

## Growing Resilient Children and Adults in Northumberland

### Learning Framework



Northumberland Children and Young People's Plan makes a commitment to ensure that all children in the County are equipped to live happy, healthy and fulfilling lives. It recognises that children and young people can experience life events that put them at risk of disadvantage because of the impact of stress or trauma but by providing safe, stable, nurturing environments and positive relationships with adults, children can build social and emotional skills and resilience to mitigate the potential impact of these adverse experiences.

This trauma-informed, resilience-focused learning framework has been developed to promote a structured approach to training for the children and families workforce and to support the communication of positive, consistent messages to wider community groups and services and to families themselves. It is informed by the Scottish Government's document 'Transforming Psychological Trauma: A Knowledge and Skills Framework for the Scottish Workforce' and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Building on Northumberland's previous Attachment and Resilience Training Strategy, it is also reflective of Northumberland's graduated approach to training by adopting an ecological framework for the cascading of learning – supporting the growth of resilient children, resilient families and resilient communities.

It is crucial that we identify opportunities and mechanisms for developing the knowledge base of children and young people themselves. A key resilience factor is the ability of the individual to address their own emotional wellbeing needs. This has implications for the development of self-care strategies and seeking appropriate and timely support

Parents, carers and family members play a significant role in developing children's resilience. Enabling parents to make informed decisions about the care they provide and how they respond to any adverse situation is crucial to the prevention of negative impact of those experiences. Providing safe learning opportunities for parents, carers and families to explore the possible impact of adversity and learn how to grow children's resilience is an important part of Northumberland's learning framework.

Formal and informal community networks and interventions can create a safe environment for growth and development, providing local services for the children themselves and also for parents, carers and wider family members. In line with the adage 'it takes a village to raise a child', in Northumberland we want to ensure that local community groups and organisations understand the significance of their role in prevention and early intervention by providing positive experiences, relationships and support for children and families. The significance of community support is highlighted by Josh MacAlister in the Case for Change review of children's social care services: "The power of a strong community network should not be underestimated."

Strengthening knowledge and developing a shared understanding of the potential impact of adverse childhood experiences and trauma across the children and families workforce will equip both the statutory and voluntary/community sector to respond appropriately to people who have experienced trauma at any age. It will promote a common approach to understanding and interpreting children's (and adults') behaviour and maximise the positive impact of trauma-informed, resilience-focused interventions with children and parents/carers. It will also ensure that where children are receiving therapeutic support from mental health services, universal and targeted services are working in a way that supports and enhances this intervention.

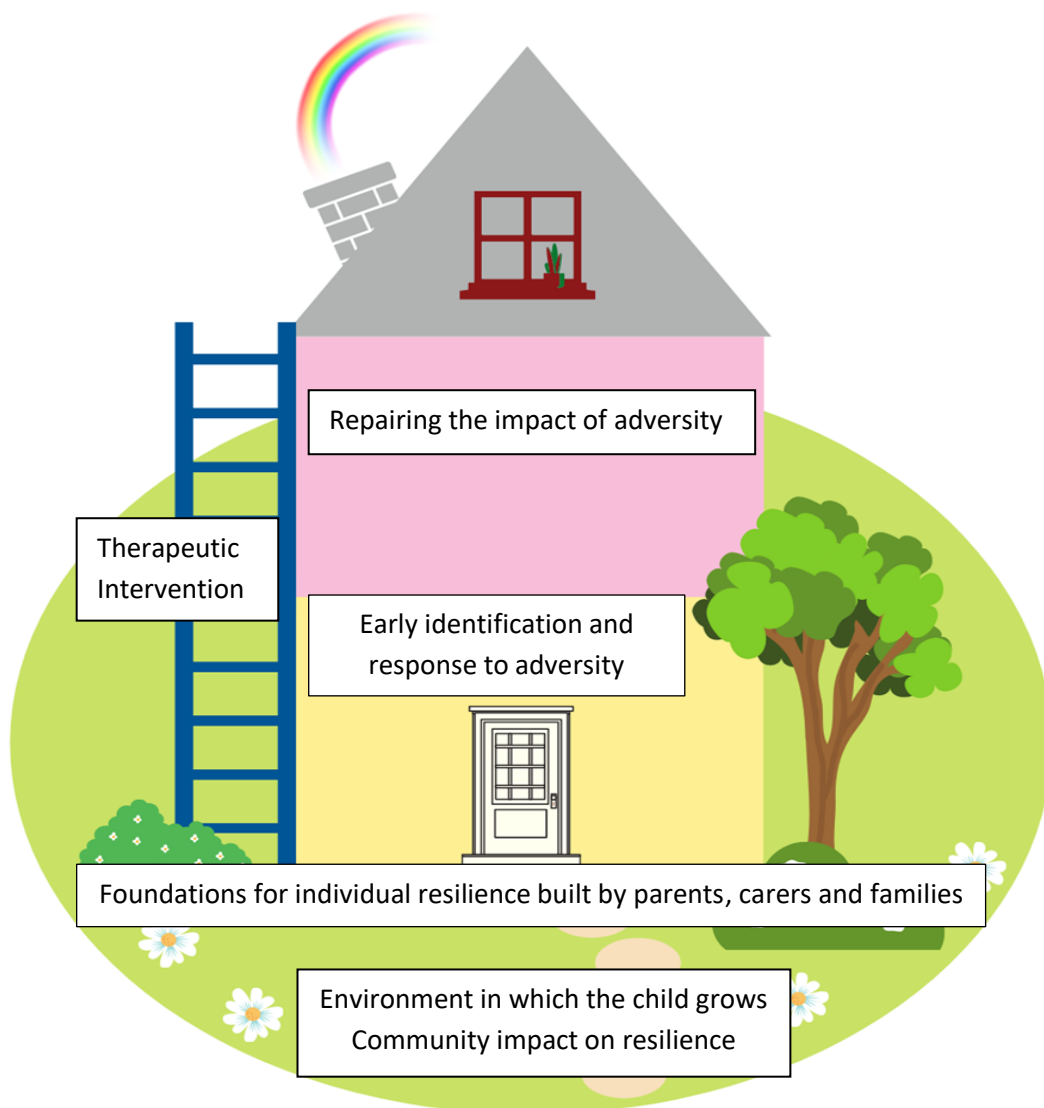
## Caring about Adversity, Resilience and Empowerment (CARE) Northumberland

