



Better Start Bradford is bringing together people living in Bowling and Barkerend, Bradford Moor and Little Horton to form one of the UK's first locally-based groups dedicated to exploring **Adverse Childhood Experiences (or ACEs for short).**

ACEs are negative things that people go through when they are a baby or child, for example living in a home where there is violence, abuse, addiction problems or a family member being in prison. Anything that causes stress or makes a baby or child feel threatened can be considered to be an ACE, and can impact people right into adulthood.

Overview

Better Start Bradford helps children in Bowling and Barkerend, Bradford Moor and Little Horton get the best start in life – find out more at www.betterstartbradford.org.uk

In partnership with local organisations *Sharing Voices* and *SHINE*, we've created an exciting volunteering opportunity as a member of a new group, to play a major part in supporting and developing community awareness of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), trauma and resilience.

We're looking for people who are keen to learn more about ACEs and trauma. There is no need to have had any previous work experience or any particular personal experience of trauma – the most important thing is that you are passionate about helping to build a community in which children are sheltered from the impact of ACEs and trauma.





What will the new group do?

The group will:

- Be a true community voice with regard to ACEs and trauma in the community
- Discuss how ACEs and trauma affects our community
- Decide on a key area of work that may improve outcomes for those affected by ACEs and trauma and look at how the group can influence this to the benefit of the community
- Develop knowledge around ACEs and trauma so that there is a strong understanding of these concepts amongst all group members
- Arrange and chair their own meetings (including frequency and structure) with support from Better Start Bradford (particularly in the early stages)
- Develop a clear set of aims and sense of purpose for the group
- Work with key support organisations to achieve the above

What are we looking for?

You must:

- Live within the Better Start Bradford area of Bowling and Barkerend, Bradford Moor and Little Horton or have a strong connection to this area
- Be able to make the time commitment to attend the majority of meetings for a minimum time period of one year (average time commitment is one hour a week, one meeting per month)
- Be willing to contribute to work to address ACEs and trauma within your local community
- Be passionate about making a difference and improving people's lives and working with people from a range of backgrounds
- Have the confidence to contribute to group discussions
- Be able to see others' points of view and debate an issue calmly and assertively without judging others

We will offer tailored support to all volunteers to enable you to participate fully, including development sessions and a named contact person. Reimbursement for expenses including travel and phone calls will be made available.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are ACEs?

ACEs stands for adverse childhood experiences. They are negative things that people go through when they are a baby or child. Some examples of these are living in a home where there is violence, experiencing sexual or emotional abuse or a family member being in prison. Anything that causes stress or makes a baby or child feel threatened can be considered to be an ACE. Experiencing these negative or traumatic things can have an impact on babies and children which can stay with them all the way into adulthood.

What is the impact of trauma?

ACEs are really common; a research study suggests that almost half of all adults within the United Kingdom experienced at least one ACE, and nearly one in ten experienced four or more. We suspect that within our area of Bradford this number may be even higher. This means that there are a lot of people within our communities who have experienced trauma as a baby or child. How trauma affects each individual person can be unique to them but it can cause things like distress, anxiety, low mood. It can also lead to people appearing to over or under react to situations that they perceive as threatening.

Why are ACEs important?

When we feel threatened, our bodies react by releasing stimulating chemicals. This is completely normal when we are facing an unusual situation which is stressful or dangerous. However, if we are frequently in stressful or threatening situations it can lead to long-term changes in our body.

Being exposed to stressful situations for a long period of time can lead to a higher chance of becoming unwell and also of having emotional or mental health difficulties as an adult.

What can be done to help?

- **Babies and Children**

One of the most important things that can be done is to reduce the amount of time that babies and children are exposed to these stressful situations, however this isn't always possible as sometimes situations are beyond a person's control. Just because someone has experienced one or more ACEs it does not mean for certain that this will have a negative impact on their life. It has been shown that there are some simple things that help limit the impact of stressful situations on children, the most important of these is the child having a steady loving adult figure in their life that they can trust and rely on. Resilience is the ability to adapt to and cope with changes and stresses in life; there are many things that have been shown to help build up children's resilience.

- **Adults**

There are some simple things that can be done to help adults who have experienced trauma. It helps if they are offered trust-worthy accessible services through which they feel listened to. One of the most important things that we can do as communities is to treat others with compassion and kindness. If we can change people's mind-sets from 'what is wrong with them' to 'what has happened to them' we can begin to understand that our experiences, both positive and negative impact our personality and behaviour in ways that we cannot always control. In this way we can develop trauma-informed communities in which people are supported to heal and move on from the trauma that they have experienced.

Nadine Burke-Harris, an American doctor, likens it to walking in the woods and coming across a bear. Your body releases adrenaline, your heart starts pumping faster and your body gets ready to either fight the bear or run away from it. This is great if you are in the woods, but what happens when the bear comes home with you, and is there day after day?