

**[Title Page]**

**Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Skills and Knowledge Framework for Wales**

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**Foreword or Executive Summary**

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## 1. Background

### 1.1. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) in Wales

Adults in Wales who were abused (verbally, physically or sexually) as children or brought up in households where there was domestic violence, parental separation (with conflict), alcohol or drug abuse or parental incarceration are more likely to adopt health-harming and anti-social behaviours in adult life.

Results from the first Welsh Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) study (Public Health Wales, 2015) show that around one in every seven adults aged 18-69 years in Wales have experienced four or more ACEs during their childhood and just under half have experienced at least one. With regard to health-harming behaviours, in comparison to those who had not had these childhood experiences, those with four or more ACEs were:

- 4 times more likely to be high risk drinkers
- 6 times more likely to have had or have caused unintended teenage pregnancy
- 6 times more likely to smoke cigarettes or e-cigarettes
- 11 times more likely to smoke cannabis
- 14 times more likely to have been the victim of violence over the last 12 months
- 15 times more likely to have committed violence against others over the last 12 months
- 20 times more likely to have been incarcerated

There is an association between ACEs and mental health and wellbeing. In comparison to those who reported no ACEs, those with four or more ACEs were:

- 3 times more likely to have never or rarely felt relaxed
- 3 times more likely to have never or rarely felt close to other people
- 4 times more likely to have never or rarely been thinking clearly
- 5 times more likely to have never or rarely to have dealt with problems well
- 5 times more likely to have never or rarely been able to make up their own mind about things
- 6 times more likely to have never or rarely felt optimistic about the future
- 6 times more likely to have never or rarely felt useful

Living through traumatic events also increases the risk of a range of physical health conditions. Up to the age of 69 years, those with four or more ACEs were twice as likely as those with no ACEs to be diagnosed with a chronic disease, specifically:

- 4 times more likely to develop type 2 diabetes
- 3 times more likely to develop heart disease
- 3 times more likely to develop a respiratory disease

The research quantifies that impact of ACEs on individuals and on society and demonstrates the significance of ACEs to every professional working with people and to the public universally. Within the public sector (including criminal justice, health, social services and education, local government and policy making) and wider, the research offers a real opportunity to build on the work that aims to both prevent ACEs and reduce the impact that they have. The Public Health Wales (2018) research report into sources of resilience and their moderating relationships with harms from ACEs demonstrates that building resilience across the life course can help avoid and overcome the harmful outcomes of ACEs. ACEs are everyone's business; everyone has a role to play in eliminating ACEs and improving the health, wellbeing and life outcomes for those who do experience ACEs.

## **2. Development of the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Skills and Knowledge Framework for Wales**

In order to achieve the collective vision of an ACE-aware Wales and Wales as a world leader in ACE-free childhoods, everyone must be aware of ACEs, their prevalence and impact, and their own role in mitigating the impact and reducing the prevalence of ACEs. The Framework relates to everyone, not just frontline workers and practitioners supporting people affected by trauma, to recognise that the impact of ACEs is widespread and across the life course. Some are already familiar with ACEs but for others this is new.

An ACE Skills and Knowledge Framework will underpin activity, including but not limited to training, by describing the knowledge and skills required by public service workers, and their organisations, to be able to grow their capacity towards changing practice. The aspiration is that this approach will subsequently resonate wider than public services.

### **2.1. Approach taken to develop the Framework**

The Framework aspires to be universally relevant across a wide range of sectors, professionals, organisations and groups and its development has been through a collaborative approach as follows:

- Task and Finish Group (appendix 1 - group membership) established in November 2017
  - The Scottish 'Transforming Psychological Trauma Framework' (informed by a comprehensive literature review, best-practice guidelines and interviews with people with lived experience of trauma) was reviewed the document and considered its applicability and usability in Wales
  - Existing, related / overlapping frameworks in Wales reviewed and alignment considered
- Outline Framework structure was produced in December 2017
- Engagement events and meetings with stakeholders across sectors took place in January and February 2018
- Review and rework of the Framework throughout March 2018
- Soft launch of the Framework in April 2018

To ensure suitability, durability and sustainability the Framework will be "live", web based resource that will reviewed and updated as the ACE Support Hub continues to engage with sectors and agencies across Wales. A Strategic Approach to Developing Skills and Knowledge among Professionals and a range of materials and tools compliment the Framework.

