

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT USER GUIDE



Ensuring quality youth care and development
in partnership with young people

January 2020 - Version 1.0
INTERNATIONAL POLICY
SUPPORT DOCUMENT



PUTTING POLICIES AND QUALITY STANDARDS INTO PRACTICE

The Youth Development User Guide serves as a global tool for continuously improving the quality of youth care and development and replaces all global youth-related guidelines and policies from SOS Children's Villages. Its intention is to support SOS member associations in bringing the SOS Care Promise to life. They are encouraged to tailor its implementation to their local realities and develop their own national youth concepts in line with this global user guide, in partnership with young people.

KEY USERS

Recommended for:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme directors and programme advisors • Youth workers • SOS parents and foster parents • Family strengthening field workers • Multidisciplinary teams (SOS aunts/family assistants, social workers, psychologists) • National management teams, particularly national/managing directors and national youth focal points • Programme development staff in General Secretariat and Promoting and Supporting Associations
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RELATED DOCUMENTS, TOOLS AND SYSTEMS

Internal frameworks:	
<u>SOS Care Promise</u>	Policy that articulates both what we do and how we do it via the principles and values that are the foundation of our work, the care solutions through which we implement our mission and the commitments to quality care
<u>Gender Equality Policy</u> (working paper)	SOS policy to implement gender equality
<u>Global framework for child safeguarding in SOS Children's Villages</u>	All internal policies and procedures that are in place to ensure that children and young people are kept safe in SOS programmes
<u>Strategy 2030</u>	Guiding framework for SOS Children's Villages until 2030. Special focus on young people in Strategic Initiative 3 "Empower young people"
<u>Gatekeeping Policy Support Document</u> and <u>Gatekeeping User Manual</u>	Guidelines to ensure we reach the right target group and implement a case management approach. Detailed outline of individual and family development planning and steps towards family reunification
Youth Participation User Guide	Guide to achieve meaningful youth participation in all areas affecting young people's lives
External frameworks:	
<u>United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)</u>	Internationally adopted human rights treaty with special attention to children until age 18 and their best interests
<u>Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)</u>	Universal commitment to the protection of human rights
<u>United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children</u>	Guidelines targeting policy and practice for children who have lost parental care or are at risk of losing it
<u>Moving Forward: Implementing the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of children</u>	Supporting document for the implementation of the United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children
<u>United Nations Sustainable Development Goals</u>	Blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all



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DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a critical time. It is characterised by physical growth and sexual maturation, combined with emotional, social and cognitive development. While in this phase, it is difficult to understand its significance. Only later in life – as an adult – can the individual look back and fully comprehend the trailblazing, dynamic nature of this phase and how important it was to their life’s journey. Additionally, evidence shows that the adolescent brain is particularly sensitive to both positive and negative environmental influences and that external factors, like the family environment or peers, can have a profound impact on how the young person responds to life (UNICEF, 2018).

Young people without parental care and those at risk of losing it are among the most vulnerable groups in our societies. They lack the support to successfully navigate in a disruptive, competitive world towards social and professional inclusion. External trends like high youth unemployment, the effects of climate change, forced displacement and high individualism add additional pressure and challenges on them.

SOS Children’s Villages, together with partners, strongly stands up for young people without parental care and those at risk of losing it. We believe that **strong relationships with caring adults can be game changers** in these young people’s lives. By offering quality youth development services, we make sure they are not left behind and are supported to achieve self-fulfilment, ultimately contributing to the development of their families, communities and societies.

Success, just like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. As such, there are **many forms a successful transition from childhood to independent life can take** – it depends very much on context and culture and the individual personality of the young person. The Youth Development User Guide defines our global commitment to quality

youth care and development. Combined with a national contextualisation process that adapts this frame to the situation in different locations, it is a strong tool to continuously improve our youth work.

Already in the title this user guide highlights the strong need to work in partnership with young people. We cannot rely on our own internal capability to create solutions for young people, but **need to build and strengthen our partnership with young people every day.** Their right to be part of decision-making is not only promoted in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, but also strongly highlighted in the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children. Partnerships require patience, respect, transparency and honesty to succeed, no matter whether this concerns adults, young people or organisations. In all our interventions with young people, we need to live these values and adapt from working for young people to working with them.

We live this **partnership spirit also with authorities and other agencies.** We build on existing youth care and development structures and jointly strive for quality youth development interventions in all areas affecting young people’s lives.

The core essence of this guide are the “high five of youth development” – five guidelines outlining how our organisation promotes youth development throughout relevant areas of young people’s lives. “High five” generally stands for a time-tested tradition of two people clapping hands to celebrate a small or big success. In order not to miss the hand of your counterpart, “high five” requires both parties to focus, to look at each other and mutually adjust – just as staff and young people need to do in our programmes. **It is this kind of positive partnership spirit that we want to promote and live with young people in our programmes.**



@ Felipe Orozco Arica

@ Lydia Mantler



1 WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

1.1 Working in partnership with young people for quality youth care and development in SOS programmes

Protecting and promoting young people’s right to participate requires that adults and young people work in partnership across all areas of life. SOS Children’s Villages strives to develop these partnerships in families, communities and societies as a whole, in order for young people in all our programmes to participate fully, according to their evolving capacities (Youth Participation Guide, 2020).

This position on working with young people, instead of for young people, is a core value for all our interactions and is strongly emphasised throughout this user guide. The success of our ability to work in partnership with young people is dependent on our willingness and capacity to do so. Accordingly, the Youth Development User Guide has been developed in partnership with young people from alternative care and family strengthening programmes. This partnership included the International Youth Coalition as well as a Youth Advisory Group and was based on Lundy’s Model of Participation (Lundy, 2007).

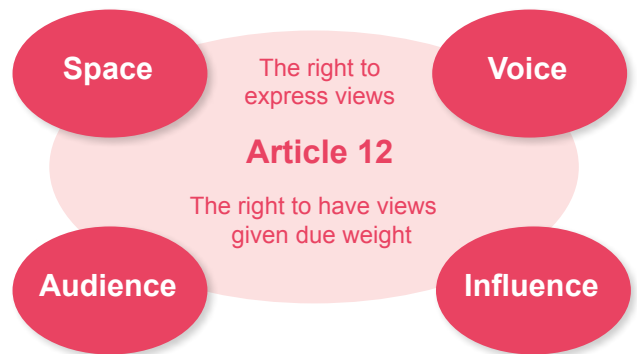


Figure 1: The Lundy Model of Participation

With this model in mind, phone calls and virtual group calls as well as face-to-face meetings were set up to collect the input of the young people (**space**). The date and time for these meetings was decided together with them and whenever individual calls were preferred this was organised according to their schedules. The young people were given a range of options as to how they could give input as well as provided with all the appropriate information needed to form their opinions (**voice**). Their views



What do we mean by “young people”?

