

ACEs and homelessness in Wales: prevalence and intervention

*Theme - Bringing together health and social care
research: A revolution in transformation*



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- What are Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)?
- What is the evidence that ACEs are linked with health issues?

Child maltreatment



Verbal abuse
20%



Physical abuse
16%



Sexual abuse
7%

Household ACEs



Parental separation
25%



Mental illness
18%



Domestic violence
17%



Emotional neglect
7%



Physical neglect
4%



Alcohol abuse
13%



Drug abuse
6%



Incarceration
4%

Neglect was measured for the first time in 2017. Most people who reported neglect had multiple ACEs.

Housing, homelessness, ACEs and health

- Why is good quality housing important?
- What do we mean by homelessness?
- What is the link between ACEs and homelessness?
- Why should public health care about homelessness?

The average age of death was **44 for men** and **42 for women**, compared with 76 for men and 81 for women among the rest of the population (ONS)

- *more than half of the deaths were because of drug poisoning, liver disease or suicide*

1. The prevalence of ACEs in the homeless* population in Wales

2. The relationship between adversity in childhood and risk of homelessness, to better understand how to intervene earlier to help prevent homelessness and where the system may be failing earlier on.

- *Is it acceptable to talk about ACEs?*
- *What risk factors led to homelessness/risk of homelessness (incl. ACEs)*
- *What are perceived opportunities for early intervention?*
- *How can the housing sector and homelessness charities work through an ACE-lens?*

Pump prime study (2018/19)

Methods

- Explore secondary datasets (national 2017 Welsh ACE survey n=2452; and 2010 MEH study n=452 UK)
- Interviews with n=27 service users and n=16 service providers (August 2018 to March 2019)

National Welsh ACE Survey

- Welsh data
- *'Since the age of 18, has there been a time in your life when you considered yourself homeless?'*
- ACE Count (0, 1, 2-3, 4+)
- Child and Youth Resilience Measure (CYRM-12) as three levels - low (≤ 6), medium (6-9) and high (≥ 9) resilience

MEH dataset

- UK data n=307 weighted cases (Wales n=25)
- Includes 8 indicators on ACEs - sexual or physical abuse, domestic abuse, homelessness or neglect, and parental mental health, drug and alcohol problems
- Different forms of homelessness (including temporary/unsuitable accommodation and sleeping rough)

Qualitative work

- Service users (n=27)

Young person (<25 years)		Adult - single		Adult with children	
Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
4	5	5	3	9	1
n= 9		n= 8		n=10	

- Services (n=16)

- 16 service providers interviewed including: (2) primary and secondary school, (1) GP, (1) Health board, (1) mental health, (2), homelessness organisations, (2) housing organisations, (3) DWP, (1) psychology, (1) drugs and alcohol, (1) youth services, (1) children's services

Results - National ACEs survey

- 164 had experienced homelessness as adults - **6.6%** (or **7%** weighted to the Welsh population)
- **54%** reported **no ACEs at all** in childhood compared to **13.4%** of the homelessness group
- **10.8%** reported **4+ ACEs**, compared to **50%** of the homelessness group
- The odds of homelessness is increased by **16 times** for those with 4+ ACEs
- The odds of homelessness was **reduced by 90.8%** for those with high levels of childhood resilience
- The odds of reporting homelessness **reduced** from **16 to 7.5 times** for those with 4+ ACEs with higher childhood Resilience Levels

