s Commissioner for Wales promotes this work and has created an intergenerational resource in collaboration with the Older People’s Commissioner that aims to encourage schools and groups of older people to establish intergenerational groups.

They say: 'An intergenerational project can be a really positive way of breaking down barriers between younger and older people, of learning new skills, and of boosting confidence and well-being.'

There are a few successful intergenerational projects making a difference to people’s lives across Wales.

In [Gwent](#), the [Ffrind i mi \(or Friend of mine\)](#) initiative, run by Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and other partners, have developed projects to help people who feel lonely or isolated to reconnect with their communities using intergenerational projects. One of the best examples of this initiative is Woffington House.

In [Brecon](#), the community group that helped the town become a [Dementia friendly community](#) also run a continued intergenerational project between Llanfaes CP School and Bupa Trenwydd care home. This partnership has been successfully running for around two years. Learning should be used to scale up this kind of work across Wales making it part of our culture for young and old to come together in a mutually beneficial way.



Long-term, preventative spend

What future generations need

The successful creation of a system focused on early intervention and prevention requires: a [long-term](#) investment, which enables [integration](#) of services towards a common purpose; [involving](#) people with lived experience in creating the system; breaking down traditional barriers to allow [collaboration](#); and [prevention](#) of intergenerational cycles of harm and abuse.

We must change the rules when it comes to how government spending operates in relation to early intervention and prevention. We must align long-term investment in services with long-term strategies for prevention of Adverse Childhood Experiences, shifting a percentage of all budgets to preventative activities which are evidence-based and which increases political accountability for the national effort in all areas of government. (see [recommendation in Chapter 2](#))

“It’s how we address these challenges and ensure that other pressures do not divert resources away from the solution, which is investment in early childhood and mitigating ACEs/child maltreatment.”

The People’s Platform



Where we are now

Current policy and legislative context support long-term aspiration of prevention but investment in services which can support these aspirations are often short term and from a siloed-pots of money

The Welsh Government budget strategy and decision-making process are a fundamental part of driving change across public services in Wales as it frames a significant proportion of decisions by public bodies.

I have advised and successfully agreed a definition for prevention to be applied to preventative spend with Welsh Government. It is now crucial that the government uses this definition in how it resources services which have an impact on preventing and mitigating Adverse Childhood Experiences, and this should also be applied by public services at all levels.

It is clear that investing in preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences could result in significant savings across a number of public services as this diagram from the Early Intervention Foundation's Report on ['The Cost of Late Intervention'](#) identifies:

Definition of Prevention

Prevention is working in partnership to co-produce the best outcomes possible, utilising the strengths and assets people and places have to contribute. Breaking down into four levels, each level can reduce demand for the next:

- **Primary prevention** – Building resilience – creating the conditions in which problems do not arise in the future. A 'universal approach'.
- **Secondary prevention** – Targeting action towards areas where there is a high risk of a problem occurring. A 'targeted approach'.
- **Tertiary prevention** – Intervening once there is a problem, to stop it getting worse and prevent it reoccurring in the future. An 'intervention approach'.
- **Acute spending** – Spending, which acts to manage the impact of a strongly negative situation but does little or nothing to prevent problems occurring in the future. A 'remedial approach'.



Source: Early Intervention Foundation's Report on 'The Cost of Late Intervention'



The actions of police services across Wales in diverting resources towards training for police officers, as well as partnership working around early help in relation to Adverse Childhood Experiences, is a good example of a service which is investing elsewhere (see the example above on the Identification and Referral to Improve Safety initiative to secure wider preventative benefits).

The ACE Support Hub provides a good example of how budgets can be pooled and resources shared for a common purpose. However, the Hub was never intended to be a permanent structure, but to support the development and then embedding of systemic change across all sectors and society in Wales. The way public funding is administered in Wales also means that time is often spent thinking about finding funding, closing down areas of work and not being able to plan further than a few years ahead. These are common, complex barriers to planning and implementing effective early intervention and prevention at scale. They must be overcome if we are to be successful. These challenges are particularly devastating when they apply to services for children and families who are experiencing Adverse Childhood Experiences. ([see my findings and recommendations on short-term funding in Chapter 2](#))

Many voluntary sector partners are employed with small pots of money to deliver short-term initiatives, projects, interventions only for funding to dry up and the project shut down. Sometimes it is because they have not worked but often it is simply because there is no more funding. [A report by the BBC highlighted the issue](#) faced by the charity Llamau, as one of a number that run healthy relationship sessions in schools and youth clubs.

They said it is a 'postcode lottery', describing how in Wales "we have fantastic legislation that identifies children requiring early intervention services, and yet in order to fund that work, we have to apply for cyclical grants, continually" The report also highlighted how there are children across Wales being identified as affected by domestic violence, but accessing any support services depended on where they lived. This is a clear failure in the system of preventing the intergenerational cycle of Adverse Childhood Experiences and one which can be simply rectified if we were serious about a system focused on early intervention and prevention.

“They are trying to save £3/4,000 but what about the long term costs of that, it’s short sighted financial planning, staff are stretched and everything is just being squeezed where it should be nourished”

Our Future Wales conversation
with 4Winds

Welsh Government short-term funding cycles exacerbate the problem of scaling up evidenced based practice and services

It is very difficult for public services to make long-term investment cases without strong evidence and yet services for children or families are typically commissioned for between one and three years, which allows little time to embed a new service or to demonstrate positive impact.