In this document, the term young people (10-24 years) is used, following the United Nations definition, to combine adolescents (10-19 years) and youth (15-24 years). (*UNICEF Programme Guidance for the Second Decade: Programming with and for Adolescents, p. 9*) Legal age limits (e.g. the age of majority and corresponding rights and responsibilities) are defined in the respective national legislation. That being said, the life stage that ‘young people’ are in is characterised by physical, cognitive and psychosocial changes towards personal autonomy and independent life. SOS Children’s Villages understands this stage as a continuous process, which is particular to each young person’s background, circumstances, wishes and abilities. In this respect, the starting and end point for this process is individual and can only be determined on a case-by-case basis, in partnership with the young person.

were directly communicated to members of the core team (audience) who greatly valued their inputs and integrated them throughout the Youth Development User Guide (influence). When it was not possible to include their views, this was clearly explained to them, in a transparent and respectful manner.

“... the more you support us to participate in decision-making, the more you build our confidence on the transition to adulthood. If you respect and support our right to participate, we can develop our personality! We can improve the relationship with adults and caregivers. In the end, youth participation will help us to rely on ourselves and become independent. And this also means: It will make SOS programmes better.”

Extract from the speech delivered by members of the International Youth Coalition at the 2019 Come Together II Meeting

Working in partnership with young people on the development of this guide has been key in anchoring it to their realities and therefore, it is vital that such a process also takes place during national contextualisation of the Youth Development User Guide. This mindset “nothing for young people without young people” must guide all our initiatives.

“ We (members of the International Youth Coalition 2019) know that youth participation is not about young people always getting what they want. It is about power sharing between young people and adults, on small or big decisions, depending on our age and maturity.”

1.2 Working in partnership with young people to advocate for their rights

We firmly believe that young people of our target group are the experts of their own lives. That’s why we ensure that they are equally recognised, respected and protected as rights holders throughout our programmes and we empower them to be self-advocates. We know that evidence-based and targeted advocacy, which is based on the realities of the young people of our target group has the biggest impact. When young people are meaningfully involved in developing and delivering recommendations on how to ensure quality alternative care, the impact is greater than when adults do this alone.

Advocating in partnership with young people requires that we ensure the space, voice, audience and influence for this participation to take place meaningfully. This is realised by providing a safe and inclusive environment where they can express their views (*space*) as well as the information they need to form those views. Young people in

our programmes learn about their rights as well as how to report rights violations. Through child rights education and trainings (for example in public speaking) they get the necessary skills to speak up for their rights. They are also informed that their participation in advocacy initiatives is always voluntary (they do not have to take part if they do not want to) and includes proper support (*voice*). In addition, we strive to create spaces for young people to present their requests and recommendations to governments and other key decision-makers. Together, we advocate for quality youth care and development services as outlined in this guide and support young people to engage in dialogue at national, regional and international level to increase public awareness of the situation and rights of young people of our target group (*audience*). During the events we take all appropriate measures to ensure that the voices of young people are taken seriously and engage in continuous dialogue with the young people to make sure that they understand why certain decisions are taken and what the next steps will be, and we inform them about follow-up actions after the event (*influence*). In addition, we encourage them to include their experience of participating in advocacy activities in their curriculum and portfolios.

In conclusion, living this partnership meaningfully means becoming a more credible partner for all our stakeholders. As the African proverb goes “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far: go together.”

www

The booklet [*You have the right to care and protection! \(2019\)*](#) is a helpful tool available in different languages to inform young people about their rights in a youth-friendly way.

2

THE “HIGH FIVE” OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN SOS CHILDREN’S VILLAGES

The global Youth Development User Guide explains how to work with young people across all services in SOS programmes. It outlines how we live youth development in partnership with young people throughout **different care options (guideline 1)**, in the fields of **emotional and social development, physical and mental health (guideline 2)**, **education and skills development (guideline 3)**, and in **leaving care and after-care processes (guideline 4)**.

Guideline 5 addresses the **professionals working with young people**, and their capacity building and training regarding youth-related issues.

In each guideline, you will find our main points at a glance, followed by our approach in detail including examples for activities, and global SOS Care Promise indicators related to this guideline.



Figure 2: Youth development in partnership with young people



GUIDELINE 1: Young people are provided with the care option that is in their best interests.

a | Relevant quality youth care options:

We shape a range of relevant quality youth care options with partners and governments in line with national legislation.

b | Regular review of care setting:

We regularly review the necessity and suitability of the care setting of each individual young person with the young person, a multi-disciplinary team of relevant professionals and the caregiver.

c | Individual development:

We accompany each young person in our programmes in their individual development.

a | We shape a range of relevant quality youth care options with partners and governments in line with national legislation.

- SOS member associations develop a range of care options for young people based on a thorough assessment of their local context, youth care services available in the community, and in line with national legal requirements.
- Young people are involved in the process of shaping and continuously adapting care options.
- All SOS care options for young people are in line with the SOS Children's Villages principles (see figure 4) and allow for individualised and specialised care as described in the different guidelines of the global Youth Development User Guide. We aim at small group sizes and an appropriate staff-youth ratio in all alternative care options for young people, according to the needs of the young people, in line with national laws and [Moving Forward: Implementing the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of children](#).
- We aim that young people in all care options have access to their own space for privacy in their home, can easily interact with community members and have access to education and jobs in the community.
- The range of SOS care options for young people includes different forms (see figure 3) that offer different levels of care intensity in order to meet the varying level of maturity of young people and ensure a smooth phasing out of care. One example are semi-independent living arrangements, where young people live on their own, mostly in groups, and receive regular support and follow-up of a youth worker.

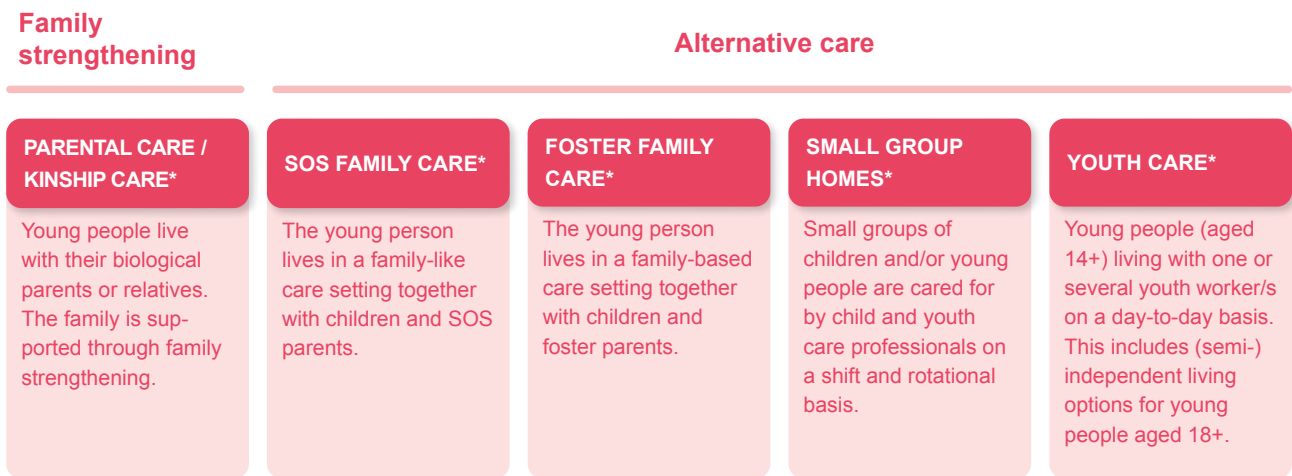
Examples for activities:

- Regularly monitoring the quality of care options for young people based on internal and external frameworks and indicators, and implementing necessary adjustments or broadening the range of care options for young people
- Taking measures to adapt care settings to the needs of young people and their caregivers, e.g. analysing and adapting the staff-youth ratio in different care settings, or rethinking who shares rooms with who, to adapt to individual preferences and privacy needs

b | We regularly review the necessity and suitability of the care setting of each individual young person with the young person, a multi-disciplinary team of relevant professionals and the caregiver.