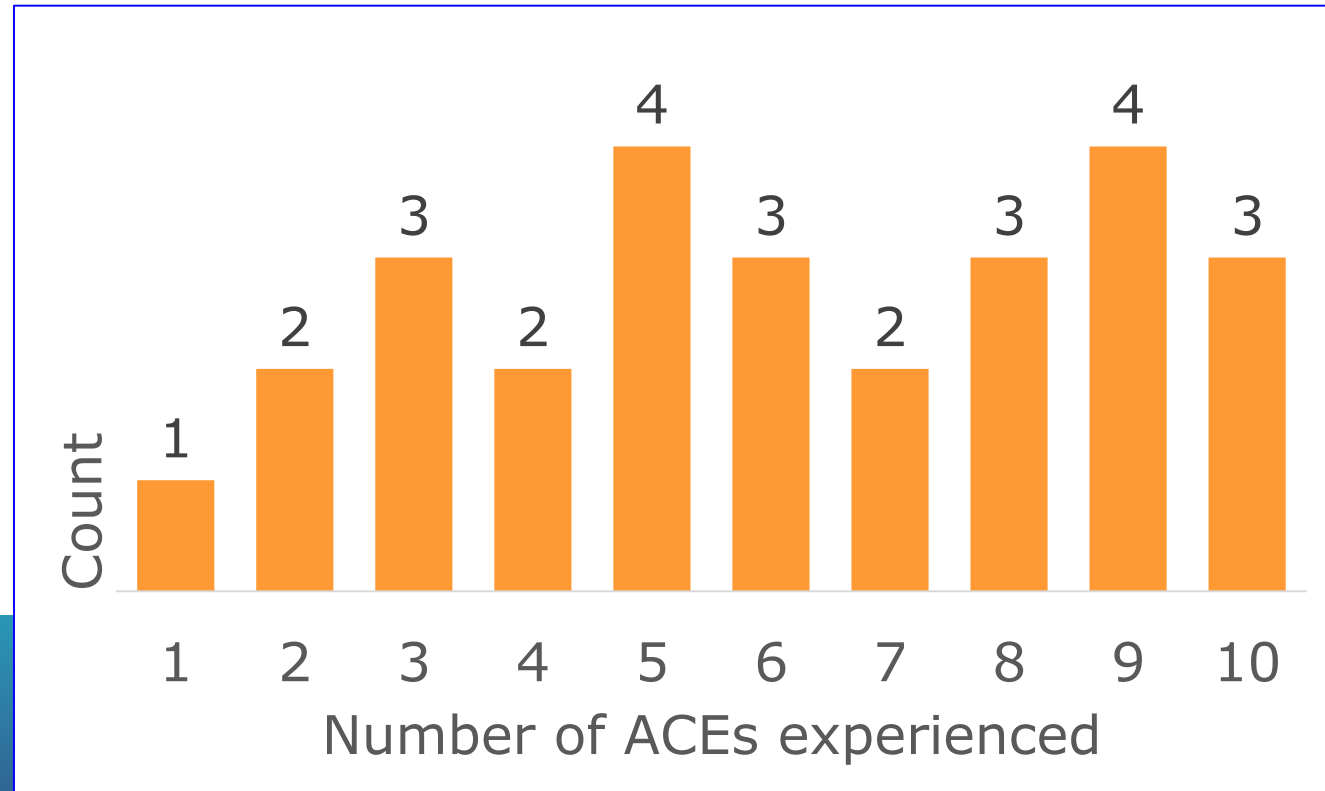
MEH dataset (UK)

- Those with more ACEs are more likely to have a higher number of homelessness experiences.
- **70% of those with 4+ ACEs had four homelessness experiences**, compared to 34% with 0 ACEs had four homelessness experiences

