

Living with domestic abuse as an ACE

(Adverse Childhood Experience)

Domestic abuse through the eyes of a child:

This short [video](#) shows the deep impact of ACEs and how small, simple interventions can have a long lasting and positive influence.

Growing up in an environment where domestic violence and abuse (DVA) occurs is likely to be a traumatic, stressful and harmful experience. Children growing up in these environments can experience feelings of blame and responsibility, which in turn can have a negative impact on their social development and relationships. Children exposed to DVA may have also experienced other stressful adversities in their lives. An increasing number of studies have identified that certain adverse experiences during childhood can have long-term negative impacts on health and wellbeing. The term adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) is used to describe these and includes experiences that directly hurt a child (e.g. physical, sexual or emotional abuse) or affect them through the environment in which they live. This includes growing up in a household where: domestic violence, parental separation, mental illness, alcohol or drug abuse is present.

1 in 5 children have been exposed to domestic abuse.

(Radford et al 2011)

1300 children live in households with high risk domestic abuse.

(CADD 2012)

1 in 5 teenagers have been physically abused by their boyfriend or girlfriend.

(Barter et al 2009)

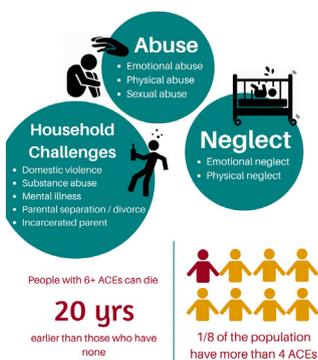
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are stressful events occurring in childhood including:

- domestic violence
- parental abandonment through separation or divorce
- a parent with a mental health condition
- being the victim of abuse (physical, sexual and/or emotional)
- being the victim of neglect (physical and emotional)
- a member of the household being in prison
- growing up in a household where adults are experiencing alcohol and drug use problems

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Experiences

Traumatic events that can have negative, lasting effects on health and wellbeing



4 or more ACEs



“Adverse childhood experiences are the single greatest unaddressed public health threat facing our nation today”

Dr. Robert Block, the former President of the American Academy of Pediatrics

67%

of the population have at least 1 ACE



Support available

Women's Aid

Tel: 0808 2000 247 (24/7 helpline)
Email: helpline@womensaid.org.uk
Website: www.womensaid.org.uk

Northumbria Police

Tel: 999 emergency/101 non-emergency
Website: www.northumbria.police.uk

Victims First Northumbria

Tel: 0800 011 3116
Website: victimsfirstnorthumbria.org.uk

NSPCC

Tel: 0808 8005000
Email: help@nspcc.org.uk

Barnardo's

Tel: 0191 212 0237
Website: www.barnardos.org.uk

How schools can support

Offer staff training around domestic abuse and ACEs

Signpost parents to appropriate support and courses

Education for children around healthy relationships

Ensure safeguarding policies and procedures are robust and regularly revisited

Effective pastoral care for vulnerable children

Prevention of ACEs through early intervention and appropriate support channels can significantly reduce damaging behaviours or actions which ultimately lead to better general health, education and life opportunities.

Supporting children exposed to ACEs can empower them to become more resilient adults and reduce their risk of:



Source: <http://www.cph.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/ACE-infographics-BMC-Medicine-FINAL-3.pdf>

How domestic abuse can impact on children

Children will all respond to trauma differently, their resilience and responses to witnessing domestic abuse may vary due to factors such as age, gender and stage of development. Domestic abuse can impact children physically, emotionally, socially and in their education.

Physical

- May get caught up in adult violence
- May experience difficulty sleeping due to hearing arguments or worrying

Emotional

- May experience stress or depression
- May feel unsafe or insecure

Social

- May experience difficulties forming and maintaining relationships
- May display negative behaviours such as truancy or going missing from home

Education

- Struggling to focus on lessons
- Not reaching their academic potential

Further reading

Adverse childhood experiences ACEs: why all the fuss – Dr Wendy Thorley 2019.

www.outwardbound.org.uk

article about ACE's and how to mitigate these.

www.manchestersafeguardingboards.co.uk

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

– resources for practitioners.

51% of children referred to children's abuse services in the Northumbria Police force area had been exposed to domestic abuse (W. Thorley 2019).

Children and young people who experience domestic violence are more likely to engage in challenging behaviour in school. It is understood that this behaviour is not deliberate, but a reaction borne out of fear, frustration and a hyper alert state. (Buckley et al, 2019).