There is already robust evidence of what works but small, short-term, single-issue funding pots from Welsh Government are unhelpful. They encourage ‘short-termism’ and time-limited pilots when what is needed is long-term, strategic funding. Such narrowly defined funding pots can absorb significant local resources in the process of developing bids and setting up services which may need to be withdrawn when the funding ends in a few years’ time.

As well as impacting the efficiency of the service delivery, it also brings other problems such as affecting recruitment and security for staff in temporarily funded roles.

At Welsh Government level, policy areas and budgets are distinct, with cross-over and sharing of budgets being a rarity. At a local level, early intervention can be undermined by the fact that its benefits often do not accrue to those who invest in it.

The decision to invest will often rest in the hands of a single agency or local government department that, because the benefits of early intervention tend to be long-term and widely shared, may not directly benefit from that investment.



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Adverse Childhood Experiences

Recommendations for Welsh Government

Key Recommendation

Welsh Government should build on programmes, such as Flying Start, to tackle Adverse Childhood Experiences; to make early intervention and childhood adversity a priority. Welsh Government should set out a clear national strategy to empower and encourage all key public services to deliver effective, sustainable and evidence-based early intervention.

Policy Recommendations

Welsh Government should:

- Invest more in the first 1000 days work, ensuring interventions are evidenced based and monitoring of impact is holistic.
- Ensure that school exclusions become a thing of the past with more focused and dedicated work on how we make this happen.
- Align long term investment in services with long term strategies for prevention of Adverse Childhood Experiences.
- Build capability and capacity within local services to generate high-quality evidence of what works in breaking intergenerational cycles. The routine use of this evidence should become part of 'business as usual', alongside investing in and scaling up what works with increased use of implementation science to ensure success.



Adverse Childhood Experiences

Recommendations for Welsh Government

Process Recommendations

In their day to day actions they should **stop**:

- Short term funding pots for delivery of essential services in early intervention and prevention of Adverse Childhood Experiences.
- Scattered responsibility across government for early intervention and prevention of Adverse Childhood Experiences.
- Short-term initiatives for quick wins.

In their day to day actions they should **start**:

- Prioritising long-term funding for evidence based whole system services which can break intergenerational cycle.
- Developing a pooled and dedicated budget and resource to focus on early intervention and prevention of Adverse Childhood Experiences without creating another silo.
- Providing holistic monitoring of the impact of early intervention and prevention of Adverse Childhood Experiences.
- To introduce a 'Real Life Fast Tack' programme within the civil service and public sector. In order to bring a variety of skills, perspectives and experiences to the public services of the future, Welsh Government should work with public bodies to introduce a 'Real Life Fast Track' programme, seeking to recruit people who are experts on their own lives. (Also a recommendation in Chapter 2 and the section on A More Equal Wales in Chapter 3).



Adverse Childhood Experiences

Advice on setting well-being objectives for all public bodies and boards covered by the Well-being of Future Generations Act (including Welsh Government)

Please refer to the chapter on Setting Good Well-being Objectives, but in setting their objectives specifically in relation to Adverse Childhood Experiences, all public bodies and boards covered by the Well-being of Future Generations Act (including Welsh Government) should:

- Collaborate with wider stakeholders including community anchor organisations and the ACE Support Hub.
- Set well-being objectives on Adverse Childhood Experiences that seize opportunities to work with partners beyond traditional services and to consider how they are doing this you can meet other well-being objectives and goals.
- Be willing to fundamentally reform existing services.

In setting their **steps**, public bodies and boards covered by the Well-being of Future Generations Act (including Welsh Government) should focus in the following areas and should:

- Identify evidence based practice from across Wales and beyond and adopt locally.
- Standardise training for Adverse Childhood Experiences and it should be quality assured across all public bodies by formal evaluation; and embedded in organisations so looking through an 'ACE lens' becomes the cultural norm. An accreditation, or approved list in Wales should be explored by the ACE Support Hub.
- Look at the whole system and replace competition with compassion – interventions should be dealing with the person, not the specific issue.



Adverse Childhood Experiences

Recommendations for all public bodies and boards covered by the Well-being of Future Generations Act (including Welsh Government)

Process Recommendations

In their day to day actions they should **stop**:

- A siloed approach to early intervention and prevention of Adverse Childhood Experiences.
- Seeing Adverse Childhood Experiences as just a health and social care issue.
- Adding more complexity to the existing system.
- Seeing Adverse Childhood Experiences as a deficit model and not focusing on resilience.

In their day to day actions they should **start**:

- Pooling resources and budgets for the common purpose of tackling Adverse Childhood Experiences.
- Placing an 'ACE lens' over all well-being objectives.
- Breaking down barriers between professions, public bodies and communities to allow collaboration and integration.
- To use implementation science for new initiatives and commit to scale up when they work.
- Ensuring relevant information about vulnerable children and families is shared promptly with schools as well as other statutory agencies – adopting Operation Encompass across the board.



Resources / Useful Information

Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

- [Future Generations Framework](#)
- [Future Generations Framework for Scrutiny](#)
- [Future Generations Framework for service design](#)

Welsh Government

- [WG Future Trends Report](#)

Other

- Public Health Wales: [Adverse Childhood Experiences and their impact on health-harming behaviours in the Welsh adult population](#)
- Eystn: [Knowing your children – supporting pupils with adverse childhood experiences](#)
- [ACE Aware Wales webinar with GPEx](#)
- [Cymru Well Wales: The ACE Skills and Knowledge Framework](#)
- [Cymru Well Wales: The First 1000 Days in Cardiff](#)
- [Public Health Wales: ACEs files](#)





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