Service users

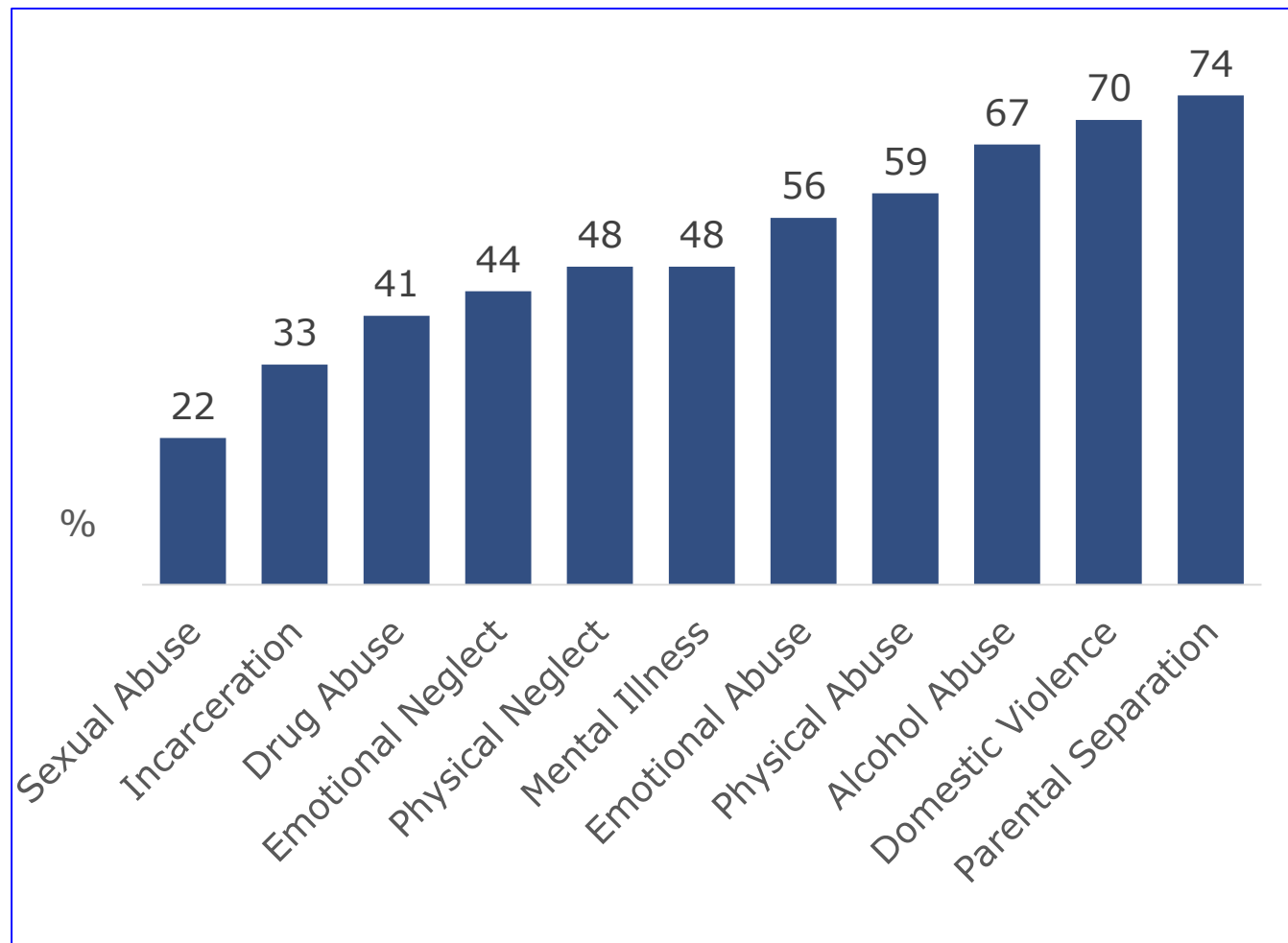
All of the 27 participants had experienced at least one ACE, and three individuals had experienced a maximum of 10 ACEs, with the **median number experienced was 6**

It's trying to put it into words that people will understand. Which is the hard, because, it's hard to describe (Blake)



Service users

*"Being raised around abuse, it's not the nicest thing, it's not the nicest thing...The drugs side of it. The violence. And the alcohol. I'd only known that stuff so for me living in that situation... it [word removed] you up in the head... It can leave you emotionally and mentally scarred for life... my family, they've been in and out of prison...we used to get verbal abuse 24/7 ... physical abuse, we used to get whipped, we used to get beat. We used to get stabbed. Literally, that's just to man us up".
(Blake, 10 ACEs)*



The relationship between adversity in childhood and risk of homelessness - Childhood

