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Barnardo's

Using *The PATHS*[®]
Programme and Social
Emotional Learning
to mitigate the effects
of *Adverse Childhood
Experiences*



PATHS[™]

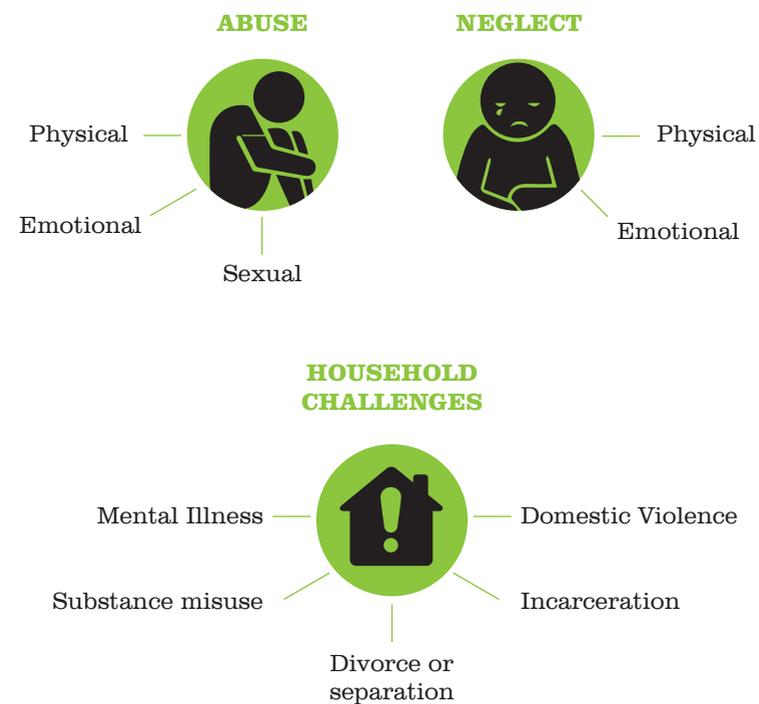
The PATHS[™] Programme for Schools (UK Version)
Promoting Alternative THinking Strategies

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

A growing body of international evidence has highlighted the long-term impacts that adverse experiences throughout childhood have on an individual's physical and mental health.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) such as abuse, neglect or household challenges in turn impact on the child's readiness and ability to learn and participate in school life.

ACEs can be identified as:



“ Adverse Childhood Experiences such as abuse, neglect or household challenges in turn impact on the child's readiness and ability to learn and participate in school life. ”

BRAIN DEVELOPMENT & TRAUMA INFORMED CARE

Where children are exposed to persistent stress through the adverse experiences they have encountered, they view the world as a threatening place.



This toxic stress changes the architecture of their brains, and affects their ability to regulate their emotions and behaviour. This also results in overactivation of the stress response itself, creating a self-perpetuating cycle.

In order to prevent and mitigate these effects, it is necessary to develop a practice of trauma-informed care. This will involve recognition and a response to trauma-related difficulties.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING: Mitigating the effects of adversity

Experiencing adversity can affect children's wellbeing and development. There are many theoretical and practical commonalities between educating students in Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and the treatment of traumatised children.

“When you team SEL and ACEs together there is the potential to create a magical word known as RESILIENCE.”ⁱ

Resilience often refers to the ability to ‘bounce back’ despite adversity or trauma. Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.ⁱⁱ Through SEL instruction in the classroom, children are provided with the tools to be well, develop resilience and succeed in life. SEL is particularly important for children who have faced severe adversity, including poverty, displacement, and violence. SEL has been shown to mitigate the effects of adversity, by providing children with the tools to focus, regulate their emotional responses, interact with others and cope with stress and challenges.ⁱⁱⁱ



THE PATHS® PROGRAMME FOR SCHOOLS (UK Version)

Consistent delivery of SEL programmes, like *The PATHS® Programme*, can mitigate the effects of ACEs and rebuild or build for the first time healthy brain structure and neurological connections.

The PATHS® Programme is one of the most researched SEL programmes with over 30 years of research across the world. The programme is grounded in the science of children's brain development, which has determined that children experience and react to strong emotions before developing the cognitive abilities to verbalise them.

The PATHS® Programme can support UK schools who are incorporating a trauma-informed approach by not only providing schools in the UK with *The PATHS® Programme* resources; but also through providing training and ongoing coaching support to teachers, working with parents and supporting the development of a whole-school approach to SEL. *The PATHS® Programme* creates an atmosphere in which problem-solving, including restorative justice type solutions are created as the norm.

“PATHS® was designed to support children in creating an atmosphere/context in which to be able to recognize and label emotions and situations as a way of working through them. PATHS® also provides teachers with skills (both for students and teachers) to support children to use new skills that can “compensate” for deficits in emotional recognition, communication and Executive Function skills that are likely somewhat lower than would be expected due to ACEs or other traumas.”

