



Llamau

**THE IMPACT OF
ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES
ON YOUNG PEOPLE SUPPORTED
BY LLAMAU
IN THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN**

Llamau



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1. Introduction

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are an increasing international concern. There is a growing body of evidence that our experiences during childhood can affect health throughout the life course.¹

There is rising concern across Wales on the impact of Adult Childhood Experiences (ACEs) on the Welsh population. The Vale of Glamorgan's Supporting People Team has commissioned Llamau to look at the prevalence of ACEs in young people supported in the Vale of Glamorgan under Supporting People Programme Grant Funding. The Vale of Glamorgan's interest in ACEs followed the publication of research conducted by Professor Mark Bellis, Director of Policy, Research and International Development for Public Health Wales.¹

Professor Bellis has said of his report, *"So many of the health problems we see in adults have their roots in childhood. The report shows that providing safe and nurturing environments for every child in Wales is the best way to ensure we raise healthier and happier adults who contribute to their communities and the economy."* He went on to say, *"We urge anyone with an interest in improving the health of the Welsh population to take note of what this study tells us and identify the steps they can take to give every child in Wales the best start in life."*²

To professionals working with vulnerable people, the impact of past experiences on a person is not a surprise, the difference now is the recognition this is having on public services across Wales, following the release of Professor Bellis' report, highlighting the high level of ACEs in the adult population in Wales and the impact on health and other areas.

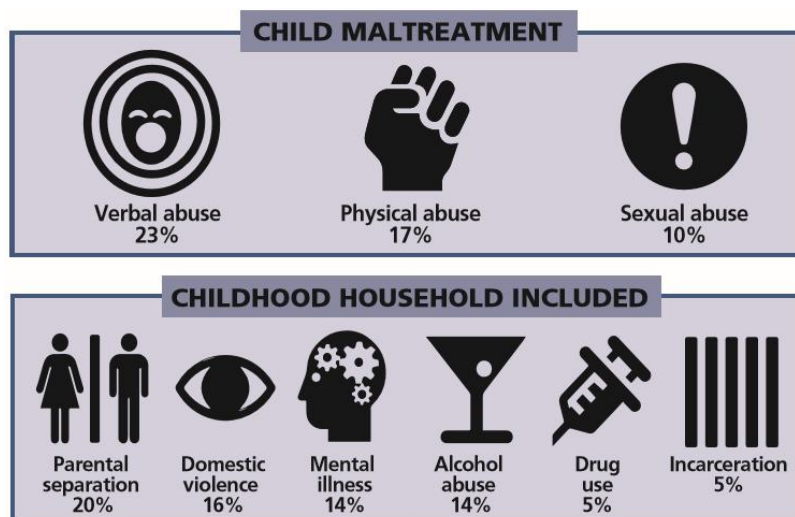
This report will identify the levels of ACEs amongst young people supported by Llamau in 2016/17. We will look at case studies and how Llamau's own support methodology is able to support some of the most vulnerable young people in the Vale of Glamorgan.

¹ Adverse Childhood Experiences and their impact on health-harming behaviours in the Welsh adult population. Bellis et al. 2015

² Public Health Wales press release

There are nine ACEs recognised in the Public Health Wales report. Three are grouped under Child Maltreatment: Verbal Abuse, Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse. The remaining six are categorised under Childhood Household Included: Parental Separation, Domestic Violence, Mental Illness, Alcohol Abuse, Drug Use, Incarceration.

Adverse Childhood Experiences have been categorised in the following infographic designed by Public Health Wales.¹



Within the Vale of Glamorgan 14% of local areas are among the most deprived in Wales, clustered in the central Vale around Barry, but there are also significant pockets in the Western Vale too. It is important to note that the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences on life chances with high levels of harmful behaviours is concentrated in the most deprived areas³.

Llamau are saving my life right now.

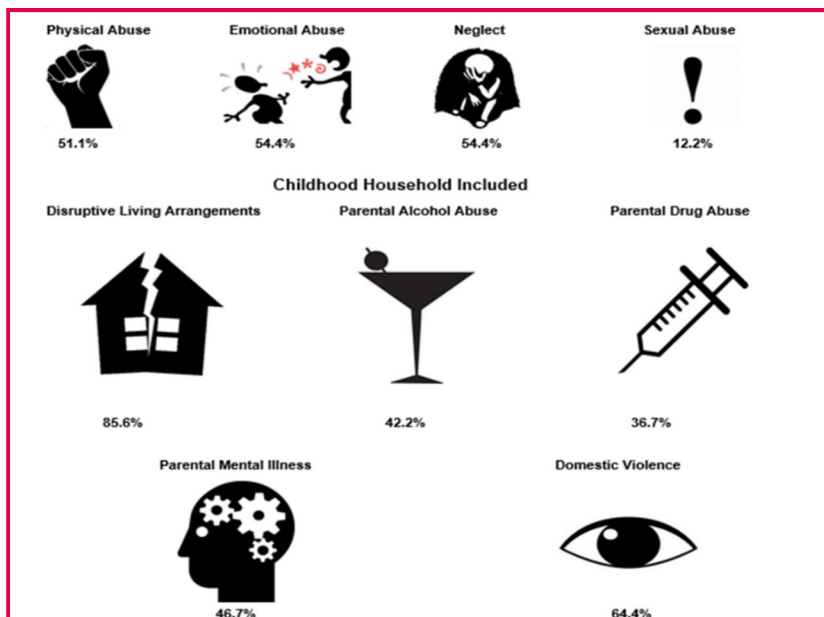
As stubborn as I can be or as difficult it is to believe in myself again, they are helping me step by step to regain my structure & routine in life, confidence, faith and belief in myself as I'm overcoming psychosis and depression.

I would probably be on the street again or back on hard drugs if they didn't believe in me.