'CARE Northumberland' is a multi-agency strategy across both children and adult services to reduce children's experience of adversity and minimise the impact of ACEs on the health and wellbeing of both children and adults.

This learning framework is a key element of the CARE Northumberland strategy, focusing specifically on how we provide consistent communication and training for everyone involved in children's lives – including children themselves.

The 'House of CARE' provides a visual metaphor for our approach to:

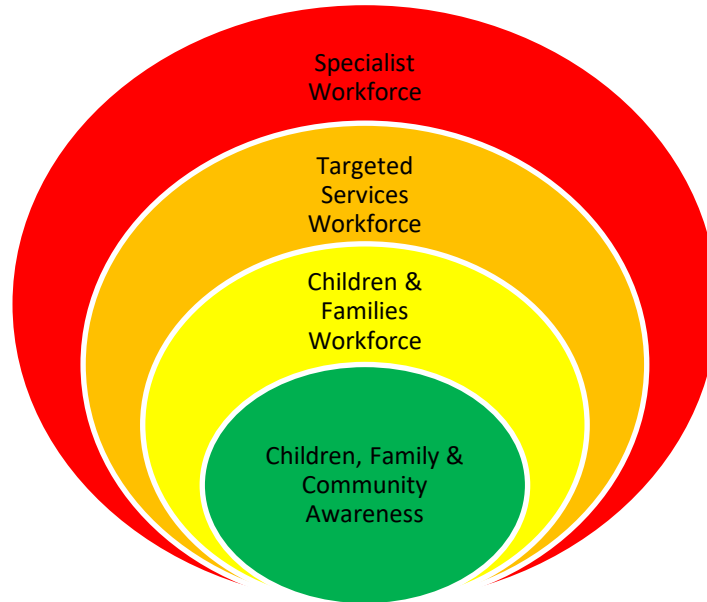
- promote and build resilience provided by communities and families
- provide appropriate support at times of distress or adversity
- support recovery and repair when adversity or trauma have impacted negatively
- ensure appropriate therapeutic intervention when 'scaffolding' is required at specific times



Northumberland’s learning framework therefore incorporates our aspiration to provide:

- **families and communities** with an awareness of the potential factors relating to, and the possible impact of adversity, coupled with clear, supportive communication of how to support children coping with adversity and actively promote their resilience
- **professionals and services** with the knowledge and skills appropriate to their role to recognise and respond to children and adults who have experienced adversity or trauma.

