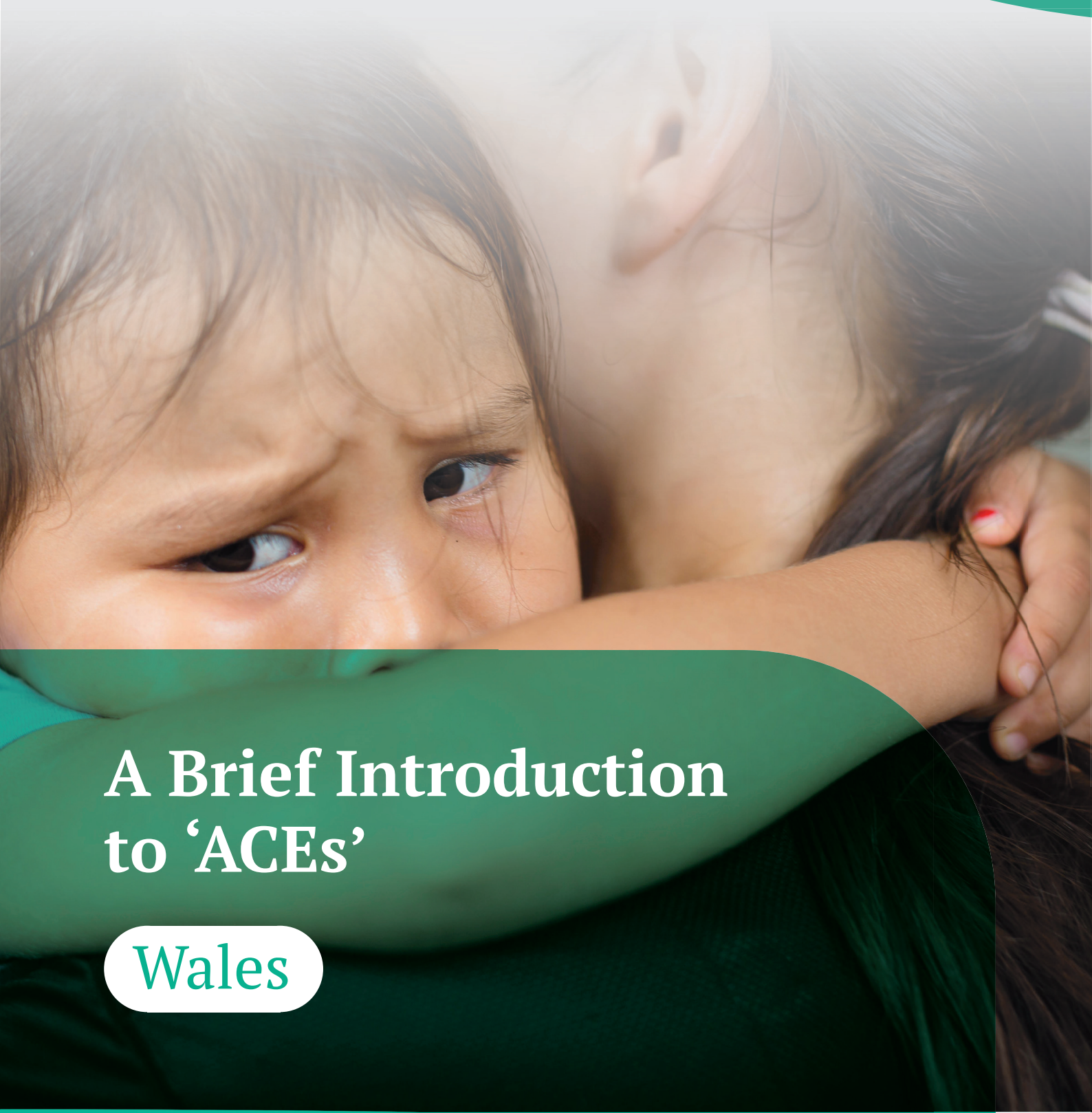




Cymru
National Day Nurseries Association

Factsheet



A Brief Introduction to 'ACEs'

Wales

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You may have heard the term ‘ACEs’ being used more frequently in recent years within the childcare sector, there is even a full page devoted to the subject in the new non-maintained curriculum. The Covid-19 pandemic and its lasting effects have further brought ACEs to the forefront for those working with young children.

