

*Pathways to Freedom*

<b>Organisation(s):</b>		SOS Children's Villages Bulgaria	
<b>Country:</b>		Bulgaria	
<b>Contact:</b>		<a href="mailto:policy@esn-eu.org">policy@esn-eu.org</a>	
<b>Theme:</b>		<input type="checkbox"/> Ageing & Care <input type="checkbox"/> Asylum & Migration <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Young People <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Support for Children & Families <input type="checkbox"/> Community Care <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Integrated Care & Support <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Co-Production <input type="checkbox"/> Disability <input type="checkbox"/> Housing & Homelessness <input type="checkbox"/> Artificial Intelligence <input type="checkbox"/> Digitalisation <input type="checkbox"/> Quality Care	<input type="checkbox"/> Labour Market Inclusion <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social Inclusion <input type="checkbox"/> Technology <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Workforce and Leadership <input type="checkbox"/> Social benefits <input type="checkbox"/> EU Funding <input type="checkbox"/> Social Service's Resilience <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mental Health <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Person-centred Care <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify:
<b>Principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights:</b> <i>Check the 20 principles <a href="#">here</a>.</i>		<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Education, training, life-long learning <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Gender equality <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Equal opportunities <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Active support to employment <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Secure and adaptable employment <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Fair Wages <input type="checkbox"/> 7. Transparent employment conditions <input type="checkbox"/> 8. Social dialogue <input type="checkbox"/> 9. Work-life balance <input type="checkbox"/> 10. Healthy, safe work environment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 11. Childcare and child support <input type="checkbox"/> 12. Social protection <input type="checkbox"/> 13. Unemployment benefits <input type="checkbox"/> 14. Minimum income <input type="checkbox"/> 15. Old age income and pensions <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 16. Health care <input type="checkbox"/> 17. Inclusion of people with disabilities <input type="checkbox"/> 18. Long-term care <input type="checkbox"/> 19. Housing and assistance to homeless <input type="checkbox"/> 20. Access to essential services
<b>Current status of the practice:</b>		<input type="checkbox"/> Concept and Design Phase <input type="checkbox"/> Execution & Monitoring Phase <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consolidation Phase <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Scaling Up and Transformation Phase <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)	
<b>Context/ Social issues addressed</b> <i>Please explain the problem you attempt to solve.</i>		Young care leavers are one of the most vulnerable social groups in our society, characterised by a high level of social exclusion, poverty, lack of employment, poor education and mental health problems. The "Pathways to Freedom" project offered a standard for a new social service - "Start of independent living", tailored to those specific individual needs of young care leavers, providing them with crucial support	

and empowerment in main areas such as psychological development, improvement of education or professional skills, health care and mental health support.

It is based on 4 major principles:

- **Individual approach** - on one hand, this ensures the planning of supporting activities on the basis of identified individual needs and, on the other hand, ensures the provision of individual packages of supporting measures for each beneficiary.
- **Systematic approach** - it is realised by the planning of measures and services within a system that leads to the achievement of the common goal, which is an increase of the abilities to start independent living and facilitate the transition from being in care to living in the community.
- **Integrated approach** - this approach is applied so that it could synchronise all activities from the programme with other activities from other sectors such as employment, education and health care. In this regard, the service`s role is to realise advocacy and intermediary activities so that it can support young care leavers with their access to other services and realise their rights.
- **Participation** - the main principle when providing support is participation and responsibility. Every young person actively participated in the contractual process by stating and motivating their needs and wishes. Achieving a high level of participation is guaranteed by the distribution of responsibilities within the planned activities as an essential part of those responsibilities of the young person.

**Objectives:**

*Please provide a maximum of three objectives in bullet points.*

- Address key gaps in supporting young people leaving care facilities in their transition to independent living in Bulgaria.
- Help social service professionals in accompanying young people leaving care through the transition period
- Ensure young care leaver`s participation on all levels

**Activities:**

*Please summarise the activities put in place to achieve the objectives (maximum 200 words).*

The essence of the program is that it is entirely based on the individual needs of young people and considers their real strengths and abilities when planning support measures. The program plans for a process of maintaining a close relationship between the young person and a trusting adult who accompanies them through the transition period and ensures participation on all levels.

The main elements of this process are:

- Effective preparation for self-dependent life after leaving care by identifying individual strengths, skills and qualities that can be further developed and strengthened.
- The young person is supported and encouraged to make a realistic self-evaluation and, together with the responsible adult to develop an individual plan with particular activities aiming at reaching a sufficient level of self-sustainability.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The young person is empowered to take responsibility for key decisions in regard to the new stage of life by providing enough information about their options.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Evaluation of practice:</u></b>  <i>Please explain how you evaluate the practice, and what the results were/are so far</i></p>	<p>Feedback through people’s experiences of services.</p> <p>Through the project, we managed to support more than 200 young care leavers with various measures such as vocational/professional skills courses, language courses, improvement of health care, provision of safe accommodation, etc., which eventually helped them become self-sustainable individuals.</p> <p>The advocacy campaign which targeted key governmental institutions, closed with a conference which gathered more than 100 people who signed a common declaration, appealing to the government to introduce a separate social service for young care leavers to receive the support they need officially. The advocacy campaign also included an important initiative called “Write a letter to the minister”, which targeted the general public, asking them to fill out and send a letter to the social ministry with a formal request to initiate more integrated support for young care leavers. Within the campaign, we organised several webinars with other social service providers, during which we discussed the current needs of the target group, our own best practices and challenges that we meet in our work with young people.</p>
<p><b><u>Links to supporting documents:</u></b>  <i>e.g. website or report of the practice</i></p>	<p><a href="https://sosbg.org/">https://sosbg.org/</a></p>
<p><b><u>Comments and tips</u></b> <i>i.e. for people willing to use your Practice</i></p>	