Birmingham City Council

7-Minute Learning

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

BIRMINGHAM COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

1 What are ACEs?



Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are stressful or traumatic events that happen before the age of 18, which can affect a child's health, development and wellbeing, both in the short and long term.

2 Examples of ACEs



- Abuse (physical, emotional or sexual).
- Neglect (e.g. lack of care, supervision or basic needs).
- Living with domestic abuse.
- Parental substance use or mental ill health.
- Parental separation, imprisonment or bereavement.
- Experiencing racism, discrimination or community violence.

7 Why it matters for VAWG



- ACEs can increase vulnerability to experiencing VAWG in later life (e.g. domestic abuse, sexual violence and exploitation).
- They can also increase the risk of harmful behaviours, including perpetration, if the underlying trauma is not recognised and addressed early.



3 The potential impact



- Can affect emotional regulation, behaviour, learning and relationships.
- May increase the risk of poor mental and physical health (e.g. anxiety, depression, substance use, long-term illness).
- The more ACEs a child experiences, the greater the risk of harm, although support can reduce this risk.

6 What this means for professionals



- Be alert to possible indicators of ACEs.
- Use a trauma-informed, curious and compassionate approach.
- Ask about a child or young person's wider experiences and home environment.
- Work collaboratively with partners to provide early support and reduce further harm.

4 The long-term effects



- Higher risk of experiencing or using violence (e.g. domestic abuse, harmful behaviours).
- Greater likelihood of mental health difficulties.
- Increased risk of poorer educational, employment and health outcomes.
- Can be intergenerational, meaning the impact can continue into the next generation.

5 Key takeaways



- ACEs are common and can affect any child or young person.
- Early identification and support can make a real difference.
- A trauma-informed approach helps build safety, trust and resilience.
- Take a whole-family and multi-agency approach, addressing wider needs and risks.
- Support today can reduce harm tomorrow and break cycles of abuse and violence.



Working together to safeguard people and end violence against women and girls in Birmingham.