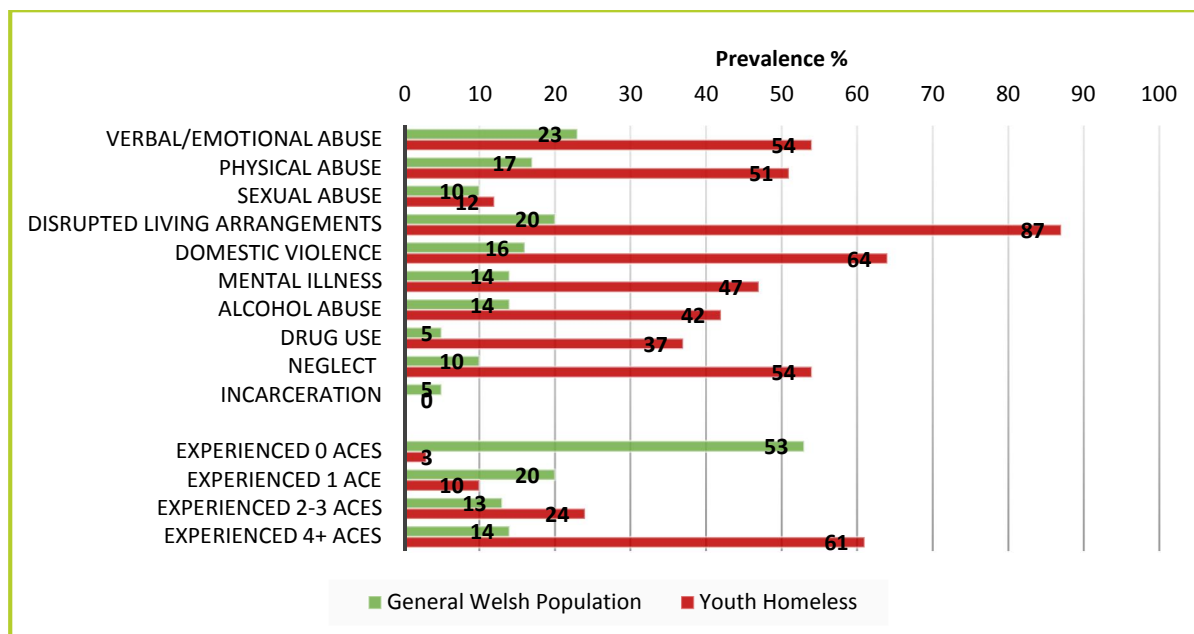
³ Cardiff & Vale Population Needs Assessment 2017

2. Background

In 2015, Llamau published the results of its three-year project with Cardiff University, the 'Study of the Experiences of Young Homeless People (SEYHoPe)⁴. The study highlighted high levels of traumatic childhood experiences, poor school attendance, poor physical health and extremely high levels of multiple mental illness. In January 2017, final year students from Cardiff University's Psychology Department relooked at the data and analysed it against Professor Bellis' research. The findings are shown below.



The students also compared the data against the general population in Wales:



⁴ <http://www.llamau.org.uk/seyhope-study-of-experiences-of-young-homeless-people/>

Llamau has been providing a range of services for young people in the Vale of Glamorgan for over 30 years. These services work with the most vulnerable and marginalised young people in the county and include services that support young people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, Looked After young people and care leavers, young people who have been involved with the criminal justice system and young people who are not in education, training or employment. In 2016/17, Llamau worked with 987 young people in the Vale of Glamorgan. This can be broken down as follows:

Project	Numbers supported
24 hr supported accommodation (Ty Newydd; Ty'r Fro; Ty John Rowley)	35
Floating Support – Tom Holmes	49 (51*)
Tenancy Support – TESS 6 & 7	23 (26**)
Mediation	84
Advice	749
Learning 4 Life	14
Vale Supported Lodgings	33

*Of the 51, 2 were also supported in other projects

**Of the 26, 3 were also supported in other projects







In my time of need, Llamau were totally there for me. I feel cared for.

3. Methodology

This report will concentrate on Llamau projects receiving Supporting People Programme Grant Funding in the Vale of Glamorgan: Llamau's 24 hour supported accommodation services and Floating Support - Tom Holmes and TESS 6&7.

In order to look at the level of Adverse Childhood Experiences in young people supported by Llamau in the Vale of Glamorgan we used the following data:

-  Statistical information from Llamau's electronic database DEMON
-  Information from young people's support files
-  Discussion with support workers
-  Case studies

We decided to look at all young people under 25 years of age supported by Llamau in the Vale of Glamorgan during the period 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017. During this period, Llamau worked with 107 individual young people under 25.

We split the data into young people's supported housing projects, Tom Holmes Floating Support and TESS 6&7. One third of the young people were Looked After young people. In the supported housing projects, 51% were Looked After. One fifth of all young people supported in the Vale had dependent children and a further 5% had children who had been placed into care.

