



GIG  
CYMRU  
NHS  
WALES

Iechyd Cyhoeddus  
Cymru  
Public Health  
Wales

## Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in Wales

Profiadau Niweidiol Mewn Plentyndod yng Nghymru

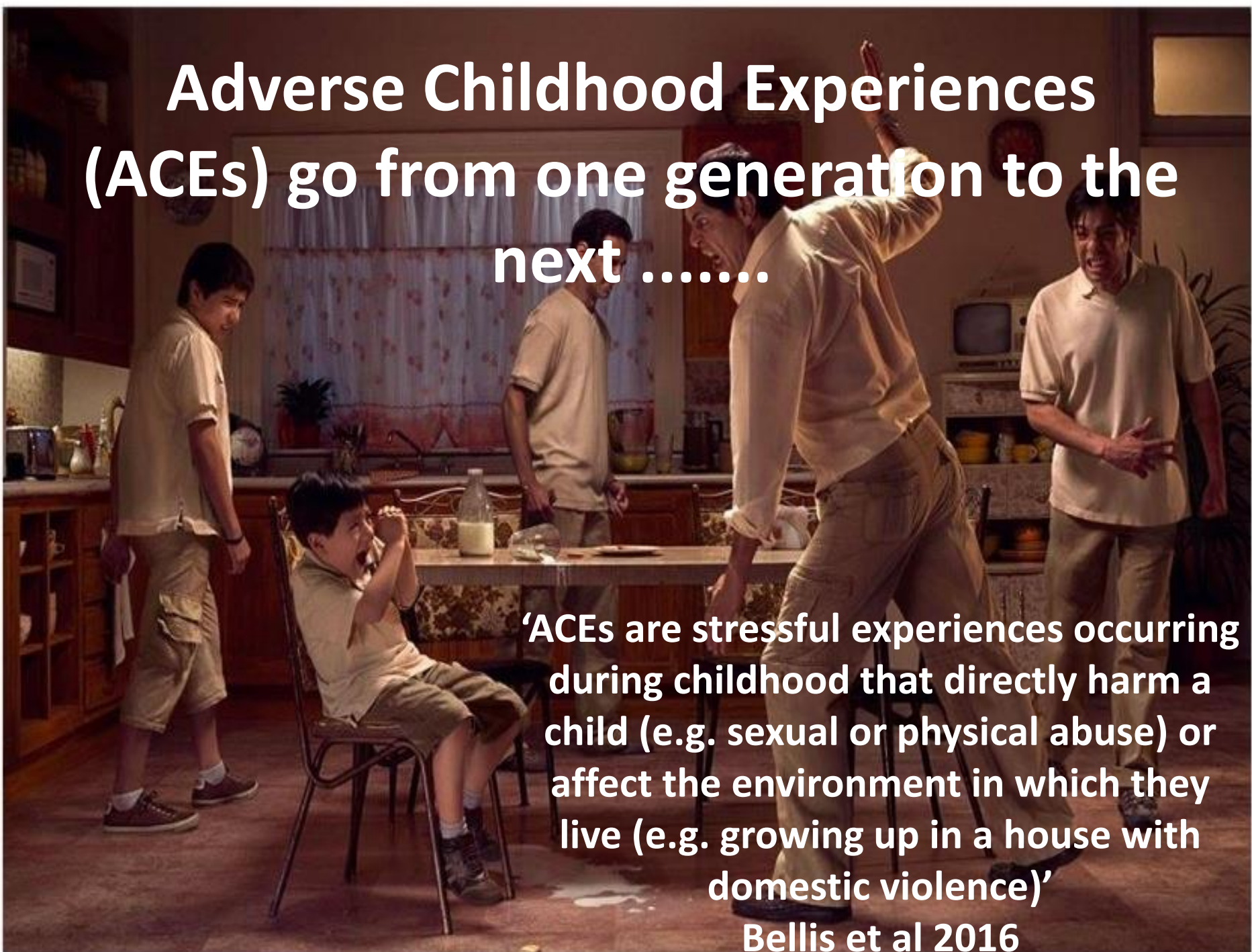
Charlotte Waite

Director, Young People & Family Services, Solas

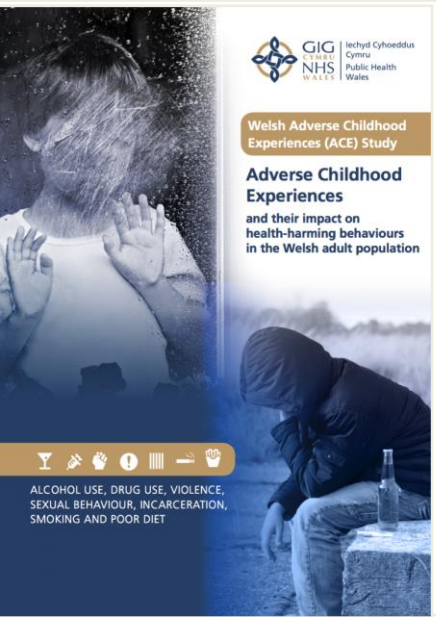
# Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) go from one generation to the next .....

**'ACEs are stressful experiences occurring during childhood that directly harm a child (e.g. sexual or physical abuse) or affect the environment in which they live (e.g. growing up in a house with domestic violence)'**

**Bellis et al 2016**



# Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and their impact on health-harming behaviours, mental well-being and chronic disease & health service use in the Welsh adult population