### **2.2. Language used**

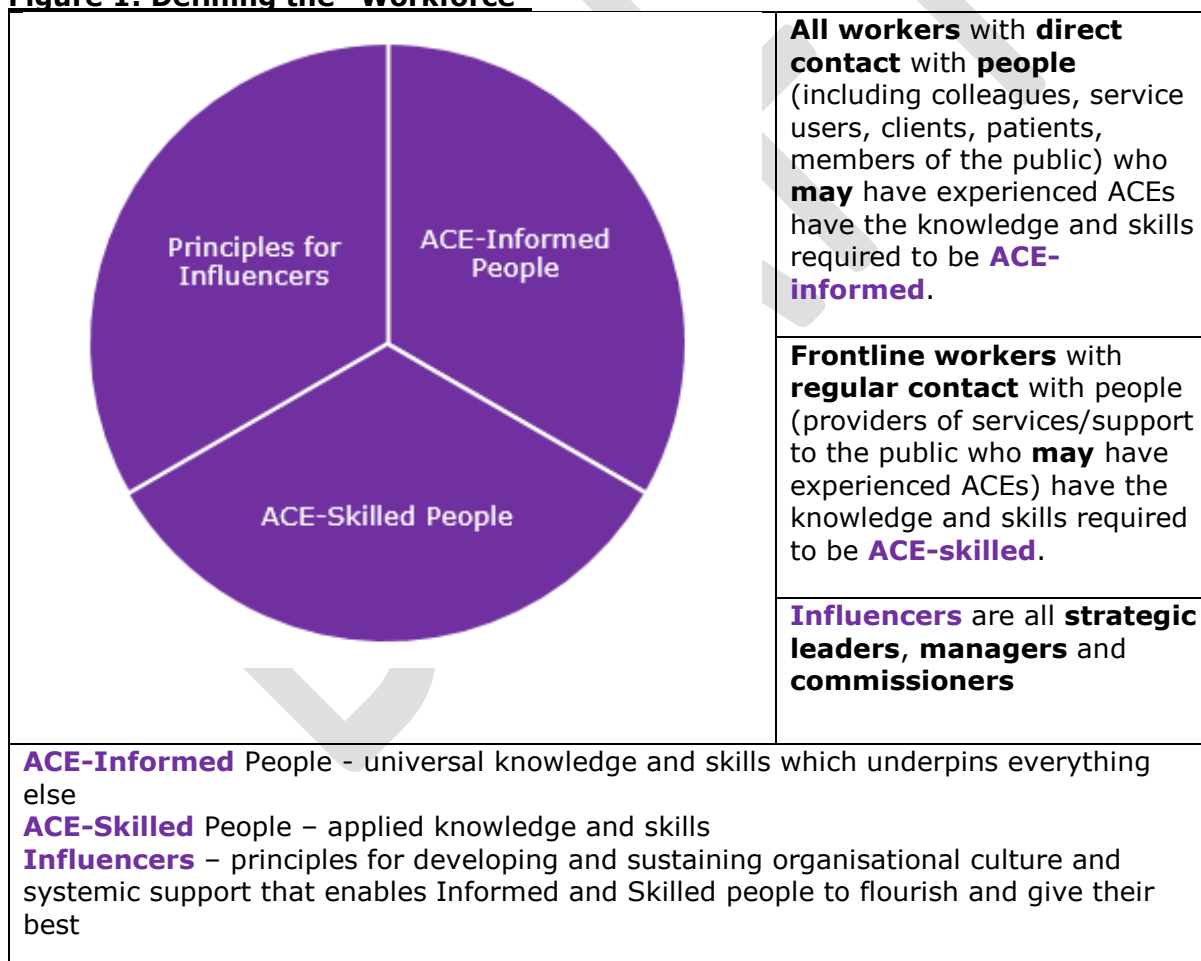
Whilst the Welsh ACEs Study focuses on household abuse (sexual, physical and verbal), domestic violence, parental conflict (parental separation), mental illness, alcohol abuse, drug abuse and incarceration, the Framework acknowledges other trauma and adversity including challenging/difficult life experiences that have long-lasting impact. Similarly, the language of ACEs will resonate less across some sectors. ACEs is interchangeable with other terms such as psychologically informed or trauma-informed.

