

# 01

## What are Aces?:

ACEs are serious traumas that result in toxic stress that can harm a child's brain. They include:

- Emotional, physical or sexual abuse;
- Violence within the family;
- Parental separation/divorce;
- Criminality in the household;
- Emotional or physical neglect;
- Mental Illness;
- Substance misuse.

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## Information:

ACEs can cause long term problems such as:

- Reduced ability to learn, remember & figure things out.
- Increased stress hormones.
- Lowered tolerance to stress resulting in behaviours like fighting & defiance.
- Increased difficulty making friends.
- In the UK, just under half of adults surveyed have been exposed to 1 ACE. Around 10% have been exposed to 4 or more.

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## Links

[Public Health Wales ACEs video](#)

Research articles,

[The effect of multiple adverse childhood experiences on health: a systematic review and meta-analysis](#)

[Relationships between adverse childhood experiences and adult mental well-being: results from an English national household survey](#)

# 03

## Exposure to ACEs increases risk of;

- Teenage pregnancy.
- Substance misuse.
- Smoking.
- Poor mental wellbeing.
- Domestic abuse.
- Physical & emotional poor health, including heart disease & cancer.
- Suicide.
- Adults exposed to 4 or more ACEs are more likely to exhibit signs of neglectful parenting

## Information:

ACEs occur in all socio economic groups but the level of exposure to higher numbers increases with increasing deprivation. Understanding ACEs are a factor in life long wellbeing shifts the emphasis away from what people do, to what they have experienced. Research has shown that adults do not routinely disclose and it may take many years and contacts with a service before they reveal their ACE's



**Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)**

## ACEs and health inequalities

An ACE survey with adults in Wales found that compared to people with no ACEs, those with 4 or more ACEs are more likely to,

- have been in prison
- develop heart disease
- frequently visit the GP
- develop type 2 diabetes
- have committed violence in the last 12 months
- have health-harming behaviours (high-risk drinking, smoking, drug use).

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## What can we do?

- Raise awareness of ACEs.
- Ask about ACEs – this should be part of assessments when working with families.
- Ensure access to effective interventions.
- Promote positive parenting.
- Promote personal and community resilience.
- Embed ACE informed practice, including taking a trauma sensitive approach

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