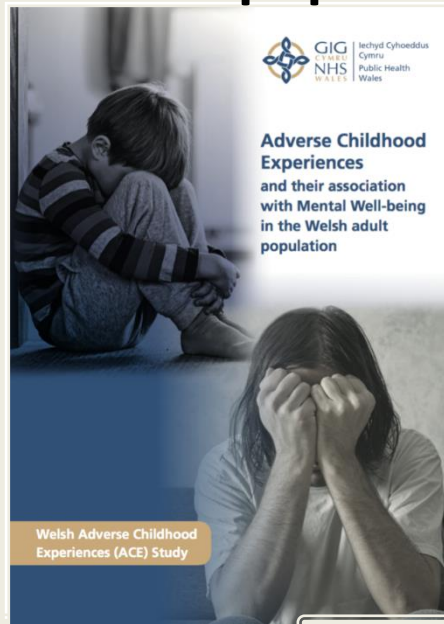


**GIG** Iechyd Cyhoeddus Cymru Public Health Wales

**Welsh Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study**

**Adverse Childhood Experiences**  
and their impact on health-harming behaviours in the Welsh adult population

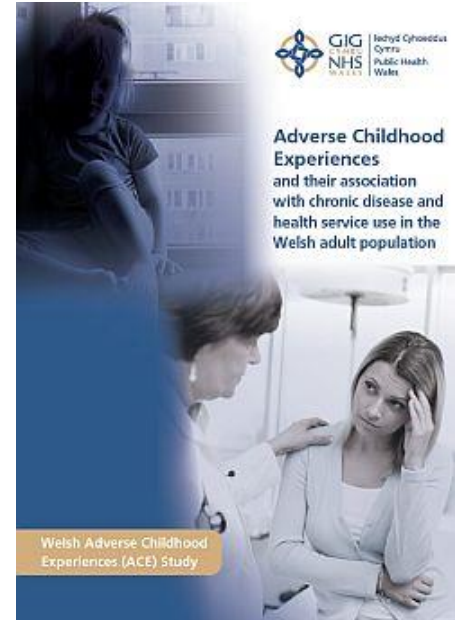
ALCOHOL USE, DRUG USE, VIOLENCE, SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR, INCARCERATION, SMOKING AND POOR DIET



**GIG** Iechyd Cyhoeddus Cymru Public Health Wales

**Adverse Childhood Experiences**  
and their association with Mental Well-being in the Welsh adult population

**Welsh Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study**



**GIG** Iechyd Cyhoeddus Cymru Public Health Wales

**Adverse Childhood Experiences**  
and their association with chronic disease and health service use in the Welsh adult population

