



Hyb ACE Cymru
ACE Hub Wales

Introducing the TrACE Toolkit into the Further Education Sector



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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACE	Adverse Childhood Experiences
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education

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1. Background

1.1 A Trauma-Informed Approach within the Further Education (FE) Sector

The ACE Hub Wales is directly funded by Welsh Government to create an environment for large scale, whole system transformation. Their mission is to enable and support organisations and communities in making changes that make Wales a world leader in preventing, mitigating and tackling ACEs and their significant impact. Also, to challenge and transform ways of working and create a societal shift in order to break the long term cycle of ACEs, adversity and trauma.

This journey has begun to ensure that every school in Wales is strong, inclusive and trauma-informed, helping children to flourish and have the best start in life. This work is supported by delivering training to make the school environment ACE aware, and then able to confidently respond to trauma, in line with the Welsh Government aim to ensure pupil inclusion, well-being, behaviour and attendance, directly supporting the development of a whole school approach.

Further Education (FE), along with Higher Education (HE) is a vital part of the whole education system and the Welsh Government has provided specific, additional funding to the ACE Hub Wales to work with the FE sector and Welsh Government to co-produce and develop a whole system approach that works across sectors and delivers on key priorities. This project was about building on the wealth of existing work and practice and working in collaboration to recognise what has been achieved and where there may be more focussed effort.

1.2 Developing the TrACE Toolkit

Building on the work within primary and secondary education, there was an opportunity to develop the model for FE which would build on existing best practice within the sector. Model development focussed on providing practical tools and techniques for college staff (including tutors and learner services) as well as resources to help colleges become more trauma-informed in recognition that trauma experiences are a possibility for anyone and the consideration of this through policies, procedures and approaches. The model is informed by the findings of the Estyn report “Knowing your children – supporting pupils with adverse childhood experiences” (January 2020) which evaluates how well primary and secondary schools in Wales support pupils with ACEs and looks at collaborative work between education and other public services in supporting pupils and their families.

The initial part of the model development was to provide a framework that enabled an institute wide, trauma-informed approach that prioritised staff wellbeing and support alongside learner experiences. To address this, one of the tools that was introduced to the sector was the TrACE Toolkit. The Toolkit was co-produced and pioneered with Pembrokeshire College, where resources and associated activities were initially piloted. This stage was crucial in the future developments as it evidenced not only early indicators of success, but reassurance that there was an appetite for a trauma-informed and ACE aware approach in the FE sector, also that there was already a substantial amount of work going on across the sector.

The project was supported by a governance structure that involved key stakeholders attending an Expert Reference Panel to influence development at a strategic level, as well as a Community of Practice group that shared the operational learning and development. Stakeholders invited to attend these meetings included a representative from each FE College on both a strategic and operational level, a Welsh Government representative from the Post 16 Education department, the evaluation team and key staff from the ACE Hub Wales.

One of the commitments of these working groups was to co-produce a Playlist of additional resources specifically for the FE Sector in Wales, which were launched on The Hwb¹ website to remain as a resource for the sector beyond the life of the funded project.

Specific additional funding was allocated to the ACE Hub Wales from Welsh Government's Post 16 Education Department Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund with the aim to adopt a national Trauma-informed and ACE aware (TrACE) approach to the FE Sector. The funding enabled targeted resource to support two Trailblazer Colleges embed the TrACE approach, building on initial work by a Pioneer College (Pembrokeshire College).

A vision paper outlined how the contribution of specific, additional funding from Welsh Government would be best used in developing a whole-institute, trauma-informed model which prioritised staff wellbeing alongside student wellbeing i.e. activities that prioritise physical and emotional safety and promote opportunities for wellbeing, healing and recovery - with everyone having a role, and, also about the content of the courses/qualifications offered. This work was about building on the wealth of existing work and practice and working in collaboration to recognise what has been achieved and where there may be more focussed effort².

From the outset of this work, a briefing paper³ was produced which set out the vision for developing trauma and ACE informed FE and HE sectors. This paper outlined "Agreed Principles of Trauma-informed HE and FE Settings" and documented how trauma-informed HE and FE settings can understand, recognise and respond to the effects of all types of trauma and prioritise physical and emotional safety in learning (See Figure 1 below).