- If the annual review of necessity and suitability (also called 'review assessment' – see [Gatekeeping User Manual](#)) indicates that a transition between care options is in the young person's best interests, the decision is taken in a participatory way and documented, and its reasons remain transparent to all involved parties.
- Emotional needs, opportunities for social integration, religion and cultural norms, as well as educational and employability options are taken into account. Age or sex of the young person should never be the only criteria for the transition to another care option.
- Under no circumstances is a transition (e.g. from the SOS family to a youth care option) to be used as a sanction for inappropriate behaviour.

Care options for young people in SOS programmes



* Classification in New Programme Structure (NPS)

Figure 3: Care options for young people in SOS programmes

SOS Children’s Villages principles interpreted for young people



Figure 4: The SOS Children’s Villages principles interpreted for young people

- The preparation for the transition starts as soon as there is a decision that another care setting would be more suitable for the young person. It is recommended to foresee a preparation period of six months or more, depending on each individual case. Importantly, young people who have grown up in an SOS family have the opportunity to maintain and nurture existing emotional bonds to caregivers or adult reference persons, siblings and peers of the former care setting, if it is what they wish.
- If re-integration with the family of origin is in the best interests of the young person, this means the end of SOS involvement or continuing the support of the young person and their family through family strengthening, if possible. Criteria for assessment and preparation of this process are outlined in the [Gatekeeping User Manual](#).

Examples for activities:

- Preparing young people for a transition, e.g. through visits in the future care setting, taking part in leisure time activities that take place in the new care setting
- Preparing members of the new care setting to welcome and integrate the new member
- Facilitating opportunities of contact to persons from a former care setting, such as phone calls or regular visits of reference persons in the new care setting or of the young person in the former care setting

c | We accompany each young person in our programmes in their individual development.

- For young people in alternative care: The individual development plan (IDP) is a tool that helps to structure this process from childhood onwards, as outlined in the [Gatekeeping User Manual](#). For young people specifically, it helps them outline their journey towards independence. With evolving capacities, the young person takes on more responsibility for the goals identified (together with the caregiver) in the individual development plan. The planning process builds on the individual strengths and needs of the young person. Its focus might change as the young person grows older, e.g. to career orientation and planning and acquisition of life skills. Specific attention is given to mapping social support networks of young people. For young people in alternative care, the IDP will include concrete preparation steps for leaving care (see guideline 4) and can be supported through further types of specialised planning, such as life projects or leaving care plans.

- For young people in family strengthening programmes, we support the young person’s development through direct interventions in the fields of education, vocational guidance, employability and other needs related to the prevention of the loss of family care. In parallel, we strengthen the caregivers’ ability to care for and accompany the young person. The development of all family members is monitored through the family development plan.

Examples for activities:

- Reviewing the IPD every six months together with the young person, and ensuring that the review with the young person is done in a safe and comfortable environment by a person that the young person trusts. This includes providing the young person with a copy of the updated IDP at the end of every review meeting

Global indicators for guideline 1:

Please note: The following indicators are taken from a set of the 23 global SOS Care Promise indicators that were selected to globally monitor the progress of implementation of the [SOS Care Promise](#). **In order to closely monitor and evaluate your youth-related work, please filter the indicators by age groups and different care settings.** The below mentioned indicators are monitored on a global level. In addition, member associations are encouraged to monitor more [PDB2 indicators](#) relevant for their youth work in the course of their contextualization process.

- Number of children in alternative care per family or group (PDB2 house) (indicator #3)
- Number of care options per programme location (indicator #10)
- % of children and young people in alternative care / families in family strengthening with up-to-date core assessment (indicator #12)
- % of families/children with up-to-date development plan (indicator #18)



[Guidelines on determining the best interests of the child UNHCR \(2008\)](#)



Guideline 2: Young people's social and emotional development is supported and their physical and mental health needs are met.

a | Social and emotional skills:

We promote the development of social and emotional skills in young people and support the development of a strong personal identity.

b | Social integration and strong networks:

We enable young people to grow up as an integrated member of their communities and to develop strong networks.

c | Ownership of their health:

We empower young people to progressively take care of their own health and well-being.

d | Mental health:

We foster young people's psychosocial well-being and their mental health and stability.

e | Sexual and reproductive health:

We foster awareness, open communication and comprehensive education regarding sexual and reproductive rights and health.

Social and emotional development

Physical and mental health

a | We promote the development of social and emotional skills in young people and support the development of a strong personal identity.

- We foster an atmosphere of open communication and empower young people to express their own opinions and concerns.
- We support caregivers to be positive, supportive role models for young people and to guide them towards taking their own decisions according to their level of maturity and capacities.
- We promote opportunities for experiential learning, allowing young people to make their own mistakes and to learn from them, with guidance from adults, but without being 'over-protected'.
- We strengthen social and emotional skills in young people, such as affective bonding, strategies for trauma recovery, resilience, adaptation, self-care, caring for others, non-violent communication, conflict resolution, decision-making, creativity and innovation.
- A strong understanding from young people of their family history and religious and cultural background is an important basis to build an identity. From the time a young

person enters SOS care, we facilitate regular and appropriate, well-supported and monitored contact between the young person and his/her family and community of origin, when in their best interests.

Examples for activities:

- Training caregivers and young people to understand the emotional, social and identity development during adolescence, and promoting a positive view of young people
 - Offering trauma-informed care training to staff in order to enable them to talk about and recognize mental health concerns, such as stress, depression and anxiety in young people
- ### b | We enable young people to grow up as an integrated member of their communities and to develop strong networks.
- We support young people to establish and maintain supportive and safe relationships with peers and family members, including their biological families, to create the stability that young people need to become independent, contributing adults.

- We involve young people in social and community services, youth networks, creating a sense of belonging to a community.

Examples for activities:

- Promoting opportunities for integration and peer support among young people, such as community-based clubs and services, youth networks, virtual platforms, etc.
- Conducting a social integration reflection workshop using the "Local Action Tool for Social Integration" and implementing related activities in order to support community integration of young people

c | We empower young people to progressively take care of their own health and well-being.

- We empower young people to take care of their health by encouraging them to do sports and physical activities and to pay attention to their nutrition and personal hygiene.
- We provide young people with access to health care and counselling services that are gender-responsive and tailored to the needs of young people, including those with special needs.

Examples for activities:

- Informing young people about sports activities taking place in the community, about workshops or events where young people can try different forms of sports, learn about nutrition, personal hygiene etc.

d | We foster young people's psychosocial well-being and their mental health and stability.

