

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

**ESSC**  
**Hamburg, June 2022**



**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)



- (1) The State of the World's Children 2021, Unicef, p. 7  
(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.



# Project objective

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.

## 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

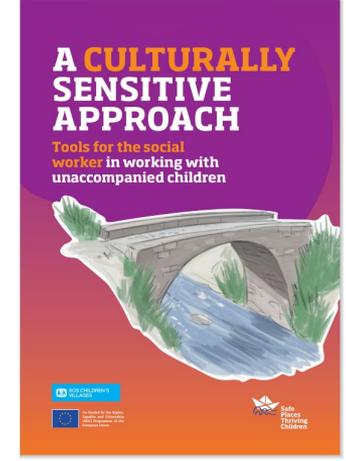
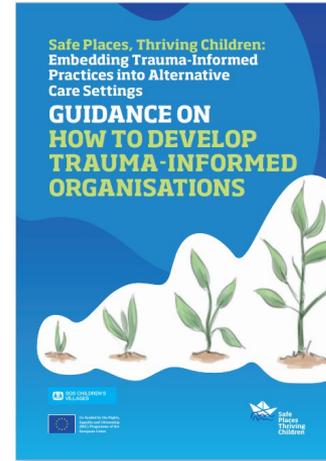
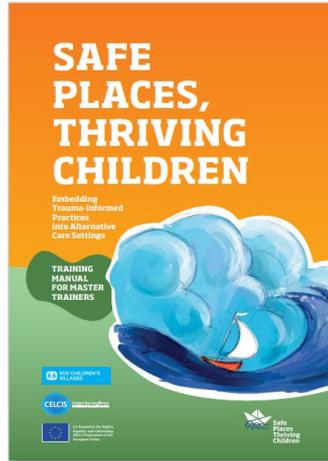
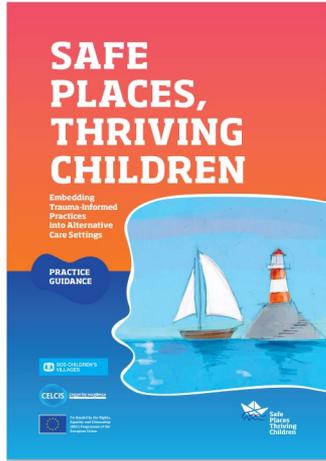
Practice  
Guidance

Training  
Manual

E-learning  
modules

Organisational  
Development

A Culturally  
Sensitive  
Approach



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

**All homes should feel like home.**

**It is important to teach me how to love in a correct and safe way.**

**What is love?  
System don't hurt me no more.**

- 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.



## 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 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