Following on from the successful pilot with Pembrokeshire College, specific additional funding enabled ACE Hub Wales to recruit a full time FE Sector Lead whose role was to work with two colleges in Wales to use the TrACE Toolkit with the goal of embedding a trauma-informed and ACE aware approach across the whole college. This work commenced by opening an application process and inviting all Welsh FE Colleges to apply to be one of two Trailblazer colleges to trial the Toolkit for the sector. From this process, Coleg Gwent and Coleg Cambria were successful in their application. It was hoped that through the trial, there would be opportunities to celebrate successes of existing and new work that contribute to the approach, as well as responding to areas that may need further development.

The Trailblazer Colleges committed to using the TrACE Toolkit, which is a four stage process for organisational change, to provide a strong foundation towards creating a whole institute wide culture of being trauma-informed and ACE aware. The process allows organisations to consider their starting point and build on that by working collaboratively, distributing leadership to truly embedding trauma-informed principles in all areas of the organisation (Figure 2).

1 <https://hwb.gov.wales/>

2 Briefing Paper ACE Hub Trauma Informed to HE and FE

3 "Trauma and ACEs Informed Higher Education in Wales, Vision Paper"

Figure 1: Trauma-informed HE and FE settings; agreed principles

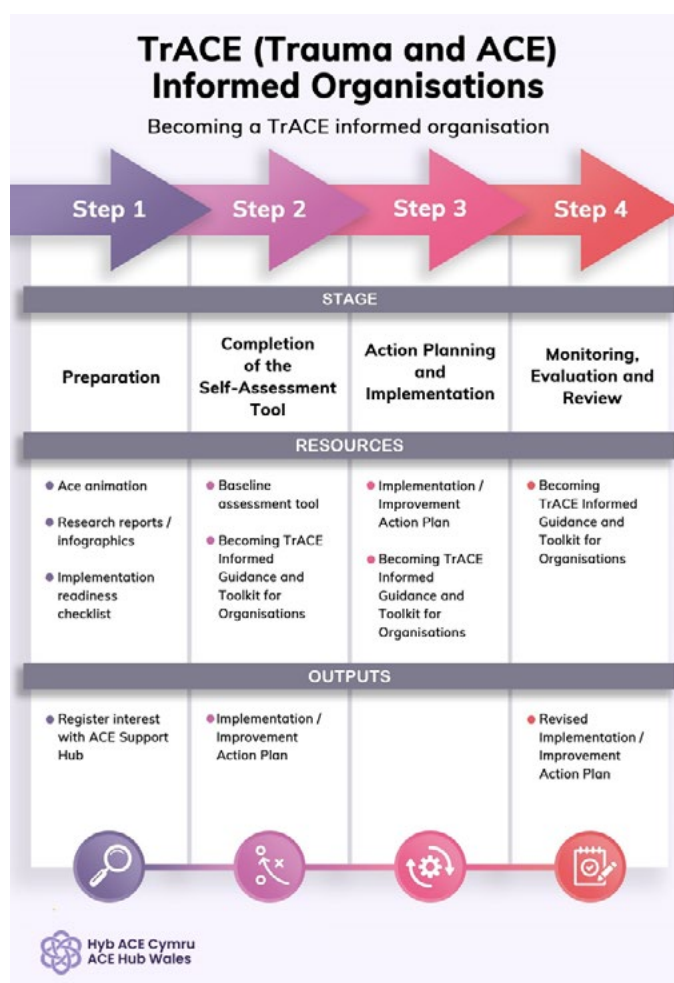
<i>“They have an understanding of how trauma impacts brain development and respond to it in both action and curriculum. It considers student-led teaching styles, creating restorative practices and fostering resilience while facilitating learning. Trauma-informed higher education / further education settings: Realise that:</i> • <i>students (and staff) may have history of trauma such as ACEs</i> • <i>negative behaviours may result as an attempt to cope with trauma</i> • <i>risks of re-traumatisation and secondary trauma should be prevented</i> • <i>resilience resources can reduce the harms associated with trauma</i> <i>Recognise:</i> • <i>the different types of trauma that may be experienced</i> • <i>the signs and symptoms of trauma</i> • <i>that staff support and wellbeing is important</i> <i>Respond:</i> • <i>by maximising student choice</i> • <i>by teaching and integrating tools and knowledge to aid in healing and empowerment</i> • <i>with culturally and personally RELEVANT person-centred approaches</i> • <i>in ways that RESIST re-traumatising</i> • <i>to build RESILIENCE in students so they can grow and thrive</i>
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The TrACE Toolkit includes key tools to support an organisation baseline and produce an action plan to strengthen areas for development. The self-assessment tool asks organisations to reflect on six domains and document existing work that contributes to the domain objective, and to identify where things might be done differently⁴.