The Northumberland learning framework is structured as follows:



## Definitions

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| <p><b>Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)</b></p> | <p>This is a group of traumatic and adverse experiences in childhood which significant research has suggested can lead to increased risk of long-term impacts on physical and mental health as well as social consequences for some, particularly when several of these experiences are part of someone’s early life.</p> <p>ACEs include: physical, emotional and sexual abuse; physical and emotional neglect; parental/key carers’ substance misuse, mental health difficulties or incarceration; witnessing domestic abuse or violence in the household and divorce. They include experiences traditionally understood as traumatic, but extend to include these additional experiences of adversity</p> |
| <p><b>Attachment</b></p>                           | <p>“An affectional bond between two individuals that endures through time and space and serves to join them emotionally” (Klaus &amp; Kennell)</p>   |
| <p><b>Resilience</b></p>                           | <p>A child is resilient when they “bounce back after enduring adversity, continue to function reasonably well despite continued exposure to risk.” (Gilligan)</p> <p>“Normal development under difficult conditions” (Fonagy)</p>  |
| <p><b>Trauma</b></p>                               | <p>Overwhelming, uncontrollable experiences which have a psychological impact by creating feelings of helplessness, vulnerability, loss of safety and loss of control</p>  |

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|  | <p>“An event, a series of events or a set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening.” (SAMHSA)</p> <p>Single event trauma: sudden and unexpected events experienced as isolated incidents, such as road traffic accidents, rapes or terrorist attacks. These can happen in childhood or adulthood.</p> <p>Complex trauma: repeated or ongoing traumatic events, such as generally happens in abusive relationship, exploitation or long term neglect.</p> |
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**Trauma-Informed: Resilience Focused Learning Framework**

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| <p><b>Children, Family and Community Awareness</b></p> <p><b>Knowledge which can support children, young people, parents and their community networks to make informed choices about well-being and relationships</b></p> |
| Recognise what children need to have the best chance of optimum development   |
| Identify those adverse life experiences and situations which might have a negative impact on emotional well-being and development   |
| Recognise strategies for appropriately supporting children or families experiencing adversity or trauma in order to minimise negative impact  |
| Recognise the factors which define healthy relationships  |
| Recognise the importance of personal and community resilience in addressing the impact of adversity for children and adults   |
| Recognise the importance of positive role models within and outside the family  |
| Recognise the importance of participation in positive activities  |
| Identify situations which require advice from, or referral to targeted or specialist services   |
| Identify strategies for developing their own personal resilience  |

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| <p><b>Children and Families Workforce – Universal Services</b></p> <p><b>Knowledge and skills required for workers with direct and frequent contact with people who may be affected by ACEs or trauma</b></p> <p><b>All of the above, plus:</b></p> |
| Recognise the widespread occurrence of adverse childhood experiences and the nature of trauma   |
| Identify the different ways in which experience of adversity or trauma can affect development (cognitive, emotional and behavioural)  |
| Establish consistent and professional relationships that build trust and prioritise safety  |
| Maximise choice, collaboration and empowerment when working with children and adults  |
| Discuss difficulties and challenges with empathy and without criticism or blame   |
| Recognise and apply the underpinning principles of trauma-informed practice   |
| Recognise that people who have experienced trauma may experience re-traumatisation in certain situations  |
| Recognise how to actively promote and develop resilience in children and young people   |

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| Seek advice from, or make timely and appropriate referrals to targeted or specialist services   |
| Liaise effectively with services to support targeted or specialist intervention   |
| Reflect on their own professional practice to identify areas for adaptation or development  |
| Recognise behaviour as a form of communication and hold in mind that a person's behaviour may be trauma-related   |
| Communicate effectively with children and families about adversity and resilience in a way which educates and empowers them to make informed choices and decisions    |
| Enable children to communicate their thoughts, feelings and views in a range of ways, particularly when working with children who find verbal communication difficult |
| Maximise opportunities for children and parents to have choice and control in their engagement with services  |
| Identify healthy self-care strategies when dealing with children or adults who have experienced adversity or trauma   |

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| <b>Targeted Services Workforce</b>   |
| <b>Knowledge and skills required for workers who provide a service for children and families experiencing difficulties which <i>may</i> be linked to negative impact of ACEs or trauma</b> |
| <b>All of the above, plus:</b>   |
| Recognise and understand how the impact of adversity and trauma may be influencing current behaviour, distress or difficulties   |
| Identify the safety needs of people affected by adversity/trauma (and their dependents) at the earliest possible opportunity so that they can be protected from further harm.              |
| Recognise, optimise and support the development of individual strengths, skills and resources to support natural recovery following adversity/trauma.                                      |
| Identify referral pathways for people affected by trauma to access timely care, support and treatment from specialist services where appropriate   |
| Establish a consistent and respectful working relationship to set the conditions for safe disclosure of current or past trauma and abuse   |
| Plan and deliver interventions to support the development of self-awareness, self-efficacy and resilience  |
| Support people affected by trauma to engage in and maintain safe, sustaining and supportive relationships and social networks  |
| Support people affected by adversity/trauma to identify and move towards goals and participate in roles that are culturally relevant and personally valued                                 |
| Support people affected by trauma to address missed developmental opportunities  |
| Actively seek and promote the voice of the child with family members and professionals to support shared understanding of their lived experience and current difficulties                  |
| Use interactive tools and techniques to engage in communication with children  |
| Liaise effectively with other professionals to ensure shared understanding of the impact of adversity/trauma on the individual across all services working with the child/family           |
| Create focused action plans with children/parents and partner organisations to address impact of adversity and promote resilience  |
| Identify sources of family and community support to promote recovery and resilience  |
| Use professional supervision for reflection and guidance on specific situations  |

