



Addressing Childhood Adversity and Trauma

WHAT IS ADVERSITY?

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are highly stressful, and potentially traumatic, events or situations that occur during childhood and/or adolescence



It can be a single event, or prolonged threats to, and breaches of, a young person's safety, security, trust or bodily integrity. These experiences directly affect the young person and their environment, and require significant social, emotional, neurobiological, psychological or behavioural adaptation.

Adaptations are children and young people's attempts to:

**Survive in
their immediate
environment**

**Find ways of mitigating or
tolerating the adversity by
using available resources**

**Establish a
sense of safety
or control**

**Make sense of
the experiences
they have had**

Forms of ACEs include:



Maltreatment

i.e. abuse or neglect



Violence & coercion

i.e. domestic abuse,
gang membership,
being a victim of crime



Adjustment

i.e. migration, asylum
or ending relationships



Prejudice

i.e. LGBT+ prejudice,
sexism, racism or disablism



Household or family adversity

i.e. substances misuse,
intergenerational trauma
destitution, or deprivation



Inhumane treatment

i.e. torture, forced
imprisonment or
institutionalisation



Adult responsibilities

i.e. being a young
carer or involvement
in child labour



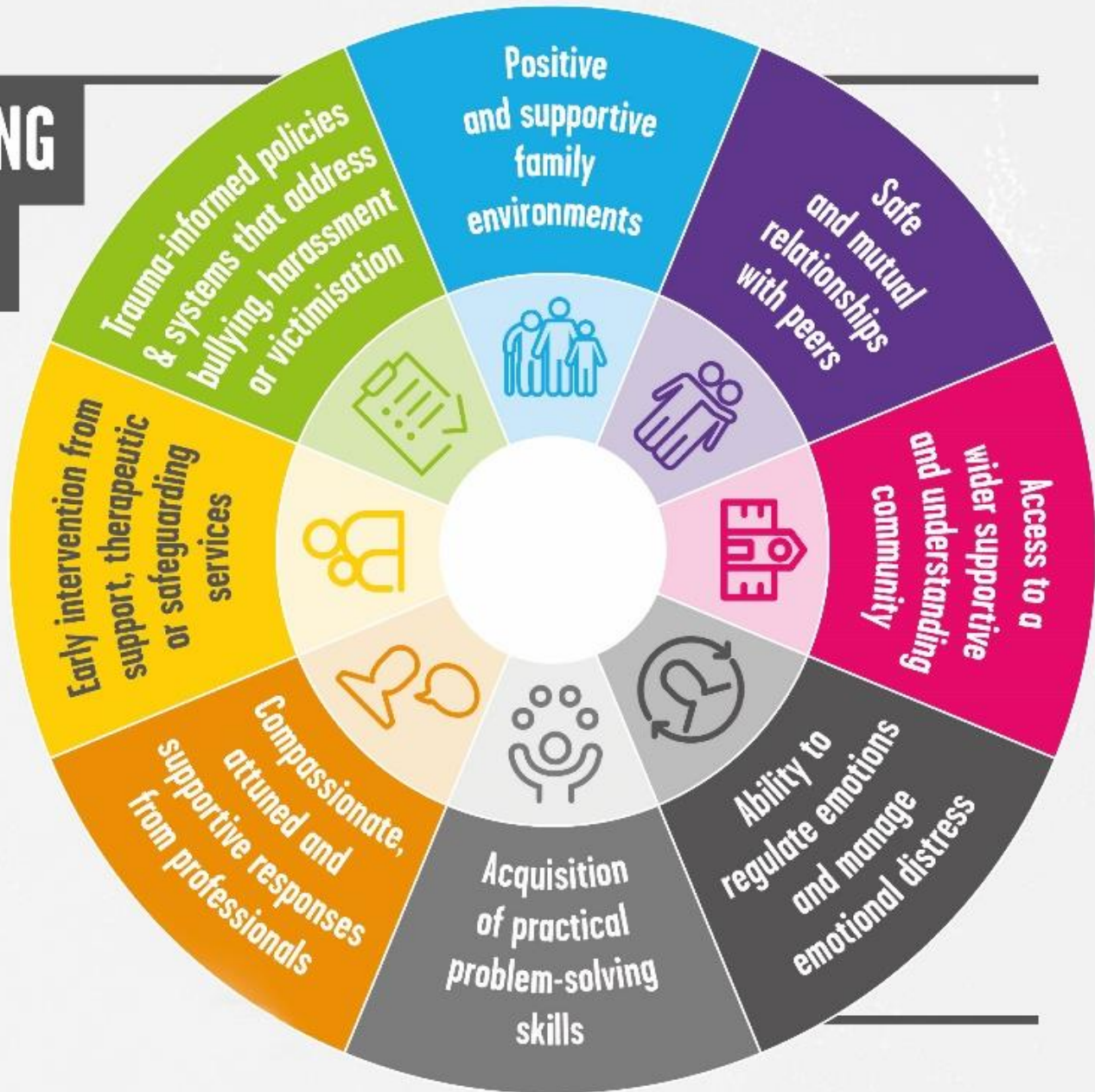
Bereavement & survivorship

i.e. traumatic deaths,
surviving an illness
or accident

WHAT PROTECTS YOUNG PEOPLE FROM ACES?

Not all young people who face childhood adversity or trauma go on to develop a mental health problem.

There are personal, structural and environmental factors that can protect against adverse outcomes, as shown in the protection wheel opposite.



WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?

Be prepared

Ensure that Senior Leaders and Governors are aware of ACEs and that addressing these is a strategic priority. Analyse the available data regarding children and young people in the school, identifying needs and possible resources to meet them.



“When you notice, or I tell you that I need help, you should already know what the next step is”

Be aware

Ensure that the whole school community has an awareness and understanding of childhood adversity and trauma, has a common framework for collating information and identifying need and can respond appropriately to the cultural and personal characteristics of the children and families.



“Recognise all of my needs”

“Don't label me with the experiences I've had”

“Understand my behaviour”

Be flexible

Use the data to target children who live in adverse and traumatic environments and provide interventions and groups that these children can easily access.



“Shape your support around me”

“Find a way that we can both understand each other”

Be safe and responsible

Intervene as early as possible, avoid re-traumatising and stigmatising children. Ensure that staff have the right skills and training to be empathetic, knowledgeable and trustworthy.



“The way you treat me matters”

“Know where I'm coming from”

“Keep me safe and don't betray my trust”

Be collaborative and enhancing

Involve children in decisions about interventions and support they receive and focus on assets of the children and their communities.



“Include me in decisions about my life”

“I want to talk to someone who has been through the same thing”

Be integrated

Ensure that services are as joined up as possible, allowing for children and families to feel held by the system and not passed around from one agency to another.



“Stop asking me to repeat myself”

“I've survived this long”

“Don't pass me from person to person”