- We strengthen young people's awareness and comprehensive education on psychosocial well-being, mental health and stability.
- We offer specialised services to young people suffering from trauma in order to build their resilience and enable them to cope with their past (see info box on mental health on p. 15).
- Behavioural issues with implications on young people's health (e.g. misuse of alcohol, medicine/other substances or use of illegal drugs, self-harm, violence, or others) must not be used as a reason for ending SOS support, but for facilitating specialised, trauma-informed interventions. These include identifying the root causes and referring the young person to psychosocial support and treatment, including specialised external service providers (if necessary for safety and/or health reasons).
- We implement prevention strategies to break cycles of physical, emotional, sexual and gender-based discrim-

ination and violence and neglect towards and among young people. When discrimination or violence has already occurred, reporting and responding happens in line with the internal and external safeguarding guidelines.

Examples for activities:

- Organizing workshops, discussions and focus groups to raise awareness of gender role allocations and gender equity in order to prevent gender-based violence. This can include working with communities on early marriage, female genital mutilation, or other topics
- Raising awareness of prevention measures (e.g. strengthening young people's (self) protection, coping strategies and risk identification through a child protection training); informing them about internal and external responding procedures to rights violations, their civic responsibilities, and consequences of rights violations in line with national legislation

e | We foster awareness, open communication and comprehensive education regarding sexual and reproductive rights and health.

- From early childhood onwards, but even more so at a life stage where intimate relationships and sexuality become relevant, we create safe spaces for conversations between youth, parents, care professionals, and experts to talk openly about diversity – and specifically to answer questions and dispel myths connected with gender issues and sexuality. Respecting privacy and confidentiality in these discussions is key.
- In case a young woman becomes pregnant or a young man becomes a father, this is not a reason for ending SOS support. On the contrary, both the young mother and father receive special attention and support (see info box on Actions to take on p. 15). All decisions are taken in the best interests of the young mother or father and child, in close cooperation with care professionals, biological parents or other persons of trust of the young parents, and in line with the national legislation.

Examples for activities

- Building awareness about contraception methods, family planning, parenting and family life education in young women and men and their caregivers, with a special emphasis on the importance of choice for young women with regards to consent-based sexual relations and family planning
- Building awareness about methods of protection against HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections



@ Björn-Owe Holmberg

Actions to take when young girls and boys in our programmes become parents:

- Assess if the pregnancy is due to a situation of sexual violence
- Ensure a safe environment where the young pregnant woman can be informed about her options and can discuss these with a person she trusts
- Ensure young mothers and fathers have access to appropriate medical services, sources of financial support and accommodation
- Provide young mothers and fathers with emotional and material support before and after birth
- Strengthen parental, practical and employability skills in young parents
- Ensure that young parents can complete their education

Global indicators for guideline 2:

Please see the comment to the indicators for guideline 1.

- % of children and young people who have (mostly) a positive relationship with the family of origin (indicator #1)
- % of alternative care / family strengthening children who have received a child protection training (5 years +) (indicator #13)
- Social integration index indicator (indicator #16)

www

[Global framework for child safeguarding in SOS Children's Villages](#)
[Trauma informed care](#)
[Local Action Tool for Social Integration](#)

Mental Health in Adolescent Age

Mental health promotion and prevention are one of the keys to helping adolescents thrive. According to the World Health Organisation (2019), **half of all mental health conditions start by 14 years of age, but most cases are undetected and untreated.** Research shows that young people living in alternative care are diagnosed with up to four times more mental health issues than young people in general population (Ford et al,2007).

Conditions such as **emotional disorders, behavioural disorders and eating disorders are relevant for this age group.** The consequences of not addressing adolescent mental health conditions can cause stigmatisation, dropping out from school and multiple placement breakdowns. The impact can even extend to adulthood, impairing both physical and mental health and limiting opportunities to lead fulfilling lives due to social exclusion, homelessness, imprisonment, substance abuse and disadvantage in the labour market (Newton et al,2000; Williams & Sherr,2008).

Traumatic experiences connected to neglect, abuse and maltreatment have significant influence on the mental health of young people in alternative care and family strengthening services. Young people who experienced long lasting extremely adverse situations, especially if they lack support from close adults, are required to adapt to these dangerous and frightening circumstances by changes in their thinking, beliefs and behaviour. **Situations from the past are often revisited by young people as part of their identity and autonomy development.** Young people need to understand and make sense of their past experiences and their family situation in order to move on and be able to plan their future. Concepts of *Trauma informed care* and Life story work can be used to support them in this process.



Guideline 3: Young people have access to relevant education and skills development, including employability and entrepreneurial skills.

a | Access to education:

We ensure that all young people in SOS programmes have equal access to relevant education according to their needs and capacities, wherever possible in their local communities.

b | Individual counselling:

Through individual education and career counselling, we encourage and support young people to achieve the level of education and training that best corresponds to their individual interests and talents.

c | Skills development:

We support young people to develop the skills required to become self-reliant and contributing members of their communities, together with partners.

d | Work experience:

We facilitate opportunities for young people to get first work experience if needed, in partnership with public and private bodies.

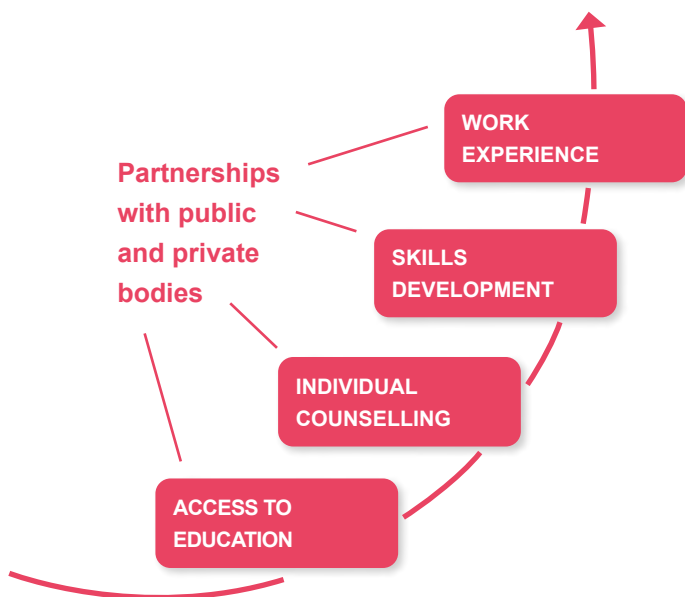


Figure 5: Supporting education and skills for independence

a | We ensure that all young people in SOS programmes have equal access to relevant education according to their needs and capacities, wherever possible in their local communities.

- We promote the importance of and access to formal and non-formal education (see glossary) and foster an environment of lifelong learning in all programmes from early childhood onwards, depending on young people's interests and capabilities. Whenever possible, this takes place in their local communities.
- We support young people to achieve the degree of secondary and tertiary education that corresponds to their capacities.
- We ensure young people's access to market relevant technical and vocational education and training (TVET) services. Where good quality vocational education is not available from other service providers, we offer vocational training opportunities for young people.
- We provide young people with access to technology and make them aware of online resources and courses that can support their development. We particularly target girls in order to reduce the existing gender gap.

Examples for activities

- Supporting young people to access various financial sources like scholarships and educational loans

b) Through individual education and career counselling, we encourage and support young people to achieve the level of education and training that best corresponds to their individual interests and talents.