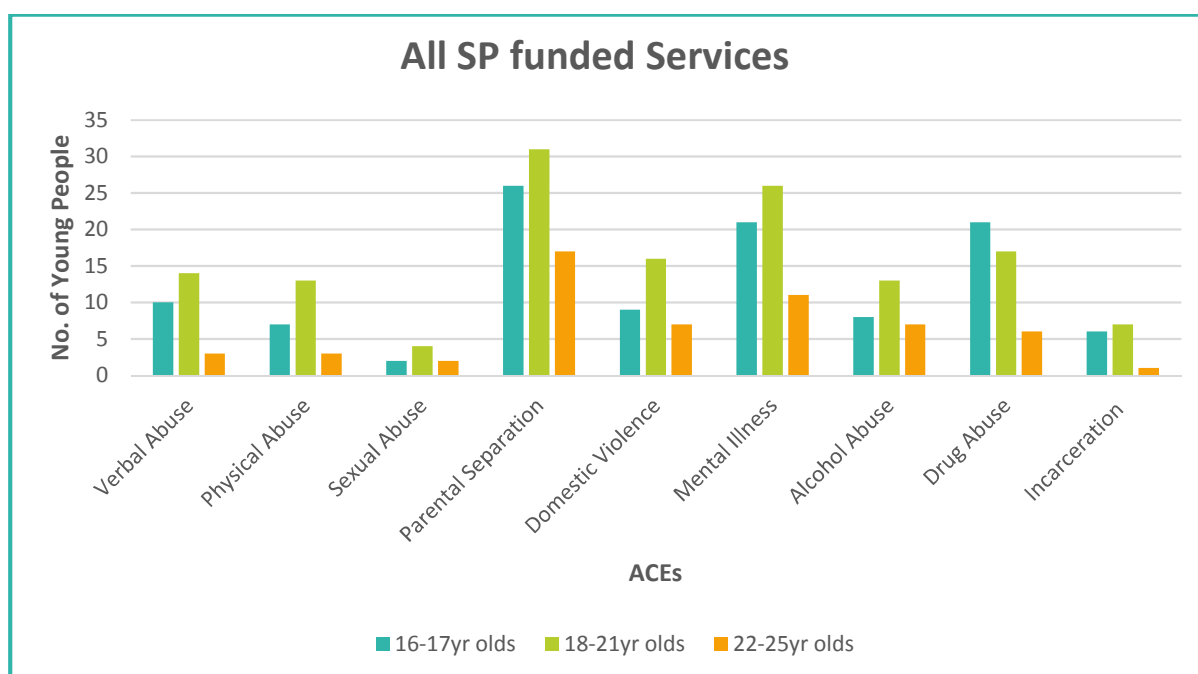
Over 50% of young people in Vale 24hr supported housing projects had been in care

4. Findings

Almost 97% of young people had experienced at least 1 ACE

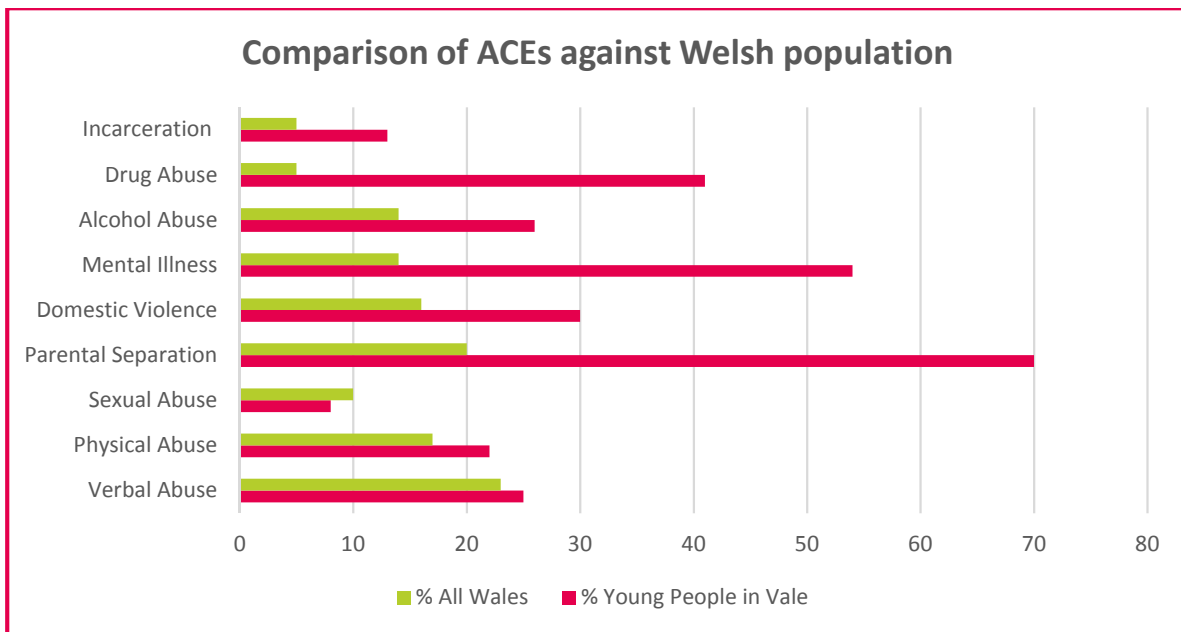
Of the 107 young people under 25 supported by Llamau during 2016/17, 96.3% had experienced one or more ACE, compared to 47% of the Welsh population⁵.

The following graph shows the number of Adverse Childhood Experience by age and category across all of Llamau's Supporting People funded services in the Vale of Glamorgan. Parental Separation was the highest scoring ACE, closely followed by Mental Illness and Drug Abuse.