**Welsh Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study**

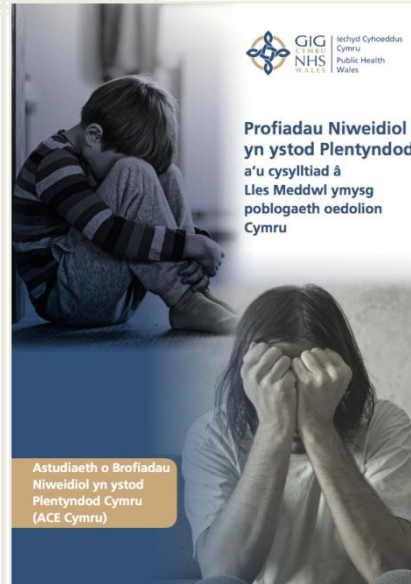


**GIG** Iechyd Cyhoeddus Cymru Public Health Wales

**Astudiaeth Profiadau Niweidiol Mewn Plentynod (ACE) Cymru**

**Profiadau Niweidiol Mewn Plentynod**  
a'u heffaith ar ymddygiad sy'n niweidio iechyd ymysg oedolion Cymru

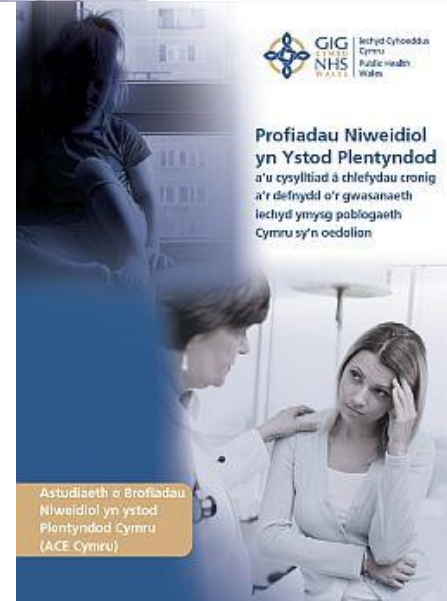
DEFNYDD O ALCOHOL, DEFNYDD O GYFFURIAU, TRAIS, YMDYGIAD RHYWIOL, CARCHARU, SMYGU A DEIET GWael



**GIG** Iechyd Cyhoeddus Cymru Public Health Wales

**Profiadau Niweidiol yn ystod Plentynod a'u cysylltiad â Lles Meddwl ymysg poblogaeth oedolion Cymru**

**Astudiaeth o Brofiadau Niweidiol yn ystod Plentynod Cymru (ACE Cymru)**



**GIG** Iechyd Cyhoeddus Cymru Public Health Wales

**Profiadau Niweidiol yn Ystod Plentynod**  
a'u cysylltiad â chlefydau cronig a'r defnyddi o'r gwasanaeth iechyd ymysg poblogaeth Cymru sy'n oedallion