- The individual development plan and the family development plan are tools that help young people to identify the steps they need to take to reach their goals, build decent careers and be independent.
- We promote gender equality by building awareness on the issue of “traditionally female” and “traditionally male” careers and by promoting a broad range of educational or career paths regardless of the sex of the young person.
- We pay particular attention to the inclusion of young people who have special educational needs, who lag behind in education or who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).
- If young people wish to change path due to failure or change of interest, we support them to find the education and career path that corresponds to them.

Examples for activities

- Building the capacities of caregivers to successfully accompany young people on their educational and career pathways, including building their knowledge on opportunities and challenges of information and communication technology
- Organising regular individual educational and career guidance sessions with young people. This includes measures to help young people identify their interests and talents (like psychometric tests or skills tests), as well as information about labour market needs and trends
- Providing targeted, gender-informed education and employability counselling to the most vulnerable groups of young people (like girls, young people who are not in education, employment, or training, or young people with special educational needs). Apart from individual coaching, measures to (re)integrate them in the educational system could include motivational courses, educational programmes, training courses with practical components, academic levelling courses, internship experiences, access to state or other subsidies etc.



@ Salma Inani

What are the skills young people need?

- **Social and emotional skills**, such as self-confidence, affective bonding, strategies for trauma recovery, resilience, adaptation, self-care, caring for others, non-violent communication, conflict resolution, decision making, creativity and innovation (see guideline 2)
- **Practical life skills**, such as cooking, laundry, cleaning, budgeting, basic house maintenance
- **Employability skills**, such as leadership skills, network building, punctuality, personal appearance, working in a team, decision-making, effective communication, coping with stress. This includes also job finding skills like job seeking, application, and interview skills.
- **Information & Communication technology (ICT) skills**, such as digital skills, how to deal with social media, online platforms (balancing the opportunities with the risks)
- **Entrepreneurial skills**, such as business planning, fundraising, financial management, marketing, business upscaling, as well as time management, critical analysis, innovative thinking, and the ability to set and achieve goals
- **Skills to advocate for their rights** at local, regional and national levels. These include understanding how democratic processes work in society, analysing youth and labour rights and violations, networking with other youth groups and civil society organisations and engaging in dialogue with decision-makers.
- **Participation skills**, such as claiming spaces for participation, inventing new modes of participation, developing campaigns and action plans

c | We support young people to develop the skills required to become self-reliant and contributing members of their communities, together with partners.

- The knowledge and skills that young people acquire will drive their employability, social inclusion, health, and well-being as adults. Preparation for social and professional inclusion should start as early as possible, taking into account the maturity and capacity of the young person, and national legislation.
- Young people are supported to build their soft skills in order to have a solid basis for developing further skills necessary in the labour market.
- When necessary, young people fill their educational gaps by attending specific training programmes, provided by SOS Children's Villages and partners.

Examples for activities

- Actively involving young people in day-to-day tasks to build practical life skills
- Encouraging young people interested in starting their own business, by supporting them to access start-up capital through governmental programmes and other partners

d | We facilitate opportunities for young people to get first work experience if needed, in partnership with public and private bodies.

- We actively work with local employers in order to create opportunities for internships or job shadowing for young people and offer young people internship possibilities within SOS programmes.
- We promote the involvement of young people in designing and implementing these partnerships.

Examples for activities

- Approaching local training providers or employers to offer relevant training, mentorship or work experience opportunities for young people
- Preparing young people for internships, by training them on professional work behaviour, safety rules and technical requirements in the respective company
- Facilitating exchange and knowledge sharing platforms (virtual ones, like YouthLinks, or face-to-face ones) with other young people or adults who have already entered the job market, to open up opportunities for first work experience



Global indicators for guideline 3:

Please see the comment to the indicators for guideline 1.

- % of children and young people in alternative care and family strengthening with at least satisfactory educational performance (indicator #20)
- % of young people in alternative care / family strengthening with at least medium level of employability// self-employment or employment skills (indicator #21)
- % of young people (15-24 years) who are not enrolled in education, employment or training (NEET) (indicator # 22)
- % of beneficiaries in alternative care / family strengthening that receive support activities by a partner (indicator #23)

“ Educating our youth is not just about sending them to secondary, tertiary or university studies. It's about widening their knowledge, skills and expertise and helping them to absorb the truth about life.”

Educational director, Sri Lanka



Guideline 4: Young people are accompanied on their journey to independent life.

a | Holistic preparation process:

We partner with every young person to ensure a holistic preparation process towards independent life.

b | Partnerships with key stakeholders:

Together with young people, we identify and build positive relationships and partnerships with other relevant stakeholders to ensure that they are aware of the part they play in supporting the young person in the process towards independence.

c | After-care support:

Young people who have grown up in alternative care are eligible for after-care support in line with the social and cultural context of the country, and possibly in partnership with other service providers.

A continuous process from care to independence:

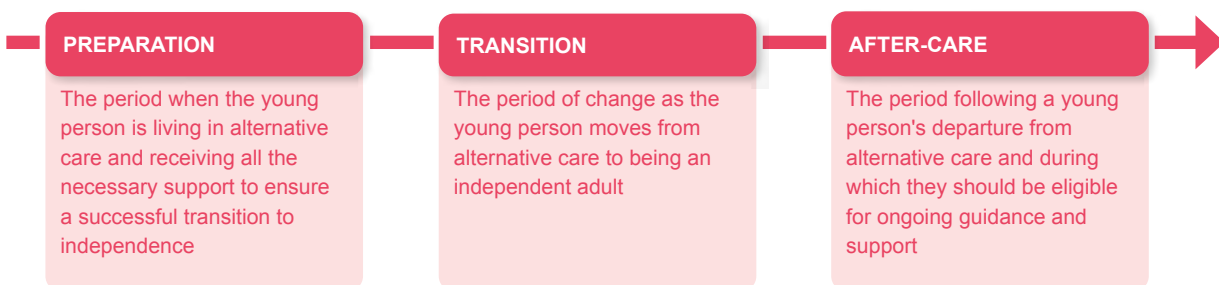


Figure 6: Process from care to independence

a | We partner with every young person to ensure a holistic preparation process towards independent life.

- The preparation towards an independent life is gradually built from the time the young person enters an SOS programme in accordance with the SOS Care Promise.
- In alternative care, the concrete planning process for transitioning to independent life should start at least two years before the young person leaves their care setting. This process is monitored and revised by the young person and the SOS parent, foster parent or youth worker at least twice a year. This can be supported by additional planning tools such as Life Pro-

ject, semi-independent living plan, leaving care plan and pathway plan ([Prepare for Leaving Care Practice Guidance](#)).

- In family strengthening, case managers work together with the families and the young person to identify the specific interventions that are needed to prepare the young person toward independent life (e.g. with a focus on education, social inclusion, career guidance).