Alongside the use of the TrACE Toolkit, the sector worked collaboratively to create a Playlist Resource which would provide an ongoing benefit to the sector. The Playlist was developed through an Expert Reference Panel that had representation from the majority of colleges, and was launched and hosted on Hwb, which is a government led resource website for teaching staff in Wales.

The TrACE Playlist included a number of resources, including short films which were accounts of learners’ experiences that were acted by Theatrical Arts learners from Coleg Sir Gar. This project was an example of how the learner voice can be central to the work, and showcased how the support

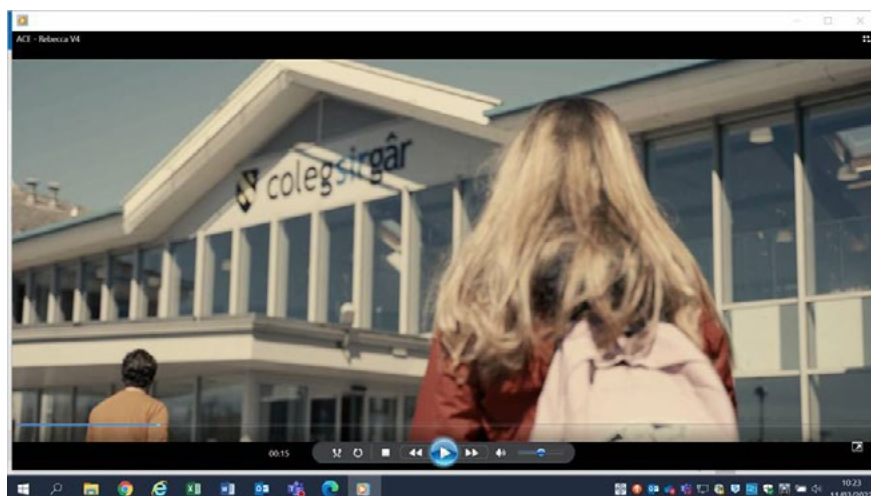
Figure 2: TrACE Toolkit: Four Stages



4 <https://aceawarewales.com/traceorgtoolkit/>

of college staff, with a trauma-informed approach can have a tremendous positive impact on young people's lives (Figure 3).

Figure 3: TrACE playlist



The purpose of the specific FE funding was to test this process and assess its effectiveness in assisting with the mission of creating a trauma-informed FE Sector. The aim was to test the approach and offer learning back to the wider sector and encourage wider participation.

1.3 Evaluation Aims

As part of the funding, a critical friend evaluation was commissioned to capture all of the learning throughout the process; the aim of the evaluation was to measure how well the project met the overall objectives which were to:

- Ensure supporting the wellbeing of staff and the provision of training and additional support for staff is a priority. Recognising that working with vulnerable learners and the widespread prevalence of trauma can be emotionally demanding on the workforce.
- Create a clear, shared understanding of what a trauma-informed FE institution should look like, as a model against which institutions can evaluate and improve their current practices.
- Consolidate the existing provision for supporting learner wellbeing, strengthening their emotional intelligence and maximising opportunities to further develop protective factors and build resilience.
- Develop a trauma-informed and ACE aware FE training strategy and training offer to include training materials.
- Combine the training offer with resources to help colleges develop trauma-informed policies and approaches.

2. Methods

2.1 Data Collection

The critical friend evaluation, completed by Team Support Training Ltd, involved the following methods to capture data and inform this report:

- 29 interviews with managers and staff of the two Trailblazer colleges
- Interviews with 26 students of Coleg Gwent
- Feedback by college staff and managers to evaluative research reports
- Contribution and participation in meetings such as the Expert Reference Panel and Community of Practice involving key stakeholders in the project.
- 12 consultative conversations with the Trauma and ACE project Leads for each college
- Consultation conversations with the ACE Hub Wales manager's team and Welsh Government representatives for Further Education

Data and information from the FE Project from March 2021 – December 2021.

2.2 Trailblazer and Pioneer Colleges

Three colleges took part in the evaluation,

- Pembrokeshire College
- Coleg Cambria
- Coleg Gwent

Pembrokeshire College

Based in West Wales, Pembrokeshire College is one of Wales' largest provider of post-16 education and their values and culture made them an ideal institute to pilot the TrACE toolkit in 2019. Their values are underlined by the phrase "Think More, Learn More, Be More" and they encapsulate the ethos of fairness and equality and centre the importance of respect and value within a holistic learning environment.