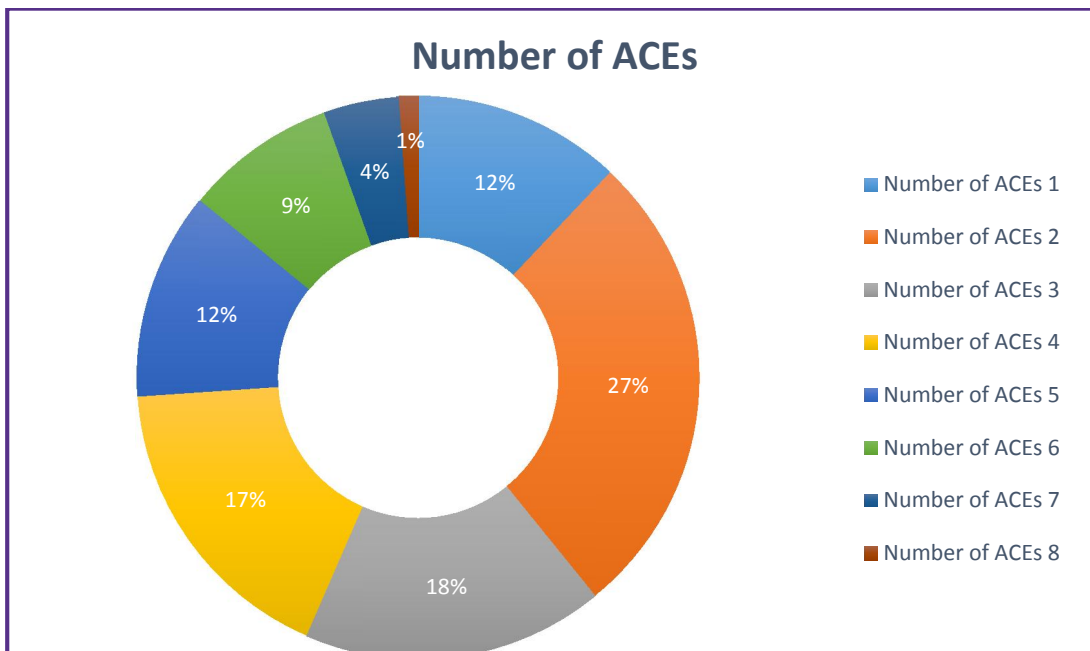


The following graph compares the number of ACEs experienced by young people supported in the Vale of Glamorgan with Welsh population overall. The only ACE where the Welsh population scores higher is Sexual Abuse. It is possible that for young people in the Vale, this has only been recorded for those young people who have raised it as a support issue. Sexual Abuse is recorded and entered as a support need at exit from Llamau, but again only if this has been raised by the young person as an area they would like support.

⁵ Adverse Childhood Experiences and their impact on health-harming behaviours in the Welsh adult population. Bellis et al. 2015



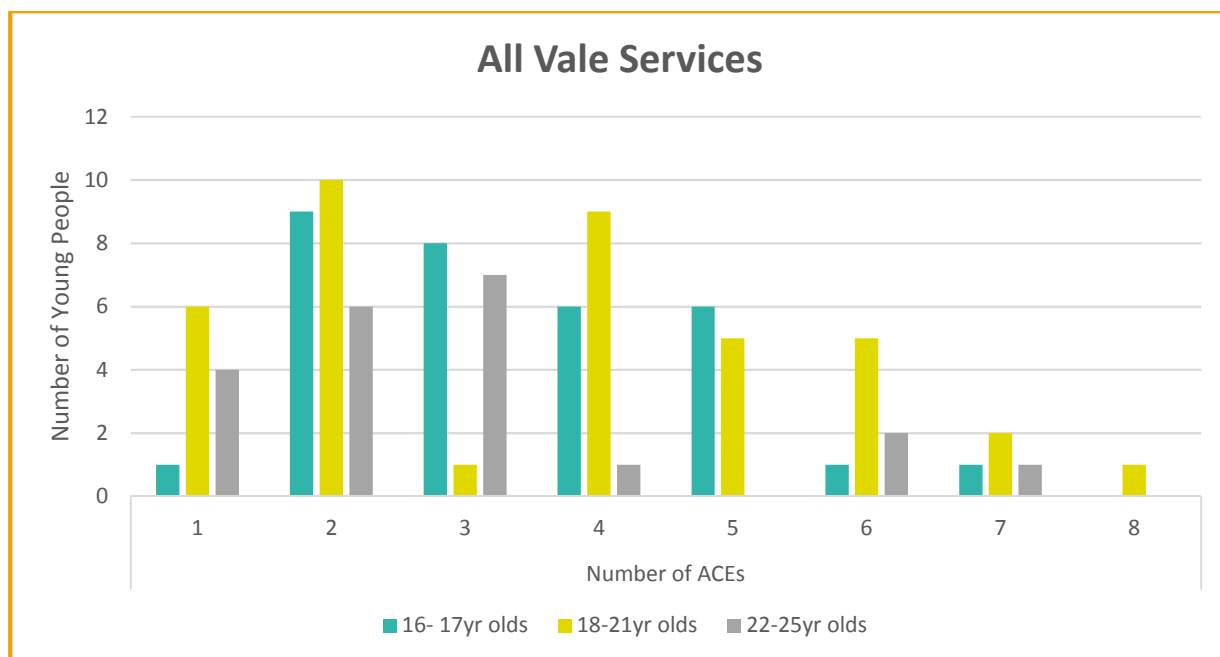
Many of the young people supported have been exposed to more than one Adverse Childhood Experience, with one young person experiencing a staggering 8 ACEs. Nearly two thirds of young people supported by Llamau had experienced 3 or more ACEs compared to just 13% of the Welsh population. Over 40% of young people had experienced 4 or more ACEs compared to 14% of the Welsh population.⁶ The following graph shows the number of ACEs experienced overall by young people.



One young person had experienced 8 ACEs

⁶ Adverse Childhood Experiences and their impact on health-harming behaviours in the Welsh adult population. Bellis et al. 2015

The following graph shows the number of ACEs experienced by age group. This has been broken down into 16 and 17 year olds, 18 to 21 year olds and 22 to 25 year olds.