### 2.3. Defining the workforce: ACEs are everyone’s business

The Framework will underpin a variety of approaches towards the development of knowledge and skills amongst professionals. Increasing awareness of ACEs and up-skilling professionals and workers will contribute to a universal approach to alleviating the impact of ACEs in Wales. All organisations have a role to play; everyone has a part in being ACE-informed. Through increasing knowledge and skills among professionals, this role will be realised and ACE-informed practice will become embedded. Increased ACE-awareness and ACE-informed practice is not about signposting and increased referrals to specialists services but is the collective action that can be taken; universal approaches for those who have may/may not have experienced childhood adversity to improve health, wellbeing and life outcomes for all.

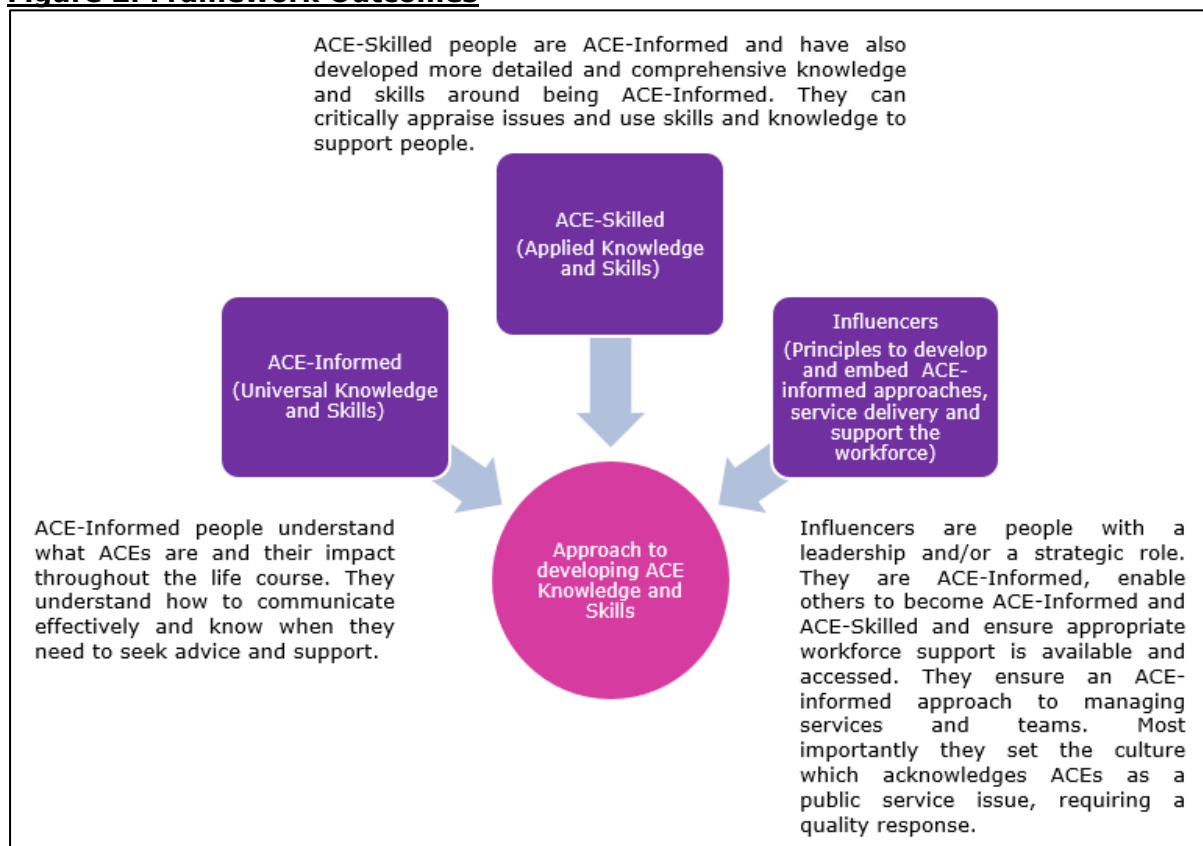
The Framework acknowledges that everyone has a part to play in mitigating the impact of ACEs and reducing ACEs and describes the universal knowledge and skills required by three broad groups of people.