## Specialist Workforce

**Knowledge and skills required for workers who are providing a service to people whose experience of ACEs / trauma is currently having a significant and detrimental impact on their life (or that of their dependents). This includes those with particular responsibility for supporting children who are looked after by the local authority.**

### **All of the above, plus:**

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| Assess and analyse the current and potential future impact of adversity and trauma on the individual  |
| Communicate effectively with parents about the risks related to children's exposure to adversity/trauma   |
| Provide advice and support to workers in community, universal and targeted services working with the impact of adversity/trauma                         |
| Develop and implement care plans addressing the impact of adversity/trauma  |
| Make recommendations about care needs and care arrangements for children who have previously experienced or are currently experiencing adversity/trauma |
| Support the child to develop an age-appropriate understanding of their lived experience (eg life story work, words and pictures)                        |
| Ensure appropriate step-down arrangements   |

## The Role of Managers

Managers at all levels are key in ensuring that workers have the necessary knowledge and skills of adversity, trauma and resilience for their specific job role and the work of the service. They are also responsible for providing a safe and supportive working environment in which workers are provided with opportunities for advice, peer support, reflective supervision and learning.

## Managers

**Knowledge and skills required for managers supervising and supporting staff (paid and voluntary) who are providing a service for people affected by ACEs / trauma.**

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| Sound knowledge and understanding of <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the impact of early adversity and trauma</li><li>• symptomatic behaviours of adversity and trauma</li><li>• principles and practice of a trauma-informed approach</li><li>• strategies for building resilience in children and families</li></ul> |
| Develop and embed evidence-based policy and practice (including supervision) to ensure workers responding to adversity or trauma are well supported by colleagues and managers   |
| Challenge professional judgements and practice to ensure they take into account the possible impact of trauma on service user behaviour  |
| Recognise and respond to risk of workers experiencing vicarious trauma   |
| Ensure the needs of workers who are directly exposed to traumatic events are recognised and addressed in the workplace   |
| Promote and maintain a learning culture in the team / service specifically relating to adversity, trauma and resilience  |

## The Role of Organisations

Managers and staff provide services in line with the prevailing culture and ethos of their organisation. For resilience-focused, trauma-informed practice to be embedded as the underpinning approach to their work, staff at all levels need to be supported by governance arrangements and strategic thinking which promote

the approach across all aspects of organisational life. This includes embedding the approach in policies and procedures for staff (paid and voluntary) as well as using it as a model for direct work with service users. Recognition of vicarious trauma and proactive mechanisms to reduce risk and address incidence of it, are key elements of creating a safe and supportive working environment for staff engaged in working with the impact of adversity.

### **Theory into Practice – The Challenge**

Significant developments in neuro-science have increased our knowledge of brain development in childhood and adolescence. This research has informed our understanding of and response to the impact of adversity and trauma on the developing brain and the lifelong effect this can have on physical and mental health.



It is possible to look at a tree that has grown in adverse conditions and see the effect of the prevailing wind on its shape and structure. Similarly we can see from children’s presentation, the way their emotional environment and the nature of their care has influenced the shape and structure of their brain – and therefore their behavioural responses. Building new, healthier brain connections takes time and perseverance.

Where children have been exposed to severe or chronic adversity or trauma, relationships are a key factor in promoting recovery and resilience, but establishing and maintaining relationships and developing trust may be one of the things they find most difficult.

“All children need relationships to thrive; traumatised children need relationships to heal”

“If relationships are where things developmental can go wrong, then relationships are where they are most likely to be put right”

Traumatised children are “likely to be fearful of relationships or believe they don’t deserve them”

“Every relationship has the power to confirm or challenge what has gone before”

Dan Hughes

This is a real challenge for family, community and professional support networks but it also provides the evidence base for ensuring that we surround children with families, communities and professionals who have the skills and knowledge to build positive, healthy relationships with them. Getting these relationships right is the most effective way to grow resilient children who will develop into resilient adults in Northumberland.

Anne Lambert (Learning and Development Coordinator) July 2021

