

# SCOTLAND: WHERE OUR CHILDREN SHOULD GROW UP LOVED, SAFE AND RESPECTED



**Today, John Swinney MSP, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills offers an insight into why the Scottish Government is focussing on childhood adversity and encouraging more action to prevent and address adverse childhood experiences.**

It is clear to see that the experiences we have during our childhood shape who we are and how we interact with the world. When someone has an adverse or traumatic experience growing up, it impacts on their emotional, biological and physical development and, importantly, their capacity to learn and thrive. Without the right support, the effects can last a lifetime, especially if those experiences are harmful.

The first adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) study took place more than 20 years ago, but the evidence base has been gaining increasing awareness in recent years, particularly so in Scotland.

It is clear that such adverse experiences aren't new, but the way we are recognising and tackling them in Scotland is changing. I am determined to drive progress on our vision that all children grow up loved, safe, and respected, so that everyone can realise their full potential.

We must work together to prevent adverse experiences happening in the first place, and when they do happen, to reduce their negative impact and encourage healing. As we reiterated in our Programme for Government published last Tuesday 4th September, we want to make sure children and

adults can get the right support, at the right time, so we can support their resilience and also limit the chance for adversity to be passed down through generations.

To further our work on this, I am delighted that we have committed to incorporating the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into domestic law in Scotland. This demonstrates our commitment to the rights of children and young people in Scotland.



**John Swinney MSP,  
Deputy First Minister and  
Cabinet Secretary for  
Education and Skills**

As part of the broader range of work we're doing to help prevent ACEs, we are supporting parents, families and children by investing in perinatal and infant mental health, providing support to young mothers through the Family Nurse Partnership and taking action to tackle child poverty.

We're also investing in school nurses and counsellors, providing attainment funding to support health and wellbeing interventions in school, and supporting children to maintain contact and relationships with parents in prison where appropriate.

In addition to this, we're implementing national trauma training for Scotland's workforce, and working to increase awareness in communities, so as many people as possible can recognise and prevent ACEs, as well as support young people and adults who have suffered from the impact of these experiences.

Our getting it right for every child approach aims to improve outcomes, support the wellbeing of our children and young people, and address their needs early. This is about families and services working together with the needs of the child or young person at the centre.

I'm delighted to be speaking at the ACE-Aware Nation Conference in two weeks' time, where I hope to listen, learn and take next steps. I'm particularly pleased that we are supporting the attendance of Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament and Year of Young People Ambassadors. I look forward to hearing their views following the conference on how to make further progress and involve young people in this important agenda.

By working together, across all corners of society, we can create a united approach across Scotland to ensure we are doing all we can to prevent adverse childhood experiences and support children and adults affected.