(Mark Greenberg, co-developer of the PATHS® curriculum).

Lessons

Through *PATHS® Programme* lessons, children get the opportunity to build their resilience in a variety of ways:

- » Experiencing a positive learning environment
- » Improved relationships with adults
- » Improved self-esteem
- » Increased emotional awareness
- » Improved self-control and coping strategies
- » Better relationship skills
- » Interpersonal problem-solving skills
- » Goal setting

Training

Training gives teachers the understanding and support to be able to meet the needs of children at a basic level. Through providing teachers with the knowledge of *PATHS® Programme* strategies, teachers are able to:

- » Consider how to develop a positive classroom environment where children feel safe, nurtured and supported
- » Develop *PATHS® Programme* strategies to support all children in the classroom
- » Explore teacher's own use of *PATHS® Programme* strategies such as self awareness and self management

Coaching Support

Barnardo's Coaches offer a variety of additional supports to schools to encourage them to build *The PATHS® Programme* into a whole-school approach:

- » Developing a common language through the training of school leaders, non-teaching staff and parents/care givers
- » Providing opportunities to integrate *PATHS® Programme* concepts with other curriculum areas, outside of the classroom, and into the playground
- » Promoting the use of emotion coaching and problem-solving around specific behaviours and/or high needs children



RECOMMENDATIONS to schools:

“In order to help pupils succeed, schools have a role to play in supporting them to be resilient and mentally healthy.”
(Department for Education, 2016)

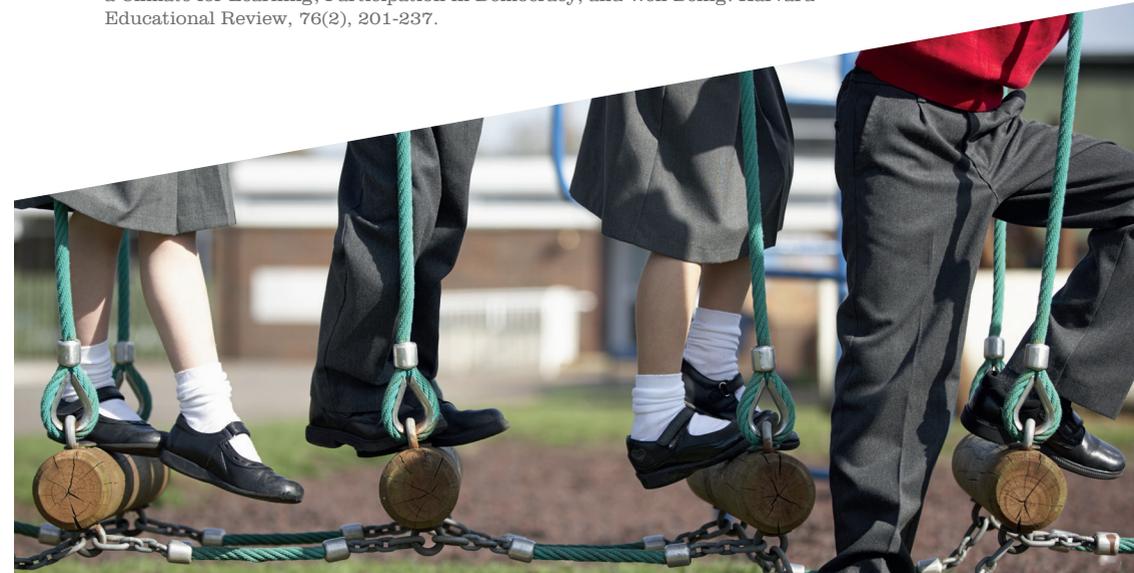
“Emotional well-being must be a larger part of any learning, and by association, the educational agenda.... Schools may be the optimum sites for buffering the impact of stress, building resilience and enhancing individual capacities for learning” (Nagel 2009)

We also strongly urge schools to become “trauma-informed.” This means that all school staff should be trained to understand and address the special needs of people who have experienced trauma. If a school is “trauma-informed”, all aspects of the school activities and mission should be focused to support the various ways in which people recover and heal from trauma and thus strengthen the effects of *PATHS®* on children's healthy development.

ⁱ Jones, 2016 <https://traumainformedoregon.org/social-emotional-learning-sel-adverse-childhood-experiences-aces/>

ⁱⁱ As defined by CASEL, The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) <https://casel.org/what-is-sel/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Cohen, J. (2006). Social, Emotional, Ethical, and Academic Education: Creating a Climate for Learning, Participation in Democracy, and Well-Being. *Harvard Educational Review*, 76(2), 201-237.



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