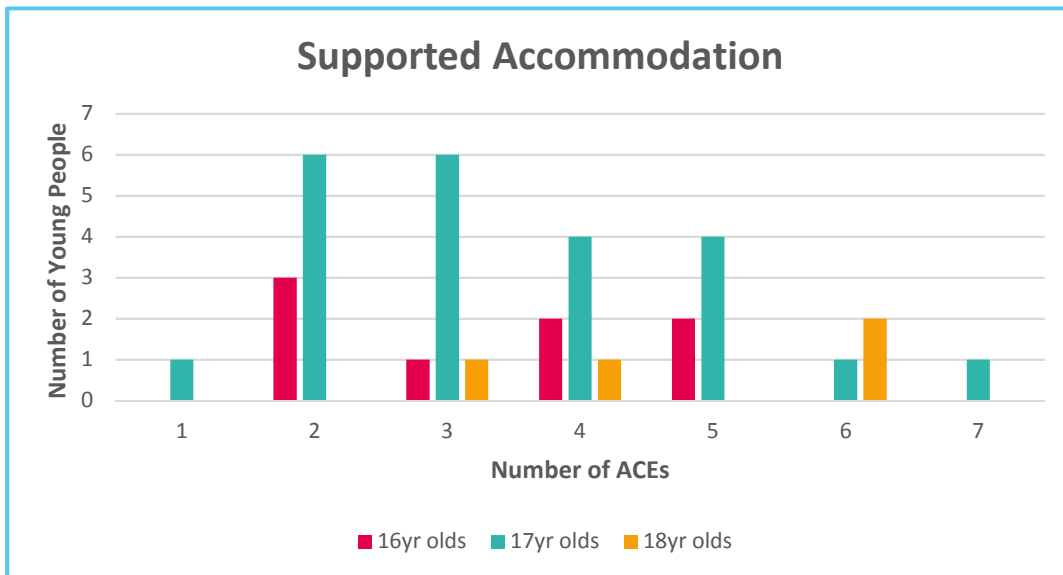


Many of the 16-18 year olds supported by Llamau in the Vale live in 24hr supported housing projects. The graph below shows the number of ACEs experienced by these young people. All young people experienced at least one ACE - 3% experienced only 1 ACE, compared to 20% of the Welsh population⁷. Nearly 50% of young people in the Vale experienced 2-3 ACEs compared to 13% of the Welsh population, with a shocking 49% of young people in the Vale experiencing 4 or more ACEs against just 14% of the Welsh population. These figures highlight the huge and complex support issues faced by vulnerable young people in the Vale of Glamorgan and the importance of intensive supported accommodation to help them to address these issues.




49% of young people in the Vale experienced 4+ ACEs

**I was suicidal when support started.
I'm now able to understand and manage my mental health better.**

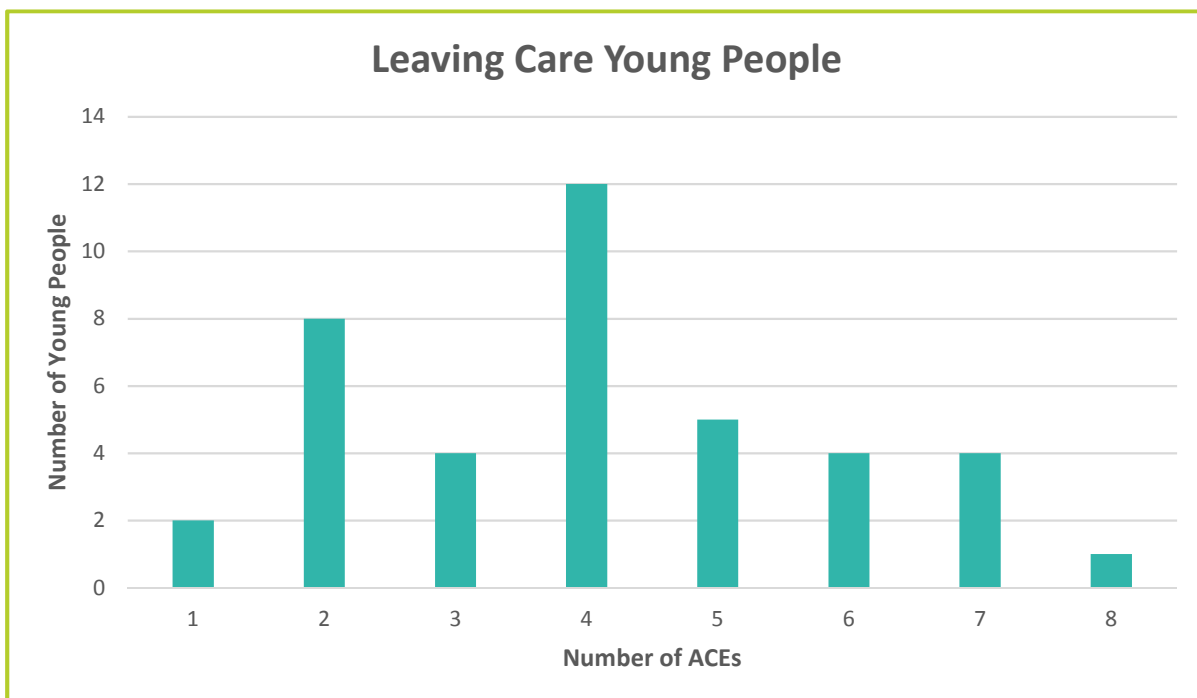
⁷ Adverse Childhood Experiences and their impact on health-harming behaviours in the Welsh adult population. Bellis et al. 2015



In 2016, the Gwent Regional Consultative Committee undertook an ACEs mapping exercise of those receiving support from the Supporting People Programme and the number of ACEs, if known, by their support worker. This snapshot found:

-  16% had 4 or more ACEs
-  63% of Care Leavers had 4 or more ACEs
-  29% of those working with the Youth Offending Team had 4 or more ACEs

In the Vale of Glamorgan 70% of Care Leavers had 4 or more ACEs



5. Interventions

Llamau's comprehensive support methodology has been specifically adapted to work with people who have experienced complex and traumatic events i.e. Adverse Childhood Experiences. Llamau takes a whole-organisation psychologically and trauma informed approach. We embed this approach into our support methodology, training, policies, ethos & values (We Respect; We Listen; We Encourage; We Learn and We Don't Give Up). We design our services around the emotional & psychological needs of people we support and have recognised key principles to properly support people who have endured numerous Adult Childhood Experiences and have complex and multiple support needs. These are:

On your side: Having someone there who never gives up on you and never give in. We build constant positive and trusting relationships and believe in the people we support.

Assertive and Persistent: We respect and believe in the people we are privileged to work alongside and don't give up on them.