*"Pembrokeshire College is a dynamic and high quality provider of further, higher and work-based education and training with nearly 2,000 full-time and 13,000 part-time learners and apprentices. The College employs over 500 talented and dedicated staff who are well-qualified, supportive and who care passionately about their students. Pembrokeshire College offers a comprehensive academic and vocational offer, covering all curriculum areas, including the priority sectors of Health and Care, Engineering, Construction, Food and Farming, Life Science, Information Communication & Technology, Finance, Tourism, Hospitality, Catering and Creative Arts."*⁵

The pilot was successful at Pembrokeshire College as it was clear that this approach was building on existing good practice in relation to supporting learners with a strengths-based approach.

Coleg Cambria

Formed in 2013, Coleg Cambria has rapidly established itself as a leading UK education provider. As one of the largest colleges in the UK, the college has approximately 6,000 full-time students, 20,000 part-time learners and many international links. Across its seven sites (including one at Airbus' manufacturing facility, and one at HMP Berwyn in Wrexham), Coleg Cambria offers a vast array of full-time and part-time courses including A Levels, GCSEs, BTECs, Welsh for Adults, and Higher Education. The college also works in partnership with over 1,000 employers locally and nationally to deliver apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities.

Coleg Cambria's inspirational vision of the future is *"Exceeding expectations through education, innovation and inspiration"*. Coleg Cambria's Values⁶ align well with the TrACE approach and have underpinned the work throughout:

- **Showing honesty and integrity** - Transparent, open and honest communication that provides clarity, creates trust and positive working relationships and recognises that everyone has an equal voice.
- **Respected & being valued** - Everyone matters. Their contributions and efforts are recognised and appreciated.
- **Being kind and supportive** - Mindful of others, approachable and prepared to share best practices and support. A positive force, creating a culture of encouragement.
- **Working with others** - To create a collaborative approach to problem solving and improvement by sharing good practice. Supporting one another to succeed and bring about positive development for the college and its partners.
- **Feeling equal and inclusive** - Make people feel valued by creating a sense of belonging, developing opportunities for all and promoting and valuing diversity.
- **Being a community** - Building bridges so we connect within and with our local communities to collaborate on our shared interests, actively contributing to the economic, societal and environmental sustainability of our local communities.
- **Being excellent and inspirational** - Showcase and develop the knowledge and skills of our people to inspire others and strive for excellence.
- **Encourage and motivate to develop** - Support people to realise their potential by breaking down barriers and creating opportunities.
- **Being passionate** - Caring deeply about our work and being driven by our mission to push the limits and succeed, inspiring the same in others.
- **Being innovative** - Create opportunities and improve ways of working by harnessing people's creativity. Innovate and adopt new solutions and ideas without fear. Embracing change to do things better in a changing world.

Coleg Gwent

Based in South East Wales, Coleg Gwent spans 5 local authority areas. With a campus in each local authority, Coleg Gwent has over 1000 staff and 7000 full time learners and also offer part time courses and Higher Education courses. According to the 2017/2018 Learner Outcomes Report published by the Welsh Government, Coleg Gwent:

- is one of the top performing colleges in Wales for the fourth year running
- ranks joint first for vocational qualifications
- ranks joint first for all main qualifications
- has had higher than national average pass rates for three years running
- has 18 different subject sector areas categorised as 'excellent' for main qualifications – no other college has achieved so many!
- The first college in Wales to be judged 'Good' in everything they do according to Estyn's (Her Majesty's Inspectorate in Wales) new inspection framework (2018). Notably, the report identified the following strengths:
 - support provided for learners, particularly vulnerable students
 - increasing success rates for vocational main qualifications
 - providing suitable progression routes for learners (in particular, incorporating feedback from local employers and regional skills priorities into our planning)

Figure 4: Coleg Gwent's Core Values



3. Findings

This section considers the valuable knowledge that has been gathered throughout the project that will aid the positive roll out of this work across the wider FE sector. The learning is of particular interest and should be considered by other FE Institutes beginning their journey to becoming a trauma-informed and ACE aware organisation.