**Astudiaeth o Brofiadau Niweidiol yn ystod Plentynod Cymru (ACE Cymru)**

# How many adults in Wales have been exposed to each ACE?

## CHILD MALTREATMENT



Verbal abuse  
23%



Physical abuse  
17%



Sexual abuse  
10%

## CHILDHOOD HOUSEHOLD INCLUDED



Parental separation  
20%



Domestic violence  
16%



Mental illness  
14%



Alcohol abuse  
14%



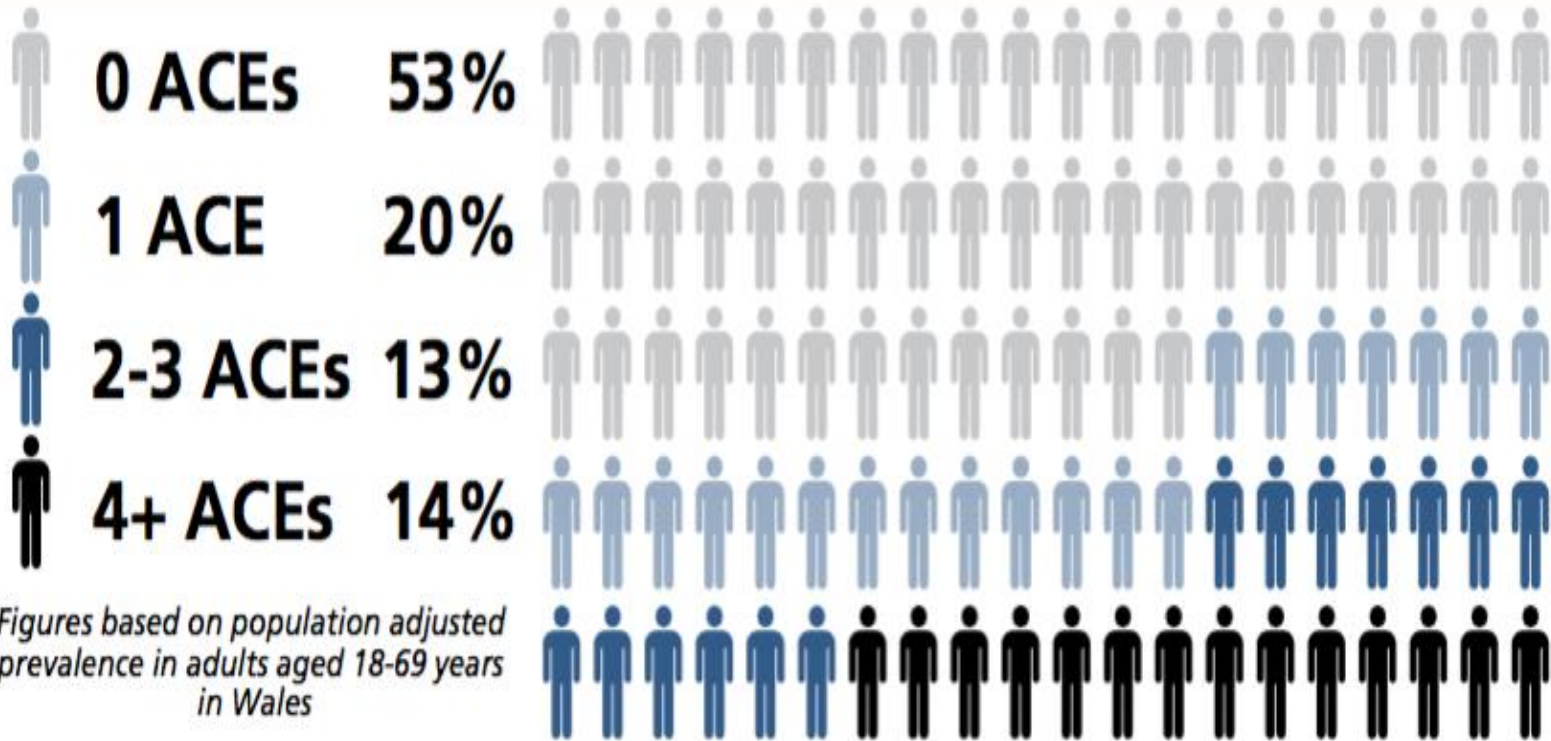
Drug use  
5%



Incarceration  
5%

# Prevalence

For every 100 adults in Wales 47 have suffered at least one ACE during their childhood and 14 have suffered 4 or more.