The term was originally developed in the US back in 1998! This was for a survey that compared negative childhood experiences and the risk of experiencing a range of health conditions in adulthood. There have been more recent studies completed in Wales, which found similar findings on how ACEs can negatively impact later in life.

This factsheet aims to provide you with a very brief introduction to ‘ACEs.’ It is highly suggested that you seek further training for yourself and your setting. Further resources, support and links to suitable training can be found at the end of this factsheet.

What are ACEs?

ACEs is an acronym for Adverse Childhood Experiences. Adverse Childhood Experiences 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)

The main examples of these highly stressful and potentially traumatic events that are often highlighted are:

- **Abuse;** Physical, sexual, verbal
- **Living with;** domestic **violence**, someone who abuses **alcohol** and/or **drugs**, someone who has gone to **prison**, someone who has a **serious mental illness**
- **Losing a parent** through divorce, death or abandonment
- **Neglect;** emotional or physical.

There are other types of childhood adversities, outside of the standard ACEs above, which can also be traumatic and can increase the risk of negative outcomes in later life. These adversities can include: being criminally exploited, bereavement of a sibling, relative or pet, bullying, community violence, critical illness, discrimination, food insecurity, homelessness, peer rejection and having no friends, poverty, being a refugee or asylum seeker, being a young carer (*This is not an exhaustive list*).

Why learn about ACEs?

ACEs can affect everyone and anyone. For every 100 people in Wales, 50 have experienced one ACE, and 14 have experienced four or more. Experiencing ACEs can have an impact on a child’s future physical and mental health by increasing their risk of certain health problems, such as cancer and heart disease and increasing the risk of mental health problems, such as anxiety, depression,

and post-traumatic stress. ACEs can also hinder a child's ability to recognise and manage different emotions, this can reduce their capacity to make and keep healthy friendships and relationships and increase difficulties in coping with emotions safely without causing harm to themselves or others.

We all have a part to play in preventing adversity and raising awareness of ACEs. We all need to understand and talk about ACEs, because the more we know, the more we can look beyond symptoms and behaviour in children and continue to demonstrate kindness, compassion and understanding which can reduce the impact of ACEs in the long term.

Supporting children with ACEs

Although ACEs are common and can have such a negative impact on a child's future, their impact can be reduced or, even better, the ACE can be preventable in the first place. Through prevention and taking quick action when an ACE happens, you can help all children reach their full potential and reduce the possible negative impact of the ACEs later in life. Research has found that a relationship with just one trusted adult during childhood can mitigate the impacts of ACEs on mental and physical well-being. Something that can easily be implemented within your setting.

As well as providing children in your setting with those trusted adults and developing positive attachments, you can also help to reduce ACEs and their impact by:

- Being and supporting others to be ACE aware
- Encouraging wider awareness and understanding of aces and their impact on health and behaviour
- Offering support to parents and families
- Supporting children to develop their resilience - the ability to adapt well in the face of adversity. E.g. Adult modelling- when you're faced with a problem, discuss it with practitioners around you, modelling how children can work together to solve a problem they're facing.

NDNA ACEs training

For a more in-depth understanding of how early years practitioners can provide intensified support to such children, helping them and their families to overcome adversity and to reach their potential, access **NDNA's 'ACEs – supporting children with adversity'** webinar training.

Key topics of the training include:

- Understand what adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are in relation to children in the early years
- How ACEs affect children's learning and development
- Practical strategies to support children with ACEs in early years settings.

Further information and resources

- A short guide to understanding Adverse Childhood Experiences and a Trauma and ACE (TrACE) informed approach - Ace Aware Wales <https://bit.ly/3bgYXde>
- ACE Support Hub - Funded by Welsh Government www.aceawarewales.com



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Factsheet

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We are the voice of the 21,000-strong nursery sector, an integral part of the lives of more than a million young children and their families. We provide information, training and advice to support nurseries and the 250,000 people who work in them to deliver world-class early learning and childcare.

See the full range of NDNA factsheets at www.ndna.org.uk/factsheets

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