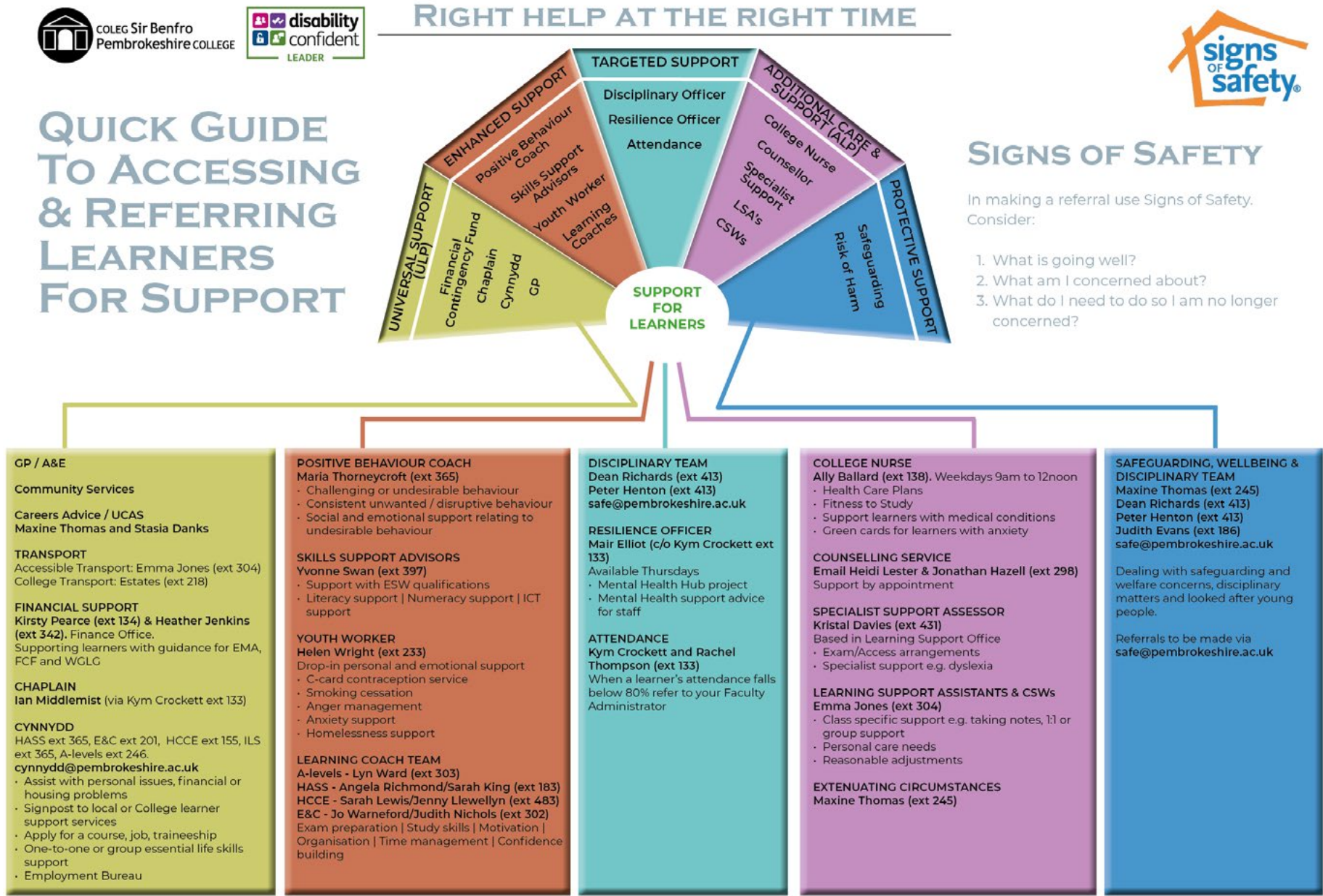
3.1 Existing Good Practice

The TrACE project has shone a light on all of the fantastic work that the FE sector is engaged in that contribute towards improving the mental health and wellbeing of their learners. This enabled a positive starting point for the TrACE work to commence as the key leaders of this work within the trailblazer colleges and others in the sector were fully committed to, and saw the benefits of the proposed work.

It was identified early on in the project that thought and consideration had long been given to this way of working, and work was already in place to support the organisational wide approach that the TrACE Toolkit promoted. An example of this is where colleges use “The Right Help and The Right Time Framework” which promotes a strengths-based approach to the continuum of support, from universal support to protective support that can be employed when a learner is experiencing difficulties. This is relevant to the TrACE approach as the toolkit is a universal approach to ensuring that organisations are considerate to trauma experienced both in the past and potential present trauma, and/or adversity and show compassion and kindness to all the people who benefit from the organisation.

