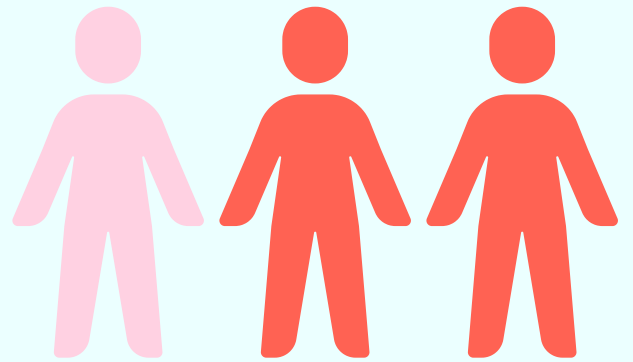
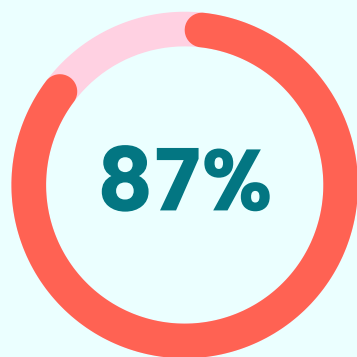


# Compassionate and Connected Community

The Compassionate and Connected Community (CCC) aims to increase the awareness and understanding of the prevalence and impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) & trauma on children and young people (Education Scotland, 2018). Particularly as we recover following the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a need for education staff to utilise trauma-informed practice.

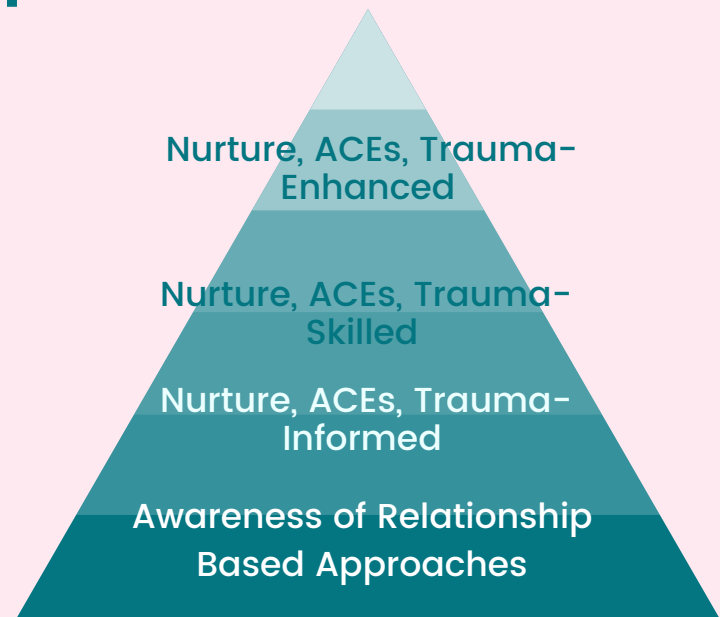
It is important to take a holistic view of adverse childhood experiences - among children with one ACE, there's an 87% chance of having two or more.



By the age of 16, two thirds of children and young people will have experienced at least one single traumatic event (Copeland et al., 2007). However, more than one in five young people will have experienced 3+ Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) (Education Scotland, 2018; Scot PHN, 2016)

## Trauma-Informed Practice & Impact of ACEs

Increasing awareness of trauma & supporting wellbeing is a priority across Scotland within existing initiatives such as Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC), the Children & Young People Act (Scotland) (2014) & the national improvement framework (NIF). As we are aware of the many potential longitudinal effects of trauma (e.g. the potential effects on physical and mental health of early trauma, links between adverse childhood experiences & learning in childhood, NHS, 2017), these two aims go hand in hand. The CCC seeks to build on existing good practice in schools, supporting practitioners and establishments to move from having an awareness of relationship-based approaches to becoming skilled at the level of nurture, ACE and trauma-enhanced practice. At this level, practitioners will have direct and enhanced knowledge in these areas and be able to provide direct and/or intense support to distressed individuals - progressing some of the goals outlined within the 'Transforming Psychological Traumas' framework.



## COVID 19's Impact on Mental Health

### Young People

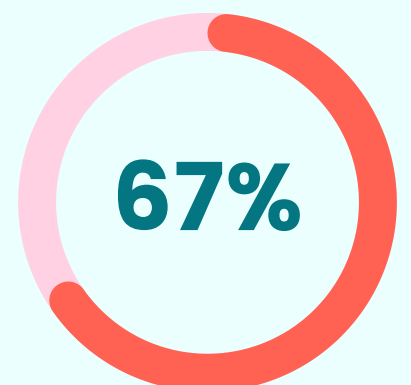
According to a global survey by Save the Children, 8 out of 10 children and young people experienced an increase in negative thoughts during the pandemic. Additionally, 67% of young people believe that the pandemic will have a long-term negative impact on their mental health (Young Minds, 2021).