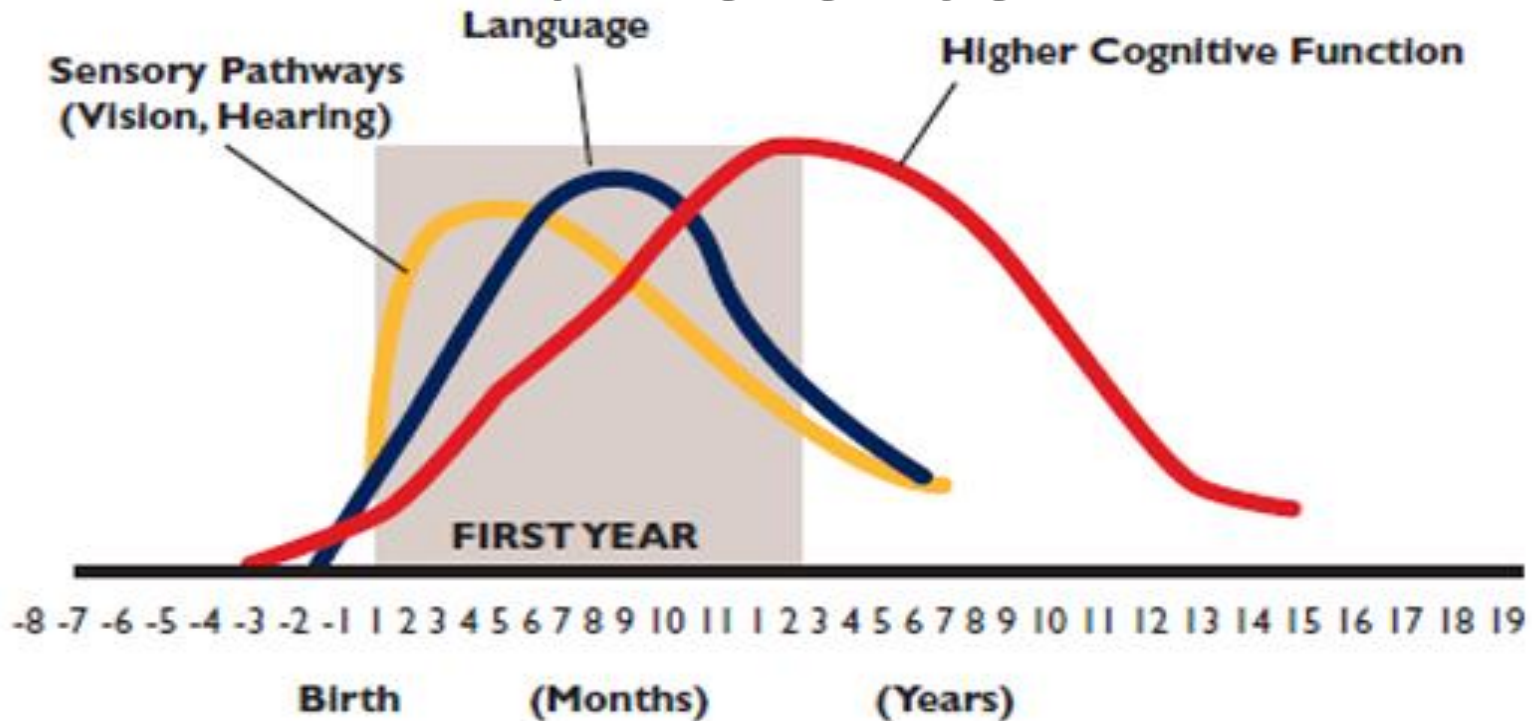


# The Increased Risk

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

- 4 times more likely** to be a high-risk drinker
- 6 times more likely** to have had or caused unintended teenage pregnancy
- 6 times more likely** to smoke e-cigarettes or tobacco
- 6 times more likely** to have had sex under the age of 16 years
- 11 times more likely** to have smoked cannabis
- 14 times more likely** to have been a victim of violence over the last 12 months
- 15 times more likely** to have committed violence against another person in the last 12 months
- 16 times more likely** to have used crack cocaine or heroin
- 20 times more likely** to have been incarcerated at any point in their lifetime

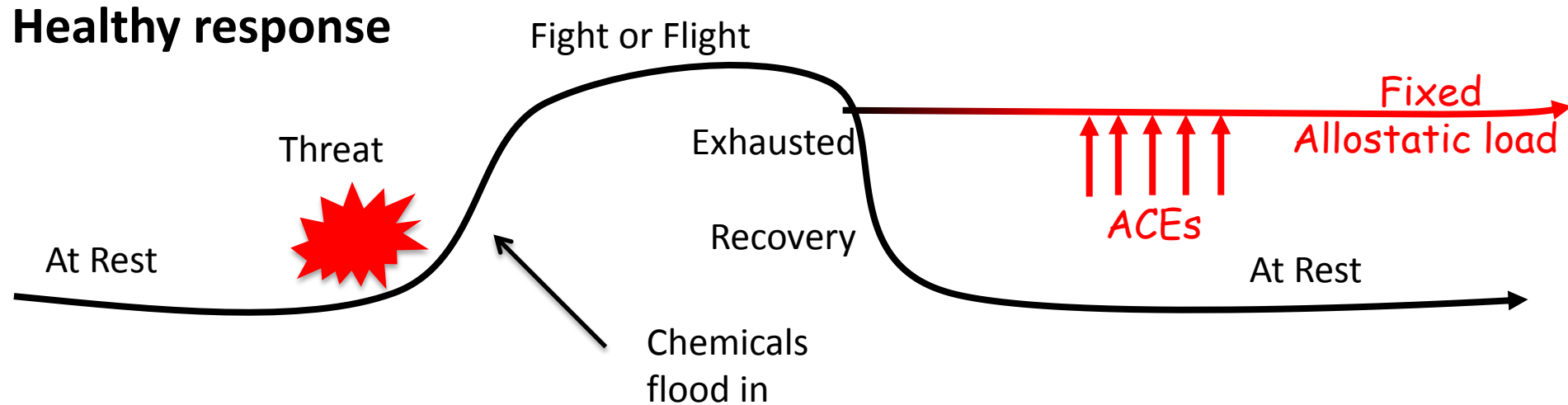
# The Critical Years - make the difference



Data source: C. Nelson (2000); Graph courtesy of the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University

- In the first 2 years a baby's brain grows from 25% to 80% of its adult size
- Development continues in childhood learning empathy, trust and community