Examples for activities

- Informing young people about their rights as well as ensuring that they have copies of important documents such as legal identity documents



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- Ensuring that the young person has the skills necessary for independent life, by actively including them in day-to-day tasks (such as cooking, laundry, cleaning, budgeting and basic house maintenance)
- Identifying where the young person would like to live, and if relevant, with whom
- Supporting the young person to develop good financial habits and helping them to open a bank account and sign up to all other necessary financial systems

b) Together with young people, we identify and build positive relationships and partnerships with other relevant stakeholders to ensure that they are aware of the part they play in supporting the young person in the process towards independence.

- We actively involve caregivers, other family members and professionals such as social workers, teachers, and psychologists on the young person’s journey towards an independent life.
- We help young people to develop and/or take part in social networks, youth networks as well as SOS alumni groups and other care leavers’ networks where they can receive support and guidance from their peers.
- We encourage the young person to identify at least one person of trust to support them in all phases of their journey to ensure that caring relationships are maintained even after leaving SOS programmes.

Examples for activities

- Providing information about, and facilitating access to, various relevant national, regional and international networks and alumni groups
- Encouraging young people to work together and engage in dialogue on topics relevant to them

- Supporting contact with biological parent(s) or other family members when it is safe to do so, is in their best interests and is something they wish to do, and helping them to understand and make sense of family relationships

c) Young people who have grown up in alternative care are eligible for after-care support in line with the social and cultural context of the country, and possibly in partnership with other service providers.

- Whenever needed, young people who have transitioned from alternative care to an independent life are welcome to come back to their SOS parent, foster parent or youth worker for emotional support. It is vital that young people are aware that they can seek support at any time.
- After-care support should target well-defined, individual needs of the young person and be tailored to the young person’s potential and capacity.
- When it is needed, SOS Children’s Villages offers financial or other material support, on a case-by-case basis, to young people who have left our programmes, even when the state is no longer legally responsible. This is supported by a clear and time-bound plan with clear goals and objectives, which has been agreed on by the young person and the SOS programme.

Examples for activities

- Supporting young people to have a safe and affordable place to live that is suitably furnished and located at a convenient distance from the young person’s place of education or work
- With the consent of the young person, visiting them in their new home

- Following-up on the young person to ensure that he or she has a stable income and access to all relevant sources of financial support, including inheritances and money gifts, welfare benefits and allowances

“ It is important to remember that the success of after-care support for care leavers will, to a large extent, be influenced by how well all aspects of the preparation work have been undertaken, including those relating to practical skills.”

(Prepare for Leaving Care Practice Guidance)

Indicator for guideline 4:

Please see the comment to the indicators for guideline 1.

- % of families/young people who are self-reliant when exiting alternative care/family strengthening (indicator #17)

Good Practice: Prepare for Leaving Care

The Prepare for Leaving Care Practice Guidance and Training Manual were developed to build the capacity of a range of care professionals who work with children and young people to better prepare them towards independent life. Young people with care experience were involved in the development of both publications and also served as co-trainers of the training at national level. The impact of their participation was clear from the training evaluation: the majority of trainees stated that they had gained a better understanding of the situation of care leavers and that they now know how to support them better. For example, one trainee noted, “Now I have new tools for working with young people, and I will use them.” [Learn more.](#)



GUIDELINE 5: Caregivers and support staff have the skills and knowledge to support the development of young people.

a | Strengthened relationships between caregivers and young people:

In alternative care, we strengthen the profession of SOS parents and youth workers so that they can be persons of trust with strong and healthy emotional bonds to young people.

b | Youth-related training and skills building:

We provide caregivers and support staff with continuous training and skills development related to youth issues, together with partners.

c | Youth work anchored on national level:

Member associations ensure that there is a position on national level responsible to oversee youth care and development.

a | In alternative care, we strengthen the profession of SOS parents and youth workers so that they can be persons of trust with strong and healthy emotional bonds to young people.

- For young people who have grown up in SOS families, the SOS parent is the key point of reference and contin-

ues to support them on their journey to independence. The youth worker supports young people to nurture those bonds as long as they wish and as this is in their best interests.

- All professionals (SOS parents or foster parents, youth workers, support staff, programme directors) cooperate

closely and work together with families of origin and local external parties (schools, communities, social workers) to ensure the best support for young people.

- Through recruitment, capacity building and training, we make sure that all professionals promote a positive, strengths-based view of young people and that they are willing and able to include them in decision-making processes according to their evolving capacities.
- All staff living and working with young people assume their leading role in guiding and supporting the development of young people and act as role models, mentors and coaches for them.
- We create a supportive environment for caregivers of young people and foster their well-being and long-term commitment.

Examples for activities:

- Adjusting the profile for SOS parents and youth workers considering the changing realities (range of care options, profiles of young people, etc) in programmes
- Establishing measures to support professionals living and working with young people, e.g. regular supervision, exchange groups, in close cooperation between the Programme Development and Human Resources departments

b| We provide caregivers and support staff with continuous training and skills building related to youth issues, together with partners.

- In alternative care, professionals are empowered and enabled to be reliable and competent sources of support for young people and their families, and to support young people's developmental, health, participation, education and employability needs and rights.
- In family strengthening, capacity building activities on topics such as youth care, youth development and youth participation are implemented according to the needs and circumstances of the family.
- Existing training and development opportunities are contextualised and offered at both face-to-face and digital level.

Examples for activities:

- Training SOS parents, foster parents and youth workers on youth care and development (considering current research trends) and establishing a network of support that they can access if necessary
- Conducting workshops and trainings with biological parents in areas of youth care, development and participation

c| Member associations ensure that there is a position on national level responsible to oversee youth care and development.

- One person on national level oversees the youth care and development work in the programmes and develops and implements activities to implement the contextualised national Youth Development User Guide. He or she is also a key cooperation partner for the Human Resources department regarding the capacity building of care professionals, biological parents and other key stakeholders related to youth care and development (see task list in annex 2). In addition, he or she works with Fund Development to coordinate corporate and other partnerships for youth development and employability.

Examples for activities

- Analysing existing needs and gaps in youth work and freeing resources so that youth-related issues can be addressed step-by-step

Global indicators for guideline 5:

Unfortunately, there are no centrally available data from global IT systems on caregivers. Therefore, no global indicators can be used for monitoring and evaluation. Nevertheless, it is recommended to monitor, for example, training attendance, turnover, etc. of staff working with young people according to data available within the member association.



[SOS Parent Profession User Guide and Annex 2 on Youth worker's tasks and competencies](#)

“ We now understand that the best way to reduce conflict is not to scream, but to try to create mutual respect and trust. It can be about small things, like saying ‘you look beautiful today’. If we want respect, we must give respect. If we want the children to be listened, we must listen. And if we want our children to trust us, we must trust them.”

SOS mother & participant I Decide My Future, Mozambique





3

GLOSSARY

After-care: the period following a young person's departure from a formal care setting and during which they should be in receipt of, or eligible for, ongoing guidance and support. ([Leaving Care Practice Guidance](#))

Care: parenting children and young people. It covers both care in families of origin and care in an alternative setting. ([SOS Care Promise](#))

Caregiver: the person who is responsible for the upbringing and daily care of the child. This also includes biological parents of young people in family strengthening. ([SOS Care Promise](#))

Care leaver: someone who is moving out of a formal care placement. At SOS Children's Villages this transition is based on the maturity, aspirations and best interests of the young person ([SOS Care Promise](#))

Care option: a specific setting in which a child receives care. ([SOS Care Promise](#))

Care professional: professionally trained caregiver who provides care to children and/or young people on a daily basis and resides with them in the programme. Care professionals include SOS parents, foster parents, youth workers and family strengthening field workers.