**Figure 1: Defining the “Workforce”**



The groups are intentionally broad to enable organisations and professional groups to freely, creatively and responsibly identify and address their own specific learning and development needs within the context of their organisations, roles and settings.

**Figure 2: Framework Outcomes**



#### 2.4. Proposed uses of the Framework

The intention is that organisations, teams, professions and individuals will use the Framework to assess their skills and knowledge, to inform role requirements and training and development needs.

Potential uses of the Framework include:

- Identifying learning and skills development needs
- Informing the development of training and development opportunities
- Validating and/or aligning to existing training
- Structured approach to skills audit
- Informing policy and procedure review and development
- Identifying role requirements
- Organisational development (staff wellbeing and healthy workplaces, recruitment and selection, induction / on-boarding, statutory training, staff appraisals and supervision, 360 degree feedback, peer review and action learning, organisational culture)
- Professional development (informing curriculum development and professional qualifications (including engagement with professional bodies) and CPD (including accredited learning)
- Support planning, guide commissioning and service improvement – holistic approach to service delivery

- Providing a common language for cross-sector / cross-agency collaborative and partnership working

Furthermore, the wider community can also benefit from this Framework, firstly by engaging with, and responding to, the Informed person section and, secondly, as a consequence of the Framework being adopted by public services in Wales. That is, services, families and communities universally responding to ACEs and contributing to a healthier, happier, fairer, kinder and a more resilient Wales.

### 3. Legislation and Policy Context

#### 3.1. Legislation

Two key pieces of legislation highlighting Welsh Government’s commitment to prioritising collaborative working and early action to improve the well-being of people who need care and support:

##### 3.1.1. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) 2015 Act

ACEs is one the Future Generation’s Commissioners six priorities, we are linking with her office to support public services to embed the seven goals and five ways of working in this area.

**Figure 3: How the Framework demonstrates the five ways of working:**

<b>Long-term:</b> The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.	The ACE Support Hub has considered alignment to other frameworks to support sustainability.
<b>Prevention:</b> How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives.	The Framework looks to support upskilling the workforce toward preventing ACEs and mitigating the impact of ACEs.
<b>Integration:</b> Considering how the public body’s well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.	Existing frameworks have been considered throughout the development process and ongoing consideration is being taken to explore possible alignment in terms of how the Framework is implemented.
<b>Collaboration:</b> Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its well-being objectives.	The Framework has been developed in collaboration with a range of organisations and in consultation across relevant sectors and professional groups.
<b>Involvement:</b> The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.	Involvement of those who have experienced ACEs is important for Framework implementation.