Figure 5 references the approach at Pembrokeshire College which highlights the strong structures that are already in place to support the mental health and wellbeing of their learners.

Figure 5: Right Help at the Right Time



3.2 Approaches

Another point of interest comes from the different approaches taken by the two colleges. This provides evidence that the TrACE approach can be utilised differently in different settings.

Approach One: Coleg Gwent

Coleg Gwent decided to take an across college approach whereby the lead of the project called for interested parties to engage in a TrACE Project Group. This attracted a large group of people with varied roles across the college including Wellbeing Officer, Heads of Learning (from different campuses) Human Resources Officer, Faculty Improvement Lead, Training Officer based in Estates to name a few. As the work progressed, further interested parties came forward to support the group, this included a Vice Principle of the College which contributed towards the work being considered at a senior leadership level.

This group was the main source of guidance for the project and the whole group of approximately 20 individuals were trained by the ACE Hub Wales using the 'Train the Trainer' model with a commitment to rolling the training out to the rest of the college staff.

The advantages of taking this approach included:

- The size of the group means that the 'train the trainer' model would have more chance of sustainability beyond the initial investment in time, recognising that this is a continuous process that will need embedding in the college's ongoing training plans.
- The make-up of the group being cross college improves the chances of awareness raising being consistent across the campuses and across different teams where their core job roles do not usually consider ACEs and trauma.
- The various levels of staff in the group provides a good example of distributed power that can model collaborative leadership. The sharing of skills and reflections in the group meetings have given insight into staff roles in a unique space considering a shared outcome and working this way allows for a robust self-assessment and action planning process to be created. Consideration can be given to a wide range of success influencing factors when action planning, for example understanding the resource implications from senior positions with budget holding responsibilities can influence the direction an action takes. It also helps to involve departments whose work may be impacted early in the process. For example, Estates, for actions related to physical spaces; HR for actions related to policies, workforce development and support; and Learner Wellbeing services staff to understand how this would impact support on the ground.

"The toolkit, and working on it together, led to an action plan, which led to a training schedule. Then we realised the training plan was too ambitious. And then we had a Vice Principal join us who brought understanding and resources to create culture change."
(Gwent College Project Group Participant)

The drawback to taking this approach was that at initial progress felt slow and there was a need for support from the ACE Hub Wales to revisit their self-assessment and action planning to ensure realistic time frames were incorporated into the whole college plan.

This was largely due to an ambitious goal of training the entire workforce in a short amount of time, which, at the time was seen as the highest priority. This was resolved quickly with some guidance around project management which relieved the pressure and enabled the longer term vision to emerge as a group.

Approach Two: Coleg Cambria

Coleg Cambria took the approach to start with a specialist team by working with their Core Inclusion Team of approximately eight staff as they were undertaking a Level 7 Trauma course and so would become an expert group who completed the self-assessment and action planning stages of the Toolkit. This group also completed the TrACE 'Train the Trainer' course provided by the ACE Hub Wales' FE Sector Lead and identified a suite of training to meet the different needs of the groups identified. This included the full training course, a three hour training course and a two hour awareness raising session.

The advantages of taking this approach were:

- Starting with a small team who are operational in this approach (working daily with learners) enables a robust and expert foundation to raise awareness amongst other colleagues
- The team that were selected could have immediate impact in the way that they worked with learners with additional learning needs
- The team were also studying for a Level 7 qualification in Trauma so had an enhanced level of understanding, knowledge and experience in why this approach is beneficial but also in practical application. This provides additional expertise in the awareness raising and training experience
- Often a smaller team can feel more functional and productive, especially when the day to day job role allows the team members to see immediate impact as motivation to progress change is maintained.

The drawbacks to taking this approach could be:

- Using a small team can put additional pressure on already pressured job role and the responsibility isn't as wide spread.
- Using a specific team to commence this work may lead to the responsibility being offset in the future to this team and there may be difficulty in reaching out beyond that team.

3.3 An Enthusiastic/Knowledgeable Sector

It was clear from the outset of the project that the sector was engaged with the concept of the FE Sector becoming trauma-informed and ACE aware and the expression of interest process for the trailblazer colleges attracted a number of applications. This interest continued into the commitment of attending the regular development workshops and the Expert Reference Panel meetings that were organised by the ACE Hub Wales.