Family reintegration: the process of a young person in alternative care transitioning back to the care of his or her family of origin. ([SOS Care Promise](#))

Formal learning is always organised and structured, and has learning objectives. From the learner's standpoint, it is always intentional: i.e. the learner's explicit objective is to gain knowledge, skills and/or competences. Typical examples are learning that takes place within the initial education and training system or workplace training arranged by the employer.

Informal learning is never organised, has no set objective in terms of learning outcomes and is never intentional from the learner's standpoint. Often it is referred to as learning by experience or just as experience.

Non-formal learning is rather organised and can have learning objectives. It may occur at the initiative of the individual but also happens as a by-product of more organised activities, whether or not the activities themselves have learning objectives. ([OECD: Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning](#))

Independence/independent living: when a young person is no longer living in a formal alternative care placement. ([Leaving Care Practice Guidance](#))

Leaving care: the process launched when a young person living in formal alternative care reaches an age at which they are no longer legally entitled to live in a care placement. Leaving care includes preparation for the move, the process of moving toward independent living (transition and semi-independence), and the period following that move. ([Leaving Care Practice Guidance](#))

Review assessment: regular (every 12 months) review to examine the necessity and suitability of the current care placement and the support provided. ([Gatekeeping User Manual](#))

Self-reliance: a status where a person has sufficient resources for livelihood, a strong social support network and is socially integrated ([SOS Care Promise indicator booklet](#))

Semi-independence: setting for young people preparing to live independently. Mostly, young people share apartments (or live on their own), while receiving different levels of support, according to their level of maturity.

Support staff: any staff (other than care professionals) with a professional qualification in education, psychology, etc. who has a direct role in the life of the young person. This may include SOS programme directors, social workers, psychologists, etc. who are working in the programme.

Transition: a period or process of change as young people move from one formal alternative care setting to another or from an alternative care setting to being an independent adult. ([Leaving Care Practice Guidance](#))

Young person / young people: the United Nations define young people as those between 10 and 24 years. The term combines adolescents (10-19 years) and youth (15-24 years). ([UNICEF Programme Guidance for the Second Decade: Programming with and for Adolescents.](#))

Youth worker: staff working in the programmes with a professional qualification in youth development and practices, with the ability to provide mentorship and coaching to young people and their caregivers. In some contexts, youth workers are residing with and providing care to young people on a daily basis. In others, they rather follow-up on young people living in the programme, coordinate activities for young people, and support caregivers living with young people (see Annex 2).

4

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5

APPENDIX

5.1. Annex 1: Youth-related global indicators

The following global indicators are taken from a set of the 23 global [SOS Care Promise indicators](#) that were selected to globally monitor the progress of implementation of the SOS Care Promise. They can be used to monitor progress on youth-related work. As outlined in the [SOS Care Promise indicator booklet](#), “the indicators will support the roll-out of the [SOS Care Promise](#) across all programmes in a results-based way, by supporting programme staff and management to look at how they work towards results and to identify quality gaps in achieving the desired results.” **Please filter the indicators according to age groups or care options in order to monitor the quality of youth care.**

In addition to those global indicators, member associations are encouraged to monitor more [PDB2 indicators](#) relevant for their youth work in the course of their contextualization process.

Global indicators related to guideline 1:

Number of children in alternative care per family or group (PDB2 house) (indicator #3)	This indicator shows the average number of children and young people per housing unit / living arrangement and gives an indication on the workload of caregivers.
Number of care options per programme location (indicator #10)	The indicator reflects the number of different care options that are registered in the SOS programme structure for each location in a member association and reflects the diversification of care options.
% of children and young people in alternative care / families in family strengthening with up-to-date core assessment (indicator #12)	A carefully conducted core assessment is key to determine children’s or family’s needs, development areas, talents and skills; it builds the base for a well-designed development plan and allows to put in place the most adequate support services to a child or family. In many countries, this is already part of a mandatory case management procedure of social authorities, done in partnership with service providers such as SOS. We have the obligation to follow a well-structured transparent process in the decision-making of a child’s or family’s most appropriate support services.
% of families/children with up-to-date development plan (indicator #18)	The indicator refers to the date of last saved review of the development plan; if less than 12 months ago, the development plan is considered up to date. Indicates the percentage of children in alternative care which have a development plan that is up to date. The development plan is the core of case management, therefore the % of up-to-date development plans shows if the case management process in alternative care is followed and working.

Global indicators related to guideline 2:

<p>% of children and young people who have (mostly) a positive relationship with the family of origin (indicator #1)</p>	<p>To determine the quality of relationship with family of origin for those children and young people who are in touch, and gives an indication on the possibility for future further involvement or reintegration.</p>
<p>% of alternative care / family strengthening children who have received a child protection training (5 years +) (indicator #13)</p>	<p>The indicator measures how many children in alternative care programme units age 5 or above have received a child protection training. It is the duty of SOS to ensure that all children in our care have adequate knowledge about child protection and have been trained on that.</p>
<p>Social integration index indicator (indicator #16)</p>	<p>Social integration is a complex topic that cannot be determined by one aspect alone. By combining several (minimum of three) indicators, a better approximation can be reached. These include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Educational attendance 2. Employment status 3. Participation in community activities 4. Level of participation in decisions affecting the own life 5. Social support network 6. Social behavior 7. Frequency of contact with family of origin

Global indicators related to guideline 3:

<p>% of children and young people in alternative care and family strengthening with at least satisfactory educational performance (indicator #20)</p>	<p>Percentage of children and young people (no age restriction) in alternative care and family strengthening programmes run by SOS enrolled in formal or non-formal (i.e. not in a school) education who achieve at least satisfactory progress in education.</p>
<p>% of young people in alternative care / family strengthening with at least medium level of employability / self-employment or employment skills (indicator #21)</p>	<p>Percentage of young people in SOS alternative care and family strengthening programmes that have a medium or high level of employable skills compared to the total number of young people in the programme.</p>
<p>% of young people (15-24 years) who are not enrolled in education, employment or training (NEET) (indicator # 22)</p>	<p>The indicator calculates the percentage of young people (age 15-24) in our alternative care and family strengthening programmes that are not enrolled in any form of education, employment or training.</p>
<p>% of beneficiaries in alternative care / family strengthening that receive support activities by a partner (indicator #23)</p>	<p>Number of children and young people in alternative care and families in family strengthening (at least one family member) with at least one activity provided by any kind of partner, eg specialised services such as education, healthcare and economic empowerment.</p>

Global indicators related to guideline 4:

<p>% of families/young people who are self-reliant when exiting alternative care/ family strengthening (indicator #17)</p>	<p>Self-reliance is defined as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• having stable and sufficient family income (e.g. income through employment, entrepreneurial activities, scholarships, or income from other members of the household)• having social support networks (e.g. good relationships with neighbours, friends, family, or other community members)• having employable/ entrepreneurial skills (e.g. formal education, vocational training, language, IT, financial skills, technical skills, or labor market orientation) <p>Not included in the measure: Leaving SOS family care or Youth Care because of family reunification</p>
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Indicators related to guideline 5:

Unfortunately, there are no centrally available data from global IT systems on caregivers. Therefore no global indicators can be used for monitoring and evaluation. Nevertheless, it is recommended to monitor e.g. training attendance, turnover etc. of staff working with young people according to data available within the member association.