"It's like **tragically followed my mum's footsteps** almost. Like, no matter how hard you try not to [laughs]". (Aisha)

"I just **fell into the same sort of relationship that my mum** was in, an abusive relationship. But I, I stuck at it for nearly 15 years". (Efa)

"Like my behaviour, the way I act, the way I am like. The things I do do when I go out and that, it's just I think **if I had a stable home and a stable upbringing** I think I could have been completely different". (Amelia)

"If you go to school, if you grow up in a different life to what most people like me have grown up... you got, say, university, you probably got a degree to be a doctor, policeman, fire brigade, ambulance service ... **You got so many doors that if you have a normal, if you grew up in a nice child[hood]**, if you have in a nice way instead of violence, you have so many doors, opportunities". (Blake)

"I've now got PTSD, because of my abuse happening... And um, er, well I've been diagnosed with borderline personality disorder". (Jessica)

Teenage years

"I was in high sets ... I was in set 1 when I first went there ... and then slowly ... I think by about year nine, I was ... no, about half way through year eight, I was problematic then...

*It's important that you do it [school], but at the time you don't care ... **you've got bigger emotional things going on rather than worrying about school and education.** (Rose)"*

*"I was quite naughty. But obviously **because of the stuff that was at home.** (Bea)"*

*"It was hard because **I was being bullied in school and going home wasn't exactly the best...** Because I was being bullied, I used to skive and go home...and when I did that, I wish I went back to school, because sometimes it'd be more, I want to be in school, because it was like a safe environment, but then I would want to be home because I'm away from all the bullies. (Madison)"*

*"Like I went to secondary and I just didn't like it. I never used to go or anything, just skip class and all. But like **I was taking drugs when, by year seven and year eight.** (Ava)"*

*"I would always like try and let go from my parents' and like **I would just try and avoid it as much as possible,** so I'd always be like sleeping with [older] guys just to like, just to like have their house for the night or something... I used to do that like. Two, three nights a week. [aged 14+] (Reggie)"*

Barriers

*"I'm not going to cry or anything, because it's over and done with now, but when I think about it, when you just, you put a few things that will make me think. But, but. **No, no-one did ask**". (Bea)*

*"And I didn't want to go back to my mum when they kept placing me back, but **they wouldn't listen**. They said I had to go back". (Harper)*

*"You're a child at the end of the day. And like, you know, yeah, your stepdad's like, you know, being nasty to you, but like, you don't really know, do you, like? And unless you talk about it, like, you know, and you know, yeah **I think it needs to be set from a young age, because, you know, what's right and what's not. What to look out for and what's not**, because, some of the things, like, you know, he'd walk into the, he'd come in, he'd smash the door down, kick the door down, and then he'd be like ... he'd grab stuff out of my room and he'd chuck about, and he was, like, that's not normal. It's really not normal. But I was, he was never, I've had to deal with it growing up and that's that. And that's all I can tell you. I mean, I don't know no different". (Bea)*