# Trauma response and the impact of ACEs on brain development

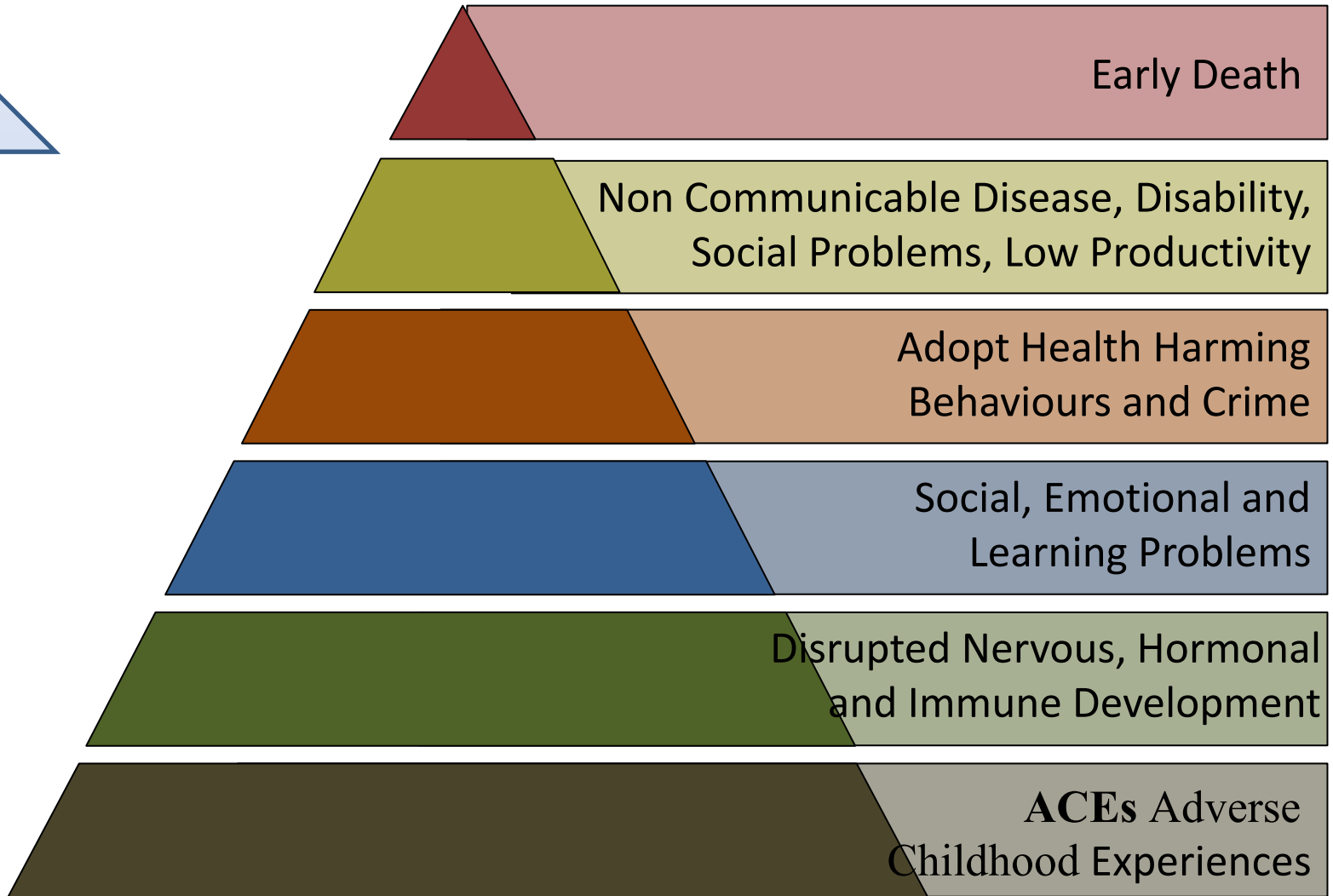
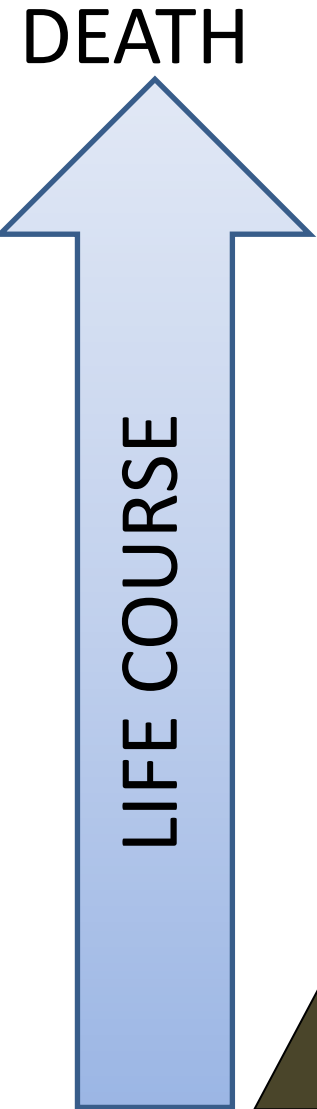


Chronic Stress from ACEs over-develop 'life-preserving' part of the brain.