##### 3.1.2. Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act

The ACE Skills and Knowledge Framework compliments the key principles of the Social Service and Well-being Act:

- Support people who have care and support needs to achieve well-being



- People are at the heart of the new system by giving them an equal say in the support they receive
- Partnership and co-operation drives service delivery
- Services will promote the prevention of escalating need and the right help is available at the right time

It will do this through describing the knowledge and skills required to be ACE-informed and ACE-skilled and principles for ACE-informed leaders; core values of safety (emotional and physical), choice, collaboration, empowerment and skill-building and trust-worthiness.

### 3.2. Policy

[Link to Policy Mapping Work](#)

## 4. ACE Skills and Knowledge Framework

**Note: This is a “live” document and will be reviewed and updated.**

<b>ACE-Informed People</b>	
<p><b>ACE-Informed people understand what Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are and understand their impact throughout the life course. They understand how to communicate effectively and know when they need to seek advice and support.</b></p>	
<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Skills/behaviours</b>
<p>Understand what Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are and what trauma and adversity is.</p> <p>Understand the impact of ACEs and other forms of trauma and adversity; understand the different ways in which ACEs can affect people throughout the life course.</p> <p>Knowledge of the trauma response to ACEs and the impact on brain development.</p> <p>Understand the collective role in mitigating the impact of, and responding to, ACEs and other forms of trauma and adversity.</p> <p>Understand own role in mitigating the impact of ACEs.</p> <p>Understand when and where to access advice and support if needed.</p>	<p>Observe and notice potential signs of ACEs / trauma / re-traumatisation and respond in compassionate and supportive manner.</p> <p>Connect with people through kindness and understanding.</p> <p>Describe own role in responding to ACEs / mitigating the impact of ACEs.</p> <p>Reflect on own role in responding to ACEs / mitigating the impact of ACEs.</p> <p>Identify own support mechanisms and access as necessary.</p>

<b>ACE- Skilled People</b>	

<b>ACE-Skilled people are ACE-Informed but also have detailed and comprehensive knowledge and skills around being ACE-Informed. They can critically appraise issues and use skills and knowledge to support people.</b>	
<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Skills/behaviours</b>
<p>Understand the neurological impact of ACEs across the life course and how to respond to individuals demonstrating signs and symptoms of trauma and adversity, including ACEs</p> <p>Understand the types of situations that could be triggers of distressing memories of ACEs / trauma and/or associated feelings.</p> <p>Knowledge of what protects people affected by ACEs from the impact of trauma including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safe, sustaining and supportive relationships</li> <li>• Supportive and understanding community and social networks</li> <li>• Practical problem-solving skills and ability to regulate emotions</li> <li>• Compassionate, consistent and supportive responses from professionals</li> <li>• Supportive, therapeutic or safeguarding services.</li> </ul> <p>Knowledge of techniques / approaches that support people towards empowerment to build on own strengths, skills and resources to live a personally valued, connected life.</p> <p>Understand own role in preventing, mitigating the impact of, and responding to ACEs including own role working with people to build protective factors and resilience.</p> <p>Knowledge of secondary trauma, the importance of self-care and of the personal support mechanisms available to them within their setting (e.g. supervision within their organisation).</p> <p>Understand the importance of reflective practice to support self-care and continuous improvement in relation to own practice.</p>	<p>Demonstrate effective relational skills including compassion and understanding in every interaction.</p> <p>Recognise indicators of ACEs throughout the life course. Look beyond symptoms and behaviours and respond appropriately through consistency and conscious action.</p> <p>Effectively respond to individuals demonstrating signs and symptoms of ACEs / trauma to reduce the potential of re-traumatisation.</p> <p>Apply an appropriate approach / psychological framework to support empowerment (e.g. emotional coaching, ABC technique).</p> <p>Reflect on and demonstrate own role in preventing, mitigating the impact of and responding to ACEs.</p> <p>Identify own support mechanisms and access as necessary.</p> <p>Contribute to continuous improvement in relation to own practice.</p>