Personalised: An approach, which addresses all of the person's needs, it must also be culturally and gender sensitive.

Strengths acknowledged: Too often people see the 'issues' and the 'problems' and do not see the person or the strengths and tenacity that has been required to endure what has happened.

Co-ordinated: We ensure there is full connectivity to the other services that a person will need, or who are already engaged with them.

Flexible and responsive: Services that are flexible to adapt and respond to the needs of the person requiring support.

We CAN fail: If we cannot engage, or if we cannot achieve what we need to, we have to find an alternative and learn from that.

Trauma informed: Understanding the effects and consequences of Adverse Childhood Experiences and other life experiences. We must also ensure that our support does not exacerbate this and that we take care of those providing support.

Co-Production: The vast majority of our services have been developed because the people we support say this is what they need and want, and this is how they would like it to work.

Strategic: The services need to both fit with current needs of the people we are supporting and with the needs of commissioners.

Our support methodology is based on a humanist approach, helping build resilience. We use the principles of metacognition, desistance and reflective practice in our support to achieve the best outcomes for the people we support. We achieve this through:

- 🏠 Ensuring the person has a supportive relationship with a worker *who believes they can change*
- 🏠 Building on the person's strengths, and helping them to construct their preferred self (so helping them to build hope)...and realise their future (through achieving goals)
- 🏠 Helping them learn to overcome obstacles and meeting their (real) needs
- 🏠 And helping facilitate their integration into society on all levels

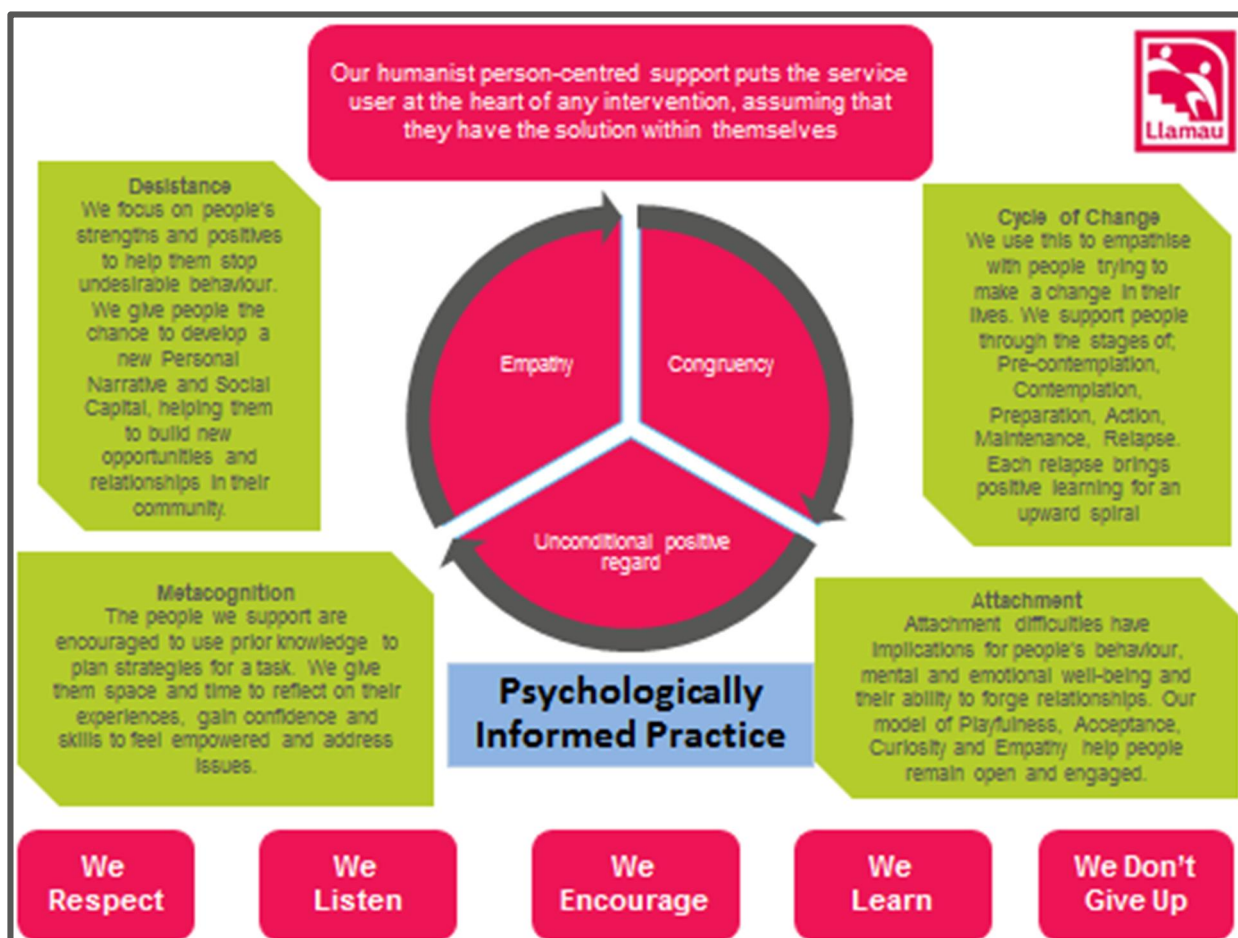
Llamau's ongoing research partnership with Cardiff University's Psychology Department continues. Our most recent PhD student is about to finish her work on Higher Thinking Skills in Homeless Young People. This research has found that many young people who have experienced homelessness appear to have difficulties in many areas of higher thinking, including shifting/flexibility; working memory; impulsivity/risky decision making; selective attention/inhibition and planning. This research is already informing the way we deliver support and helping support workers to understand the poverty of thought⁸ experienced by the people we support and how best to address this.



Llamau has helped me make better life choices and helped me get back in to education.