5.2. Annex 2: Youth worker and national youth focal point

(1) Tasks and competencies for youth workers (programme level)

The following set of tasks and competencies provides a general overview of globally applicable tasks and competencies for youth workers to be considered in all different youth care options. **Just as the Youth Development User Guide, this set of tasks and competencies needs to be contextualised and only covers a minimum of necessary qualifications.** This means it is required that every member association conducts a national assessment of their work with young people (youth care and development) and of the national youth work “landscape” (existing service providers and partners, legal requirements, existing youth worker’s profiles and trainings etc). Based on that assessment, job descriptions for youth workers (residential or not) in the respective context have to be developed, and their exact tasks and competencies have to be defined and related to the national youth development strategy.

In general, it is recommended that each programme has at least one co-worker who is coordinating youth care and development issues, especially if young people in this programme live in different care settings.

(1a) Tasks

1. Oversee youth development work including leaving care and after care:

- To support the individual development planning process of the young people, enabling them to take responsibility for their own development and supporting them in learning the required soft and life skills needed to live an independent life
- To support psychological development of young people and their identity finding as well as to promote mental health through psycho-social support and training activities

- To identify risk behaviors in young people and risk situations young people are exposed to in their communities in order to jointly prevent and respond to them
- To accompany and support transition processes, be it from a one care setting to another care setting, or from the current care setting to independent life
- To be an active point of contact for care leavers, nurturing long term links to caregivers and maintain contact information, with consent of young people
- To support the maintenance of good relationships of the young people with their SOS family, their family of origin and the community
- To promote and foster social integration of young people

2. Encourage youth participation:

- To encourage youth participation, engage with young people and listen to them
- To organize and coordinate youth-related leisure time activities, whenever possible using the offers of the community
- To support and counsel caregivers living and working with young people in individual and/or group settings
- To build young people's participation skills in order to empower young people towards actively participating and getting involved in decision-making

3. Support education and employability of young people:

- To provide young people with on-going career counselling and job orientation based on a clear understanding of each person's skills, abilities, aspirations and matching them with labor market requirements
- To be informed and up to date about available vocational training and educational opportunities and to encourage young people to take the initiative to research and take up career opportunities
- To stay informed about young people's school/work progress and react timely if any challenges are detected

4. Carry out administrative and liaison work:

- To fulfill necessary managing and administrative duties
- To regularly update the Programme Database
- To monitor young people's development and transition to independence
- To support the development and maintenance of partnerships that young people can benefit from

(1b) Key competencies

Educational and psychological competencies

<p>Educational and psychological competencies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Profound comprehension and knowledge of youth care and development • Knowledge about trauma (trauma-informed care) and mental health • Familiarity with and awareness of UNCRC (UN Child Rights Convention), child and youth care acts & other relevant national (and local) legislation in connection with safeguarding • Good comprehension of planning, implementation and monitoring of child, youth and family development • Good level of digital skills and knowledge to use technology
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<p>Methodical competencies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth-centered • Participatory and creative • Playful and dynamic approach • Analytical and constructive • Capability for goal-oriented planning, reporting and acting • Practical and proactive • Leading by example
<p>Social competencies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathy and cultural sensitivity • Active listening • Openness and honesty • Respect for young people, positive, strengths-based, gender-sensitive view of young people • Ability to realistically assess young people’s talents, skills and interests • Counselling skills • Motivational skills • Maintenance of trust and relationships • Reliability • Conflict management • Clear communication • Able to forge partnerships • Networking skills • Practical and solution-oriented
<p>Personal competencies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong interest in child and youth care and in working with young people • Readiness to make a long-term commitment and to live with young people (for residential staff) • Stable, mature and reflective personality • Self-management • Responsibility • Resilience • Ability to work under pressure • Ability to ask for professional support/ supervision when needed • Independence
<p>Responsibilities with SOS Children’s Villages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsibilities with SOS Children’s Villages organisation and principles • Knowledge of SOS Children’s Villages organisation and principles • Understanding and application of the child rights-based approach in SOS programmes

(2) Tasks for the national youth focal point (national office level)

National youth focal points support and refresh youth development in their respective context. Youth-related staffing structure varies a lot in different SOS member associations, depending on the size of the national association, the structure of youth programmes, the size of the youth population, existing external (governmental) support measures for young people, and the participation in youth-related projects (that could mean extra human and financial resources). Therefore, a continuous effort to contextualize and expand the basic tasks is needed.

1. Ensure the development of a national youth strategy and the implementation of the Youth Development User Guide by:

- Analysing the target group situation, including global and national youth care and development as well as youth employability trends and SOS-internal trends regarding the youth population (based on data of the programme database)
- Identifying and networking with key stakeholders to improve the situation of young people in and leaving care, and young people in vulnerable families

2. Develop a holistic programme for young people in SOS programmes that covers all areas of youth development as outlined in the Youth Development User Guide, by:

- Defining and developing SOS youth care options, based on the findings of past and current assessments, and taking a results-based management approach, involving young people.
- Ensuring regular individual youth development and career planning takes place in programmes, including leaving care planning
- Promoting autonomy and independence as the ultimate goal in plans, programmes and activities
- Ensuring that young people in SOS programmes have access to trainings (provided by SOS or partners) for all relevant areas of youth development, according to their needs
- Ensuring that support mechanisms are in place for young people who are leaving or have left care

3. Strengthen youth participation in programmes by:

- Ensuring that young people can participate in decisions and choices that directly impact their (personal) journey to self-reliance throughout programmes and that young people are involved in programme design, recruitment of youth workers, and advocacy activities, amongst others
- Promoting the establishment of networks of young people including those who already left SOS care
- Developing and implementing programmes and activities that foster participation, e.g. youth-led networks and initiatives

4. Build the capacities of care professionals related to youth care and development by:

- Ensuring that care professionals living and working with young people have access to trainings (provided by SOS or partners) for all relevant areas of youth development, according to their needs
- Developing measures to foster engagement and retention of SOS parents, foster parents and youth workers in close cooperation with the HR function

5. Exchange and network with relevant stakeholders by:

- Networking with programme-based youth coordinators, programme directors, and staff living and working with young people
- Linking and aligning across other teams and functions regarding youth-related issues (eg, Human Resources, M&E, communications, fund development)
- Providing information to regional youth focal points, networking with peer youth focal points in the region, sharing of good practices
- Linking with governments and other stakeholders and advocating for the rights of young people in and leaving care

6. Promote youth employability by:

- Analysing the local job markets and identifying potential employer branches for young people
- Training SOS staff on changing market and target group needs
- Preparing the setup of youth employability programmes, including employability and life skills training, internships, mentorship programmes
- Promoting the development of digital skills among young people
- Being involved in fundraising by identifying and approaching potential corporate and social partners and attracting new donors

