Safe Places, Thriving Children: Embedding Trauma-Informed Practices into Alternative Care Settings

ESSC
Hamburg, June 2022
**Mental health and ACEs**

Mental health is widely stigmatized and misunderstood: It is, in fact, a positive state of well-being and a foundation that allows children and young people to build their futures. (1)

 Millions of adults across Europe live with a legacy of Adverse Childhood Experiences. (2)

(2) Bellis et al., 2019
Why do we need trauma-informed practices?

Children and young people that lost parental care are more likely to experience Adverse Childhood Experiences than their peers.
Principles of trauma-informed practices

1. Trauma recovery is only possible within **consistent caring relationships**.
2. Trauma needs to be understood from a **child developmental and ecological perspective**.
3. The trauma recovery journey should be a **partnership**.
4. Trauma-informed practices are grounded in **children’s rights**.
5. The **understanding** of children’s trauma needs to be reframed from a “deficit” model to an “adaptive” model.
To embed a trauma-informed care approach into child protection services, so as to better support children and young people affected by ACEs, and thereby increasing their chances to develop to their fullest potential.

**Project objective**

**How we achieve this:**

- Face-to-face trainings
- Online awareness-raising modules
- Organisational Development workshops
- Policy recommendations

Participation of young adults with alternative care experience
Key project outputs

Available on https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/trauma-informed-practices in English, Bulgarian, Croatian, Dutch, French, Greek, Hungarian and Serbian.
Key messages from young adults

- We are not problematic, we are adapting.
- Our behaviour is a normal reaction to an abnormal experience.
- We need help, not punishment.
- The greatest work results should come from your heart, not from your salary.
- Alternative care is not just a place to live; it should also be a place of mental growth.
- Look behind me and make an effort to find me – my story could be yours.
Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1
Acknowledge the impact trauma has on children by integrating trauma-informed practices into the provision of alternative care, to enable children to build caring and stable relationships with the adults that work with and for them, thereby ensuring children live in an environment that gives them the best chance to develop to their strongest selves.

RECOMMENDATION 2
The realisation of the right to mental health for all children and young people in alternative care - child protection services have the duty to uphold this right.

RECOMMENDATION 3
A trauma-sensitive and motivated workforce that knows how to protect and care for children’s mental health, and is supported to do so.

RECOMMENDATION 4
Systematic and meaningful child and youth participation to tailor the care offered to the real and individual needs of each child.
Project set-up

**Project coordinator**  
SOS Children’s Villages International

**Project partners**  
- SOS Children’s Villages Belgium  
- SOS Children’s Villages Bulgaria  
- SOS Children’s Villages Croatia  
- SOS Children’s Villages Greece  
- SOS Children’s Villages Hungary  
- SOS Children’s Villages Serbia  
- Centre for Excellence for Children’s Care and Protection (CELCIS)

**Time frame**  
March 2020 – July 2022

**Funding**  
The project is co-funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC) Programme of the European Union and SOS Children’s Villages.
Thank you for participating!

#BecomeTraumaAware
#TraumaAwareness
#TraumaInformedCare
#Train4ChildRights