⁸ Mullainathan, S., & Shafir, E. (2013). *Scarcity: The True Cost of Not Having Enough*. London, UK: Penguin Books Ltd

Llamau's Support Methodology:



Alongside this, Llamau's Mental Health Specialist Workers provide specialist mental health training, bespoke support to frontline workers and workshops to the people they are supporting to better understand their mental health and emotional wellbeing. Our mental health training and our Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Questionnaire has been informed by our research with Cardiff University's Psychology Department.⁹ Our ongoing relationship continues to inform Llamau's support methodology and operational practice. Our joint research into the Higher Thinking Skills in Homeless Young People is about to conclude and we are about to begin a three year research study into Trauma and Psychologically Informed Environments for homeless young people and vulnerable women.

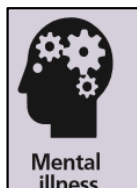
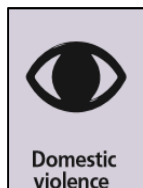
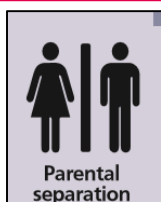
⁹ <http://www.llamau.org.uk/seyhope-study-of-experiences-of-young-homeless-people/>

6. Case Studies

The following case studies give an indication of the complex support needs of young people supported by Llamau. All of the young people featured have experienced numerous ACEs as detailed below. *Names have been changed to protect identities.

CLARE*

Clare presented with **5 ACEs**:



Clare was 22 when she was referred to Llamau's services in the Vale. Clare's parents had significant substance misuse issues and Clare had witnessed ongoing domestic violence in the family home. Clare herself was involved in a violent relationship and had a child with that partner. She was living in temporary accommodation when support began. Clare had a history of mental health issues. Her support worker used Llamau's Mental Health and Wellbeing Questionnaire to help her access Tier 2 mental health support through her GP and encouraged her to go to counselling. Her support worker worked with her on a number of issues, including healthy relationships, positive parenting skills, accessing a community arts and crafts course.

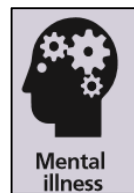
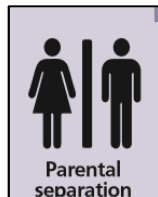
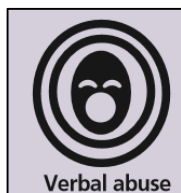
When Clare was offered her own flat, her support worker supported her in preparing for the move. This included understanding her rights and responsibilities as a tenant, applying for housing benefit and budgeting support. She also supported Clare in writing a CV so she could supplement her income and encouraged her to apply for part time work, which she got.

Clare was desperate to find out about her birth parents and her support worker supported her to access her file from the adoption agency.

While in her new flat, Clare met her new partner and had a second child. After the baby's birth, Clare suffered from Post Natal Depression but was supported through this by her support worker, Health Visitor and GP. Her support worker and health visitor worked together to ensure Clare had the support she needed. As Clare's mental health improved, support was tapered and Clare continues to live with her partner and children without support.

JESS*

Jess has experienced **5 ACEs**:



Jess first became known to Llamau at 16 when she came to Llamau's Young Persons Advice Service @236 Holton Road. She told staff she had run away from her Mum's in England, where she said her stepfather had sexually abused her. Jess was very distressed and was sofa surfing in Barry. Most recently, she had been staying with a family member with a history of alcohol abuse and had been verbally threatened by them.

She was referred to one of Llamau's 24hr supported housing projects and a referral was made to Children's Services. Jess' support worker was concerned about her mental health and completed the Llamau Mental Health and Wellbeing Questionnaire with her, indicating that Jess may be suffering from anxiety and depression. Jess also told her support worker that she had previously had suicidal thoughts. Jess was encouraged to get fit and her support worker supported her to access exercise classes in the local leisure centre, which in turn helped her improve her emotional wellbeing and mental health. Jess was also supported to engage in Llamau's Learning 4 Life project to help her access work, training or education. Jess successfully completed a number of City and Guild qualifications, including Employability, ICT and Numeracy.

Jess decided to make a complaint to the Police about the abuse from her stepfather and was supported through this by her support worker, however the CPS did not take it to court as they said there was a lack of evidence. This had a devastating effect on Jess and her mental health deteriorated. Her support worker helped Jess to access counselling support and encouraged her to apply for jobs when her mental health began to improve. She was also supported by Llamau's Specialist Mental Health Worker to learn how to better understand and manage her mental health – he gave her tips to identify when she was beginning to become more anxious and depressed and taught her strategies to better manage how she felt.

Jess got a job and was able to move into her own flat after successfully bidding for her own flat with Homes4U. Jess's support worker helped her to put together a budgeting plan so she could pay her rent and bills while working. Jess was able

to continue to have tapered support outside of her working hours in order until she felt better able to manage her accommodation on her own.

Shaun*

Shaun has experienced **4 ACES**:



Shaun was adopted at a young age, having been taken into care following abandonment and neglect issues. The relationship with his adopted family broke down in his teenage years.

At 17, Shaun was referred to one of Llamau's 24hr supported housing projects. He had already been evicted from two other non-Llamau services due to violence and aggression and vandalism, where he had been charged with criminal damage. As a result, Shaun was involved with the Youth Offending Service and was deemed medium to high risk on referral.

Shaun initially struggled to settle into his Llamau accommodation. He was aggressive to staff, very challenging at times and was a heavy user of cannabis and alcohol. It was clear a psychologically informed approach was needed to support Shaun, taking account of the multiple traumas he had faced as a child – separation from his birth mother and more recently from his adoptive family.

Shaun had a number of statutory agencies working with him and Llamau facilitated a multi-agency approach to ensure everyone worked together. At this point, Shaun began to withdraw and although all agencies were concerned about his mental health, he refused to go to any medical appointments. With his support worker and support from Llamau's specialist mental health worker, we encouraged him to complete our Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Questionnaire, which indicated that he had anxiety and depression. Llamau's mental health worker supported him with techniques to better understand his mood.