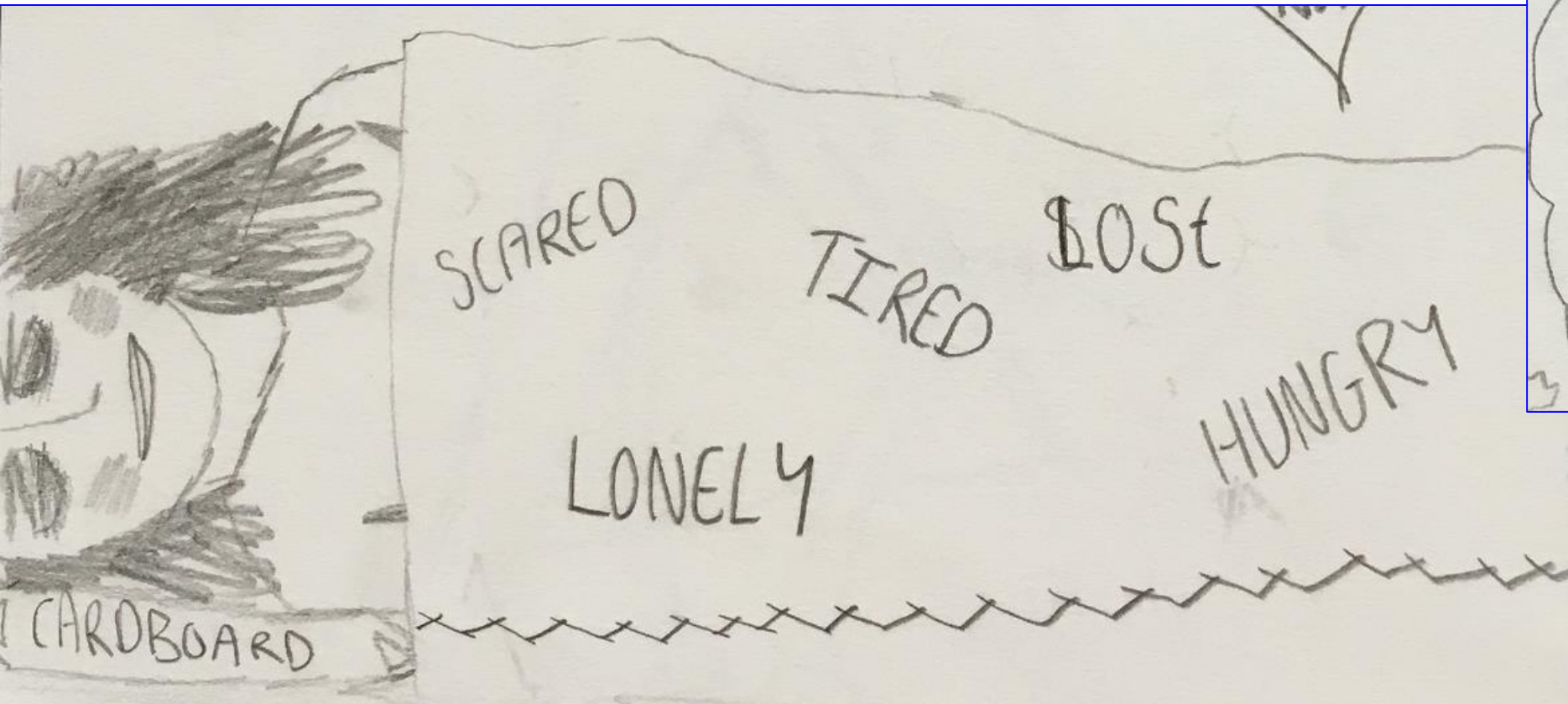
*"I just kept it, I don't know, I just kept it to myself. Just didn't think it, nobody [psychologist] was really interested, so, just kept it to myself... I just felt that, that it's, **nobody would believe me, you know, because my mum didn't believe**, so I, so I thought, well, you know, nobody else is going to believe me, so". (Jessica)*

Service providers *"It's about seeing the person not the problem"*

- ACEs can have a huge impact on services and resources
- **ACEs are everyone's service responsibility and services should be trained accordingly, particularly in early years such as schools and children's social services**
- Need for cultures and settings in organisations that understand and support people with ACEs e.g. restorative approaches, PIE.
- Training should be more available for organisations to be ACE aware.
- Services need to see the person not the behaviour – this needs the above, i.e. culture change and training.

"nobody chooses to be homeless, but if you've got things going on from your childhood and the post-traumatic stress or something from, from those actions, then that leads you down the path of alcohol and substances and... you know, even money management"

"Everyone has got so many different complex needs. I was very dismissive of, when I was growing up, you'd see someone rough sleeping, and you'd walk by and you'd think well, it's their fault. And having gone through it, and seeing what's gone on in the past with my life, it's not, you know. No". (Seth)



Imagine you were these people. On the street, tired with bags under your eyes. You have nowhere to go, nothing to eat. Many things would have happened in the past. Now think, ANYONE could become homeless.