

## Background:

It is widely understood that the Mental Health of Looked after Children (LAC) is poorer than that of the general population. The experience of children and young people in care is often fractured, with multiple placement moves, placement breakdown, and interrupted education/changes to schools & interrupted treatment from therapeutic services. This further compounds the young person's sense of isolation and loneliness. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on looked-after children, young people's mental and emotional health and wellbeing, as well as their educational progress, cannot be underestimated.

Regionally there are currently 1803 children placed in care. 601 have emotional and behavioural issues with an extra 61 with mental health concerns, but only 78 on the CAMHS waiting list. This indicates there are a significant number not meeting criteria for CAMHS interventions, or not accessing the service but evidently experiencing emotional or behavioural issues.

## Objectives:

- Develop a co-produced training programme with stakeholders and service users
- Provide a core-training programme to a pilot cohort of residential children's homes in the BCUHB central area.

## Methodology:

- Develop the training in collaboration with voices from Care Cymru, frontline staff, managers and residents of the four care homes in the pilot
- Four care homes engaged in the project, and an extended phase included an additional 6 care provisions
- Pre and post questionnaires completed by staff

## Conclusions:

This cohort of children and young people are those care experienced individuals who have comorbid symptoms that are secondary to their underlying developmental trauma & attachment difficulties. These young people present with significant emotional dysregulation, high-risk behaviour/impulsive behaviour.

These young people require a different, dedicated, specialised service to meet their needs.

## The Training Programme:

### Objectives:

- Assist staff to understand the context of poor mental health within a formulation of developmental trauma and attachment issues
- Assist staff to see that a trauma informed/therapeutic parenting approach is necessary to address issues of developmental trauma and attachment
- Support staff to understand the role of core CAMHS and that of partner agencies
- Support staff to manage the crisis presentations of young people with a profile of developmental trauma and attachment

### Training Content:

- Overview of key Mental Health disorders in children
- the impact of developmental trauma and attachment on children in care and their subsequent mental health
- Working and communicating with adolescents
- Crisis / in-patient pathway
- Risk management (including managing Self Harm and Suicidal presentations)
- Self-Care for Staff

## Impact:

- The data collected from these questionnaires indicates an overall increase in both knowledge of, and confidence in, managing the topics taught
- Early data collected through the programme requires cleansing however it indicates that there are delayed transfers of care for Looked After Children who fit within this particular cohort of young people i.e. those with underlying developmental trauma and attachment. These young people often present in crisis due to instability of placements and a lack of specialised mental health services to support their residential teams.
- The uptake and engagement of all care homes involved in the project was positive. There have been multiple requests from both those who have received the training and additional care providers requesting further training
- The project has strengthened relationships through collaboration with statutory partners i.e. North Wales Police & Local Authorities. This integrated way of working reinforces guidance and legislation with regards to both mental health care and specifically meeting the needs of Looked After Children