The Expert Reference Panel had representation the majority of colleges throughout the life of the project, all of which contributed towards the positively received Playlist that was launched and hosted on Hwb.

The TrACE FE Playlist has received over 600 views⁷ which gives insight into how popular this has been since the launch, and evidences interest from wider staff in the sector in seeking out additional resources and supporting information.

3.4 Embracing Support from ACE Hub Wales

Both Trailblazer colleges were positive about the support provided by the ACE Hub Wales during the process. Both colleges were offered support to follow the process and the ACE Hub Wales staff were available to provide support in whichever way was needed by the college.

The wider support from the FE Sector Lead and wider team at the ACE Hub Wales enabled the co-creation of bespoke resources (The Playlist), two training packages for colleges to use to inform and skill their staff, and has brokered collaboration between colleges through two forums on taking the issue forward as well as webinars which are now hosted on the ACE Hub Wales website⁸.

In terms of evolving this support as a result of testing the approach, support from the ACE Hub Wales seemed to have a greatest impact with one Trailblazer College at the Stage 1 (preparation) of the process. Enabling and supporting the college through exploring actions which didn't solely focus on getting all staff through the training, which was a pressured task. By providing some additional project management resources and expertise encouraged reflection of impact and this was picked up in the full evaluation as a pivotal and important point in the project timeline and was separately highlighted by five people who were interviewed. This demonstrated that external consultancy support from the ACE Hub Wales was seen as important and it was referenced also that this consultancy was successful due to a relationship of trust being built over a number of months with the FE Sector Lead and wider ACE Hub Wales team members.

This particular support for Stage 1 of the process will inform how support is offered in the widening of participation of the FE sector to engage in the TrACE project and will be used to update the guidance documents to ensure that there are more practical guides.

7 <https://hwb.gov.wales/repository/resource/cc1dff58-4d7d-45bc-8396-4652ff4bf7b3>
8 <https://aceawarewales.com/traceorgtoolkit/>

3.5 Training

The two training packages were co-produced with the sector and were positively received by those who experienced it through the trailblazer colleges. The impact documented in the feedback forms suggested that *“70% of attendees said they would definitely make changes in their practice as a consequence”* which evidences that the content had a positive impact in inspiring staff to consider their practice. By the end of 2021, over 500 college staff were trained across the two trailblazer colleges. Feedback included:

“Very informative training which really opened my eyes to my surroundings and my own lack of knowledge. The TrACE training has made me eager to learn more and expand my understanding going forward.”

“I thought it was very useful (even though I had completed an ACEs online training during lockdown). I think that it does us good to be reminded - every so often - that students are going through/have gone through so many other things (in addition to the pressures of college). Perhaps a reminder should be built into our training?”

“The explanation of how ACEs can be experienced as a very small child. And how the body/mind is unable to recover. The highlight that just one person can make the difference to a young person’s future and even though we all look after our students we could be the one that makes the biggest difference, so a positive outcome.”

Some additional considerations came through the evaluation forms and also through consultation with the trainers themselves with the full evaluation process. These considerations include the emphasis on the support needed in the room, in addition to the trainer, to support staff who may find the content upsetting and who may need some time out of the room. This is vital considering the subject matter, as referenced in the TrACE project principles, the whole organisation approach must prioritise the wellbeing of staff as much as the learners and recognising that staff themselves may have, or may be experiencing, traumatic events in their lives.

One of the other considerations to come out of the evaluation is around the competing continuous professional (CPD) priorities and how this fits with the training strategies and the time and resources needed to invest in the training alongside other mandatory requirements.

It was also fed back that the training had more impact when delivered in a face to face context as opposed to online delivery. Some staff received the phase 1 training online due to restrictions related to COVID 19 and the facilitators felt that the impact was far more positive when they compared the engagement to the face to face training that was delivered when the restrictions were relaxed.

4. Considerations for the Future

4.1 Culture Change

The concept of culture change needs to be fully understood at the outset of any work attempting to make the changes that are aspired to with the TrACE project. There needs to be understanding by all involved of the time required to effect culture change “...*cultural change occurs over time and time is required to successfully embed changes in practice*”⁹. It is suggested through the full report that the TrACE Toolkit and subsequent support provided by the ACE Hub Wales should have resources and tools to increase awareness and understanding of culture change and the related change management resources that are required.

