


REPORT TO THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY BOARD

11th November 2019

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| Subject: | Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) |
| Cabinet Portfolio: | Lead Member for Best Start in Life, Councillor Joyce Underhill |
| Director: | Executive Director of Children's Services, Lesley Hagger |
| Contribution towards Vision 2030: |  |
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DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That:

1. The Scrutiny Committee considers the report and notes the work of the ACEs Co-ordinators.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide the Scrutiny Committee with information about the agenda for addressing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).
- 1.2 To assure the Scrutiny Committee that the Council is contributing to the multi-agency plan to address ACEs in Sandwell, which is monitored by Sandwell's Health and Wellbeing Board.

2 IMPLICATIONS FOR VISION 2030

- 2.1 A multi-agency workforce that can provide early identification of, and take action to address, ACEs in children and adults can contribute to all of the Vision 2030 Ambitions relevant to people and place.

3 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are stressful or traumatic experiences that can have a huge impact on children and young people throughout their lives. The ten widely recognised ACEs, as identified in a US study from the 1990s, are:

1. Abuse: physical, sexual and verbal
2. Neglect: emotional and physical
3. Growing up in a household where:
 - there are adults with alcohol and drug use problems
 - there are adults with mental health problems
 - there is domestic violence
 - there are adults who have spent time in prison
 - parents have separated.

3.2 As well as these 10 ACEs there are a range of other types of childhood adversity that can have similar negative long-term effects. These include bereavement, bullying, poverty and community adversities such as living in a deprived area and neighbourhood violence.

3.3 Childhood adversity can create harmful levels of stress which impact healthy brain development. This can result in long-term effects on learning, behaviour and health. Evidence from ACEs surveys in the US, UK and elsewhere demonstrates that ACEs can exert a significant influence throughout people's life. ACEs have been found to be associated with a range of poorer health and social outcomes in adulthood and that these risks increase as the number of ACEs increase.

3.4 Research has found that people who reported experiencing four or more ACEs are:

- 4x more likely to be a high-risk drinker
- 16x more likely to have used crack cocaine or heroin
- 6x increased risk of never or rarely feeling optimistic

- 3x increased risk of heart disease, respiratory disease and type 2 diabetes
- 15x more likely to have committed violence
- 14x more likely to have been victim of violence in the last 12 months
- 20x more likely to have been in prison at any point in their life

Consideration of ACEs is therefore crucial to thinking about how to improve the lives of children and young people, to support better transitions into adulthood, and achieve good outcomes for all adults. Addressing ACEs is about better supporting adults who have been through adversity and trauma as well as positive interventions in childhood.

- 3.5 In Sandwell, the Health and Wellbeing Board has recognised the importance of understanding the impact of ACEs on our communities and has agreed an Action Plan to improve the understanding, identification and support available to those at risk of, or experiencing the impact of ACEs. The Action Plan is attached at Appendix A. A multi-agency Steering Group was established as a ‘task and finish’ place to develop and implement the Action Plan. The Steering Group is chaired by the Executive Director of Children’s Services for Sandwell Council, and serviced by colleagues from Public Health. The Steering Group reports to the Health and Wellbeing Board. The Action Plan is also incorporated into the work of Safer Sandwell, through the Prevention of Violence and Exploitation (PoVE) sub-group.
- 3.6 Sandwell’s partnership has benefited from the introduction of two ACEs Co-ordinators, funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner and hosted by Barnardo’s, working across Sandwell and Dudley. The co-ordinators will be attending the Scrutiny Committee meeting to describe their current work and future plans. Their work is also supported by the West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit and Public Health England.

4 THE CURRENT POSITION

4.1 The Action Plan seeks to address 3 priorities:

- Sandwell has a good understanding of the distribution of ACEs across the borough; professional curiosity is used in a systematic way to identify those at risk and their support needs. (Priority A)
- People can access support and advice from a range of trauma informed interventions and services. (Priority B)

- Professionals are ACE aware, and trauma informed, communities across Sandwell have a better understanding of Adverse Childhood Experiences and its impacts. (Priority C)

4.2 The Action Plan has progressed well, with the primary focus being to develop the awareness and understanding of ACEs across all agencies to improve the support provided to children and adults. The training offer is:

- a) an e-learning tool made available to all agencies to become ACEs Aware;
- b) a face-to-face training session to enable all agencies to become Trauma-Informed;
- c) a Trusted Adult training programme (3 days) in schools and made available to other agencies.

4.3 Additionally, the Teamworx programme, which is offered to pupils in Years 5 and 6 who are identified by their schools as experiencing ACEs, has been evaluated and demonstrates considerable impact. A Business Case is being developed to sustain the programme beyond this academic year.

4.4 The next steps are to find ways to evaluate the impact of the training, develop ongoing resources that agencies can use when working with children and adults, and to review and make recommendations for policy review across agencies to address the negative impact of ACEs.

5 CONSULTATION (CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)

5.1 Consultation and engagement took place with children and young people in October 2019 and a report is being prepared by the ACEs Co-ordinators.

5.2 Consultation has taken place with all agencies regarding the content of the Trauma-Informed training.

6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

6.1 The options to either ignore ACEs, or to invest heavily in interventions prior to developing understanding and knowledge across agencies, have been discounted in favour of a measured and sustainable approach.

7 STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Members of the Steering Group have given their time to participate in moving the ACEs agenda forward. Recent staff changes in Public Health have meant that progress against the Action Plan has slowed but it is hoped that this could be resolved via the ACEs Co-ordinators.

8 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 Governance is via Safer Sandwell and ultimately the Health and Wellbeing Board.

9 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

9.1 ACEs can be experienced by all individuals; the impact of ACEs can make those individuals vulnerable to poor life outcomes.

10 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

10.1 None.

11 CRIME AND DISORDER AND RISK ASSESSMENT

11.1 Vulnerable children, young people and adults can be more likely to be victims of crime and potentially perpetrators of crime.

12 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS

12.1 The Action Plan has a definite end-date, however, there may be further activities that are developed through the ACEs Co-ordinator posts. Addressing policy changes will enable the understanding of ACEs to be sustained.

13 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)

13.1 People who experience ACEs are at risk of poor health and wellbeing outcomes.

14 IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND

14.1 None.

15 CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

15.1 There can be no doubt that ACEs are experienced by many Sandwell residents. Understanding ACEs, their potential impact on people's lives, and how to best to provide support is the first step in enabling people who have experienced ACEs to become better understood, more self-reliant and resilient, and achieve improved life outcomes. This is an important agenda for Sandwell Council to address, with its partners, as part of the

Vision 2030 ambitions to ensure that Sandwell residents can have improved life chances.

16 BACKGROUND PAPERS

16.1 None

17 APPENDICES:

17.1 Action Plan (Version 7)

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