# Adverse Childhood Experiences ACEs - The Life Course

*Developed from Felitti et al. 1998*





**Anxious**

**Always prepared to fight or flee**

**Disengaged**

**Poor learner**

# Police and ACEs

In one area of South Wales  
between 4th June 2015 and 18th  
November 2015 (24 weeks)  
1,484 Public Protection  
Notifications were received by  
social services from the police

11% (167) Public  
Protection  
Notifications  
progressed

89% (1,317)  
Public  
Protection  
Notifications  
logged and  
closed

Increase risk, adversity and harm



Sexual  
abuse



Physical  
Abuse



Domestic  
Violence



Drug Use



Mental Health



Separation



Alcohol  
Abuse



Incarceration



Verbal Abuse

# What if we prevented ACEs?

Preventing ACEs in future generations could reduce levels of:



**Heroin/crack cocaine use (lifetime)**  
by 66%



**Incarceration (lifetime)**  
by 65%



**Violence perpetration (past year)**  
by 60%



**Violence victimisation (past year)**  
by 57%



**Cannabis use (lifetime)**  
by 42%



**Unintended teen pregnancy**  
by 41%



**High-risk drinking (current)**  
by 35%



**Early sex (before age 16)**  
by 31%



**Smoking tobacco or e-cigarettes (current)**  
by 24%



**Poor diet (current; <2 fruit & veg portions daily)**  
by 16%

# ACEs can last a lifetime . . . but they don't have To

- Healing can occur
- Safe, stable, nurturing relationships and other protective factors heal
- The cycle can be broken



# Protective Factors

## The building blocks of resilience

One or more  
stable, caring  
child-adult  
relationship

Feel you can  
overcome  
hardship and  
guide your destiny

Involved and  
connected

Equipped to  
manage your  
behavior and  
emotions

# Strategic Perspective: How can we respond?

- **ACE informed organisations, staff and practice** assessing all policies and services for the impact of ACEs on parents and their children
- Develop a **universal & proportionate approach** to identifying and responding to ACEs – recognising prevalence, escalating response with higher ACE score
- Steer investment towards **first 1000 days of life** – earlier identification of and response to risk rather than harm; Social model of care in pregnancy
- Promote **resilience and emotional literacy** in schools
- Increased focus on **parenting** as a universal support
- Encourage broader engagement with all stakeholders to work towards an **ACE informed society**

# Operational Perspective: How can we respond?

- Consider **ACE history** of parents, in addition to assessing risk of exposure to the child – strong evidence that discussing previous ACE exposure with adults can have beneficial effect
- Consider use of **routine ACE enquiry** - integrate into existing assessments
- Consider **impact of ACEs** in non-specific symptoms or behaviour – in adults and children
- Develop **clear referral pathways**, maximising local system assets and protective factors
- Responsibility & permission to **act, not just refer**
- Consider how your service **supports the core protective factors** creating opportunities for resilience to develop



# Police Innovation Fund Project

## 3 Strategic Objectives



**Objective 1: Understanding** the current systems and processes for responding to ACE related issues and the opportunities for change from a wider perspective than just police



**Objective 2: Intervening** earlier using the opportunities and evidence identified for prompt, positive action that is efficient and effective



**Objective 3: Preventing** the root causes of crime in collaboration with key partners

# Breaking the cycle of ACEs in Housing

- Poor housing is associated with poor physical and mental health
- Those living in social housing may experience poorer health outcomes than owner-occupiers
- People living in social housing are also more likely to be the poorest and often the most vulnerable members of society, and are more likely to be socially excluded than those in owner-occupied houses.
- Homelessness is made more likely by childhood disadvantage
- Homelessness in adulthood is associated with parental addiction, domestic violence and living in social housing or local authority care as a child
- Family relationship problems and lack of support networks are common amongst teenagers and young adults who find themselves homeless.
- During adulthood, homelessness is connected to unemployment, crime, addiction and mental health problems.