<b>Influencers</b>	
<p><b>Influencers are people with a leadership and/or a strategic role. They are ACE-Informed, enable others to become ACE-Informed and ACE-Skilled and ensure appropriate workforce support is available and accessed. They ensure an ACE-informed approach to managing services and teams. Most importantly, they set a culture that acknowledges ACEs as a public service issue, requiring a quality response.</b></p>	
<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Skills/behaviours</b>
<p>Understand what it means to be ACE-informed, as an individual, a manager, a leader, a team and an organisation.</p> <p>Understand the management and leadership qualities required of those who are ACE-informed.</p> <p>Understand the coordinated response required to mitigate the impact of ACEs and the importance of having ACE-informed organisational culture and systems.</p> <p>Understand how to have an ACE-informed approach underpinning the strategic direction of the service/team/organisation etc.</p> <p>Understand how to apply an ACE-informed approach to service design, development, monitoring and evaluation.</p> <p>Understand how to support the workforce.</p>	<p>Model ACE-informed principles of safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration and empowerment in the day-to-day work setting.</p> <p>Demonstrate open, transparent and collaborative leadership.</p> <p>Adopt an ACE-informed approach to setting the organisational culture that values safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration and empowerment.</p> <p>Apply an ACE-informed approach to developing and implementing policies and processes and in designing, developing, monitoring and evaluating services.</p> <p>Develop and implement ACE-informed policies and processes that lead and support staff in taking an ACE-informed approach.</p> <p>Demonstrate an ability to plan an ACE-informed strategic direction for the service/ team/ organisation.</p> <p>Prioritises an ACE-informed approach, recognising the needs of people who maybe have been affected by ACEs (trauma and adversity)</p> <p>Demonstrates a commitment to effective monitoring and evaluation; ensuring evidence generating practice and quality assurance of ACE-informed approach.</p> <p>Provides adequate resources and appropriate support for staff including access to coaching or supervision and protected reflective practice time.</p>

**5. The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Support Hub**

The ACE Support Hub was established in 2017 by Cymru Well Wales to address ACEs and their impact in Wales through a whole system approach and to drive the achievement of the collective vision for Wales as a world leader in ACE-free childhoods.

Building on the groundswell of interest following the publication by Public Health Wales of research outlining the impacts of ACEs, the Hub will help create the environment for change, enable and support individuals, communities and organisations to achieve their local ambitions around the ACEs agenda. It will do this by:

- Spreading information and knowledge about ACEs enabling the voices of communities, children and families to co-design solutions that will work for them
- Sharing evidence about what organisations can do differently to help prevent and mitigate ACEs
- Developing knowledge and skills amongst professionals, providing training for them to enable themselves and their organisations to grow their internal and external networks to change practice
- Pulling learning from individuals, communities, organisations and the wider system and sharing it through a range of action learning sets and communities of practice
- Driving change and system transformation at local and national levels.

The vision of the Hub is to reduce the number of adversities experienced by people in Wales and to build the resilience of those who have already experienced ACEs.

The Hub will seek to do this by working with a number of sectors, namely (but not limited to):

- Education
- Health
- Housing
- Emergency Services
- Criminal Justice
- Third Sector
- Government, including social care

The Skills and Knowledge Framework is supported by implementation guidance, a range of professional development offerings and the Hub's strategic approach to developing skills and knowledge amongst professionals.

## Bibliography

Scottish Transforming Psychological Trauma Framework

<http://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/media/3971582/nationaltraumatrainingframework.pdf>

Social Services and Wellbeing Act

<http://gov.wales/topics/health/socialcare/act/?lang=en>

Wales ACE Study reports <http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/888/page/88517/>

Wellbeing of Future Generations Act <http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/future-generations-act/?lang=en>

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## **Appendix 1**

### **Task and Finish Group Membership**

The Task and Finish Group involved representatives from the following organisations:

ACE Support Hub  
Aneurin Bevan University Health Board  
Barnardo's  
Cwm Taf University Health Board  
Mental Health Foundation  
Mind Cymru  
Public Health Wales  
Welsh Women's Aid

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