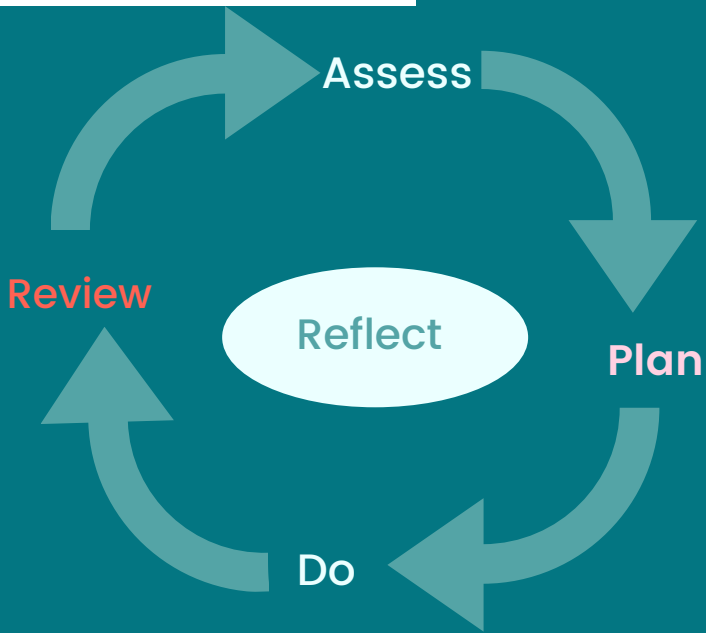
### Care-Experienced and Vulnerable Children and Young People

According to a survey of care-experienced and disadvantaged children and young people, 67% stated that they felt more stressed, anxious, or low during the pandemic. Additionally, these young people expressed concerns about returning to school and trying to re-establish their relationships with both peers & staff (MCR Pathways, 2020). The Scottish Government's evidence summary on the impact of COVID-19 also states that there has been a negative impact on the mental wellbeing of children and young people as a result of the pandemic, and that care-experienced and disadvantaged young people have been particularly affected (2020). A government rapid review further evidenced that children and young people are likely experiencing elevated levels of depression, anxiety & low mood not only during lockdown, but after it ends (Holmes et al., 2020).

In addition, a recent survey by the centre for disease control (CDC) found that remote learning is associated with poorer mental health for children and young people. When schools reopen, therefore, the use of trauma-informed and relationship-focussed approaches is likely to be of particular importance. According to an article by Weale, "Schools should support children's emotional wellbeing as schools reopen...this will be essential to help relieve stress and anxiety" (2020).



## Practitioner Enquiry



Practitioner enquiry is a method of professional learning or research which can be used to promote understanding and drive improvements in practice within an establishment. Individuals working in education are encouraged to engage in practitioner enquiry, otherwise known as a 'finding out' or reflective way of investigating one's practice, as it promotes teacher professionalism (NIF, 2021). Practitioner Enquiry is also core to implementation of the CCC, as developed by Education Scotland (ES).

Explicitly defining the model used in practitioner enquiry can be helpful to guide practice. Within South Ayrshire and the CCC (as it was created by ES), the model used is 'assess, plan, do, review', with ongoing reflection (Education Scotland, 2018).

Practitioner enquiry is central to the compassionate and connected community, as it supports the impact of this input to be embedded more thoroughly within establishments. Participating individuals are able to co-construct their learning, and are encouraged to reflect throughout the process, increasing potential effectiveness. (Champman et al., 2015 referenced in Education Scotland, 2018) Furthermore, this method of enquiry has been found to have a positive impact on pupil outcomes, in part because it supports practitioners to connect theory and practice (Cordingley & Bell, 2012). The GTCS acknowledges that engaging in this enquiry has the potential for positive impacts on the individual, the establishment, and the wider community. Lastly, practitioner enquiry focuses on the adult learner - during lockdown, learning will take place in a virtual or blended fashion, which must also be considered within implementation of the CCC.

# Virtual Learning

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, learning has moved partially and at times fully online. Despite some research illustrating the negative impact of remote learning during lockdown on the mental health of children and young people, this method of learning has been used



successfully within higher education and other contexts since before the pandemic. A report by the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation & Development (OECD) has found that the freedom to undertake professional learning online has resulted in an uptake of such opportunities during COVID (2020). In fact, the number of people engaging in online learning was four times higher at the start of the pandemic than it was one year prior (OECD, 2020). Online learning has the capacity to be flexible, and where both those delivering and receiving the training have an adequate level of digital literacy, there are few barriers (OECD, 2020).

Effective blended learning should include a mix of 'live' interactions and tasks for individuals to complete in their own time (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). Asynchronuous activities (where learning and direct teaching take place at different times) allow for more opportunities to reflect - this is supported by the setup of the CCC, as cycles of practitioner enquiry occur between virtual sessions, regardless of the specific sessions chosen by the practitioner group (Mayer, 2003; Newman et al., 1995; Warschauer, 1996). Within SAC, the decision was made that virtual delivery of the CCC was appropriate, given the need for trauma-informed practice during recovery alongside the need for COVID delivery & a volume of research demonstrating the appropriateness/accessibility of virtual learning.

## Conclusion

The CCC was created by ES to help schools support children with trauma. Therefore, effective remote delivery and implementation of the CCC has the potential to improve education staff's capacity and awareness of trauma-informed, nurturing practices at the classroom level, with the potential for change to be driven at the level of the establishment through practitioner enquiry.

Click [here](#) to access the compassionate and connected community professional learning resource



Click [here](#) for references

Equity,  
Excellence &  
Empowerment  
through  
Psychology