His relationship with his girlfriend broke down and his anger increased. Shaun was involved in an assault, which resulted in him being placed on a tag, and given a curfew. This exacerbated his anger and he felt 'shut in'. Recognising this, his support worker encouraged him to take up sport. This included support to

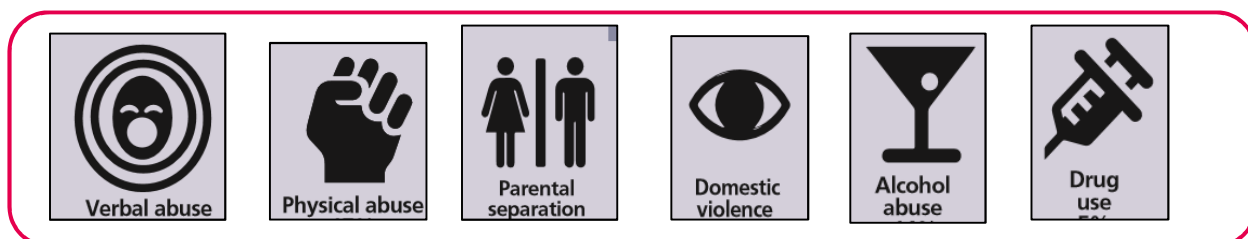
attend a weekly football team and exercising with his support worker until he felt ready to do attend fitness classes on his own.

Eventually, Shaun began to open up to staff, saying he was desperate to trace his birth family, which his support worker helped him to do, through the adoption agency. Meeting his father caused further issues as his father had numerous support needs himself, but his Llamau support worker continued to support him through this difficult time. Anger management issues began to resurface and Police became involved again when he was found in possession of a weapon. A search of his room found more weapons and Shaun was charged by the Police and became involved with the Probation Service. Rather than serve Shaun an eviction notice, we continued to work with him to understand how his behaviour was risking not only his tenancy but also his liberty. Shaun was encouraged to re-engage in exercise and re-join the football team and this time things began to click for him.

Shaun now regularly attends mental health appointments, has moved into his own flat, is doing well, and is engaging in training. Shaun himself admits that it has taken a long time and that if Llamau had not stood by him and supported him through many difficult times he would now be in prison.

Adam*

Adam has experienced **6 ACEs**:



Adam had grown up in an abusive family and regularly witnessed domestic violence. As a result, his grandparents assumed parental responsibility when he was in his early teens. In his teenage years, he moved between his grandparent's home and his mother's numerous times. This unsettled home life was exacerbated by conflict between his mother and grandparents. During a short stay at his mum's he alleged he was verbally and physically assaulted by her new partner. Adam was 17 when Children's Services referred him to one of Llamau's 24 hour supported housing projects, following previous placements in short term fostering and supported lodgings.

Adam struggled to settle in our project and his behaviour had begun to threaten his tenancy, including lighting small fires, being aggressive to other tenants and increasing cannabis and alcohol use. Despite this, Llamau support methodology enables the support team to understand the trauma Adam has faced during his childhood and teenage years. His support worker encouraged him to undertake a Fire Safety module, with Llamau's Learning 4 Life project, to understand the potential consequences of his behaviour. Llamau's mediation worker also worked with Adam to rebuild his relationship with his grandparents, who have always tried to support him.

Adam's behaviour began to improve and he accepted support around budgeting and independent living skills. Adam was supported to continue to attend Learning 4 Life and eventually moved on to a college course. His support worker encouraged him to bid for his own flat, which he gets and is now managing well with low level tenancy support and ongoing support from his grandparents.

Previously in my foster placement, I felt depressed and not supported - as was not accepted for who I am and the foster parents wanted me to be like their children. Llamau have given me more freedom and trust to make my own decisions.









7. Conclusion

Forty three percent of the young people supported in the Vale of Glamorgan by Llamau in Supporting People funded services last year had been exposed to **four** or more Adverse Childhood Experience, with all bar one young person experiencing at least one ACEs. A quarter of young people had experienced five or more ACEs.

These shocking figures highlight the complexity of support needs young people are struggling to cope with.

It is clear that Llamau's Supporting People services are helping to lessen the impact of these ACEs and this tailored support is enabling young people to move forward positively with their lives. Of the young people who left Llamau services in the Vale of Glamorgan last year, 92% found that support had a positive impact. At the end of support, progress against key support issues was as follows:

-  83% were better able to manage their mental and emotional health and had made progress against this support issue
-  80% had improved family/intimate relationships
-  68% reduced offending
-  65% reduced alcohol use/misuse
-  80% reduced self harm
-  73% improved anger management

The level of ACEs amongst care leavers and young homeless people in the Vale is extremely concerning. More must be done to better measure levels of Adverse Childhood Experiences across Wales and to better evidence, the outcomes achieved. Llamau is investing in a new electronic case management system to allow even better monitoring and evaluation internally. Alongside this, Llamau is developing a Service User Portal to allow the people we support to access key information online and to receive alerts and information electronically to allow them to access information around their support needs. This could include links to free Mindfulness Apps, healthy eating recipes and safety plans.

8. Acknowledgements

Thank you to the Vale of Glamorgan Supporting People Team and in particular Helen Jones, for commissioning this work and supporting Llamau to continue to deliver high quality services in the Vale.

Thank you to the Llamau teams in the Vale who work tirelessly to ensure that the most vulnerable young people are supported to overcome traumatic adverse childhood experiences and to grow in confidence to truly believe they can achieve their full potential.

Thank you to the wonderful Statutory and Third Sector organisations in the Vale of Glamorgan who are so committed to ensuring that young people are properly supported and helped to move on positively in their lives.

Finally and most importantly, thank you to the amazing young people who, on a daily basis, overcome the most difficult of hurdles, survive countless knockbacks and realise their dreams and aspirations.