4.2 Involving Learners

The TrACE ambition is clear that the processes should be undertaken in collaboration with all that benefit from the organisation, and in FE terms that this should include learners. It was a consistent theme of consideration through the trailblazer colleges work, in understanding how this can be done safely and with the wellbeing of learners at the heart of the approach.

It was suggested that some of this work aligns to existing programmes of work that involved students and consideration should be given to how the engagement of learners can be embedded. Some examples of how this might be done are:

- Wellbeing Ambassadors
- Learner Union Representatives
- Student Satisfaction Surveys

4.3 Indicators for Success

A key part of the TrACE process is evaluation and monitoring (Stage 4) and the FE sector should agree on a set of indicators for success of embedding a trauma-informed and ACE aware approach. These indicators for success should consider short term, medium term and long term impacts of the approach and should, where possible, consider existing impact measures in place and how they interface with the TrACE approach. This could be a feature in the ongoing, re-energised governance Project Delivery Board, to co-produce and agree a set of national indicators for success.

4.4 Sustainability

Throughout the TrACE project, there were conversations with key stakeholders, including the colleges themselves, around how this approach would be sustained beyond the initial pilot to achieve the desired culture change over a number of years. Maintaining momentum is a challenge over time, especially when the incentive of additional resource decreases over time.

There is still an opportunity to consider how this work can be aligned more closely to the Welsh Government's Mental Health and Wellbeing policy priorities and also how this work can be embedded into existing quality assurance frameworks such as Estyn.

4.5 Limitations

It is worthy of note that the majority of this work was undertaken during the global pandemic of COVID-19, which involved unique pressures for education institutions. Whilst COVID-19 shone a light on the increasing need to work with a trauma-informed and ACE aware approach, for both learners and staff, FE colleges and staff were faced with operating in a completely unfamiliar way with off campus teaching and support.

Responding overnight to these unprecedented circumstances meant that resources were tighter than ever and whilst commitment to this approach was never doubted, resources were needed elsewhere to ensure staff and learners had access to learning.

It must be recognised here that some of the areas identified for improvement in the above section also reflect the difficulties faced in the current context of recovering from a global pandemic.

5. Recommendations

Throughout this work, there have been some considerations to how this approach could be supported to increase wider participation and have a stronger chance of being sustained within the FE sector.

Firstly, this work could be aligned more closely to the Welsh Government's Mental Health and Wellbeing policy priorities, given the strong links that taking a TrACE approach has with the mental health and wellbeing of learners. Also, it should be recognised that a whole institute approach should be prioritised when investing in interventions or initiatives that aim to improve the mental health and wellbeing of learners. This will ensure that interventions sit within the wider context of the college and do not operate in isolation for one team or cohort of learners. Taking a whole institute approach to embedding a trauma-informed and ACE aware approach could encourage earlier intervention and prevent difficulties escalating, to needing more specialist intervention and support.

6. Conclusions

In conclusion, the TrACE Toolkit has been well received by the FE Sector in supporting them to become a trauma-informed and ACE aware sector that contributes to the wider whole education system.

There is already evidence of a strong focus on this approach, this is seen through many initiatives within the sector that align with the TrACE approach and prove a good level of understanding of a need for the wider culture, whole organisational and universal approach to supporting both learners and staff when experiencing difficulties. This provides an opportunity to stronger align the mental health and wellbeing agenda to the TrACE approach to avoid duplication and feed into the common outcomes associated. This conversation can be supported by taking advantage of existing network opportunities to raise the profile of the FE sector TrACE ambition. An example of this would be connecting with Colegau Cymru to promote this work.

Some attention and thought needs to be given to the resources included in the TrACE Toolkit to ensure that colleges taking this work forward in future can do so with interactive and informative support guides. These could include information of the resources needed for achieving organisation culture change and change management process.

The potential impact for the TrACE approach in FE is significant. This is highlighted by the case studies outlined in the videos created with learners' real life experiences, where a College has provided mental health and wellbeing support to enable them to continue with their educational journey. This is a key objective of the Welsh Government's newly released 'Children and Young People's Plan'¹⁰ which set out the commitment for 2022/2023 to "Support all children and young people to stay in education longer, get better results and achieve a qualification" and the TrACE approach to FE must to promoted as a means to help Welsh Government achieve this specific objective.



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ACE Hub Wales

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