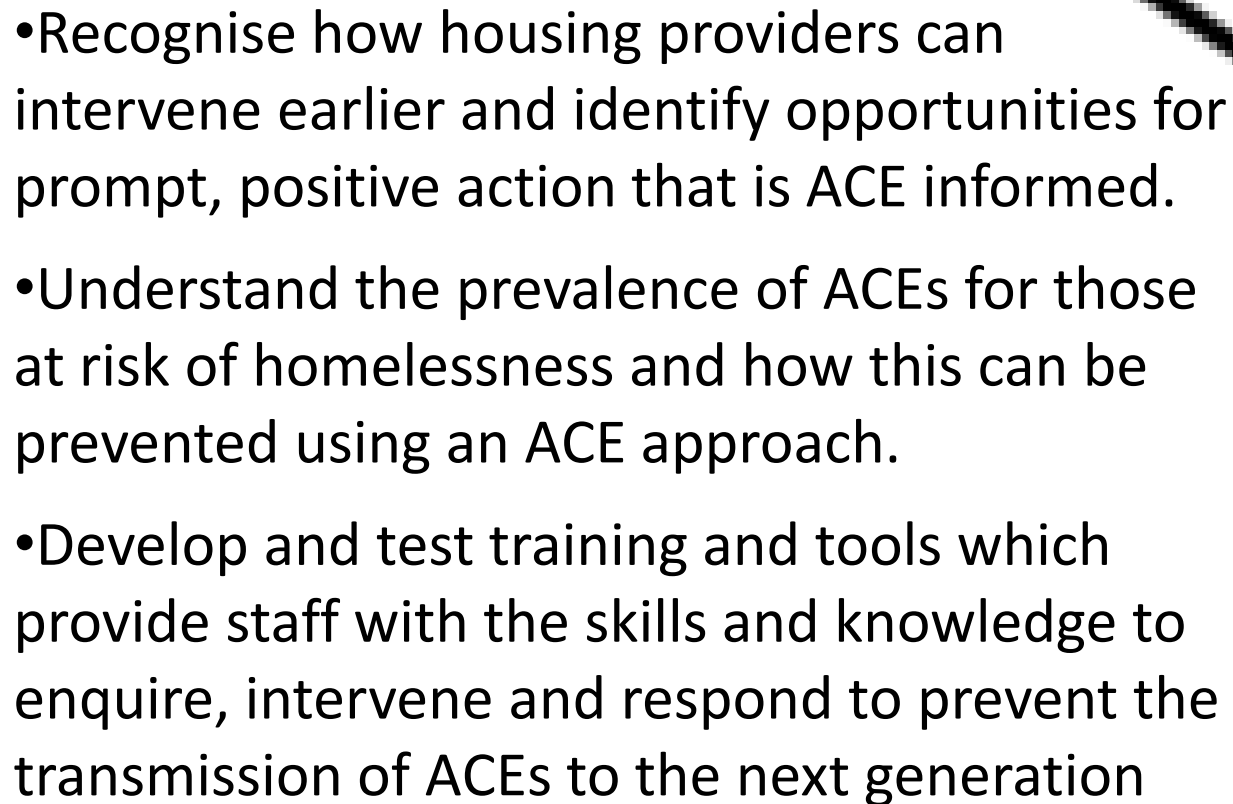


# Breaking the cycle of ACEs in Housing

- Increase and improve early intervention and preventative activity when ACEs are evident in the home environment
- Work with housing providers and tenants to address vulnerability and risk through evidence based practice
- Mitigate and prevent the experiences of ACEs and the transference of these experiences to the next generation
- Principles of early intervention, prevention, collaboration and integration are integral
- Strongly align with the 7 well-being goals and the 5 ways of working set out in the Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and support the principles set out in the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014



# Breaking the cycle of ACEs in Housing

- 
- Recognise how housing providers can intervene earlier and identify opportunities for prompt, positive action that is ACE informed.
  - Understand the prevalence of ACEs for those at risk of homelessness and how this can be prevented using an ACE approach.
  - Develop and test training and tools which provide staff with the skills and knowledge to enquire, intervene and respond to prevent the transmission of ACEs to the next generation

# Breaking the cycle of ACEs in Housing

## Project outcomes:

- Better staff engagement and relationship with tenants and their families
- ACEs are identified routinely
- Reduced evictions
- Protective factors enhanced for identified families
- Improved partnership working between health, housing and police
- Future generations have improved access to life opportunities