

SAFEGUARDING UPDATE

April 2023

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Adverse Childhood Experience

The experiences we have early in our lives and particularly in our early childhoods have a huge impact on how we grow and develop, our physical and mental health, and our thoughts, feelings and behaviour. Two important factors to think about when considering our mental wellbeing, are the quality of our attachment relationships and our experience of adverse childhood experience (ACEs).

What is Attachment?

Attachment refers to the pattern of the relationships we have had with our parents or carers early in our lives. It is the emotional bond that forms between a parent and child from birth and has a huge impact on our development.

The way a parent or carer responds to their child will impact on the child's attachment style. This attachment style becomes a template for how we build future relationships with others in our lives, and also a template of how we feel about ourselves and other people.



What are Adverse Childhood Experiences?

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are "highly stressful, and potentially traumatic, events or situations that occur during childhood and/or adolescence. They can be a single event, or prolonged threats to, and breaches of, the young person's safety, security, trust or bodily integrity." (Young Minds, 2018).

Examples of ACEs:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Living with someone who abused drugs
- Living with someone who abused alcohol
- Exposure to domestic violence
- Living with someone who has gone to prison
- Living with someone with serious mental illness
- Losing a parent through divorce, death or abandonment



How can we respond to ACEs?

- Firstly, we need to listen to the child's experiences. Think about how those experiences will have an impact on their healthy development and on their behaviours.
- It is important to recognise the signs and see beyond a child just 'acting out'.
- Try to help them become more grounded, give them choices and allow them to feel more in control.
- Understand that it is likely this will have an impact on any attachment for that child and there will be mistrust. We need to try and build a relationship with the child that is different to ones they have experienced previously.
- It is important that child and families receive the right help/support/advice at the right time. Therefore, if you have concerns about a child or young person speak to your Designated Safeguarding Lead or Emotional Wellbeing Team and jointly discuss how you can support.

How common are ACEs?

Around half of all adults living in England have experienced at least one form of adversity in their childhood or adolescence.



How does it impact the lives of young people?

ACEs impact a child's development, their relationships with others and increases the risk of engaging in health-harming behaviours and experiencing poorer mental and physical health outcomes in adulthood.

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



Resilience

Childhood adversity does not define a child, negative effects of ACEs can be overcome by building resilience. By scaffolding child development by supporting families, building healthy communities and addressing social inequalities play a vital part in helping individual children and communities to develop resilience. The role schools play in promoting the resilience of pupils is particularly important for children with less supportive home lives.

KEY REMINDERS

- Lanyards must be worn at all times.
- Please ensure you sign in and out of school at all times.
- Do not let visitors follow you into reception behind you as you walk in
- Ensure you lock your computer screen when you walk away from your device

DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEADS



Directors of the Trust with a responsibility for Safeguarding



Michael Gallagher



James Sargeant