

Applying Safe Behaviours

PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO PEER VIOLENCE AMONGST CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

FINAL PROJECT PUBLICATION



SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES



Co-funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC) Programme of the European Union



Applying Safe Behaviours

PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO PEER VIOLENCE

Impressum

©SOS Children's Villages International, 2023

Published in Austria by SOS Children's Villages International

First published in April 2023

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Quotes

The quotations from young adults with care experience and professionals included in this publication are from responses to peer-to-peer interviews and questionnaires administered during the scoping exercise and national trainings and peer-to-peer workshops conducted in the five partner countries participating in the project *Applying Safe Behaviours: Preventing and Responding to Peer Violence Amongst Children Without or At Risk of Losing Parental Care (2021-2023)*.

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This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of SOS Children's Villages International and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.

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PROJECT PARTNERS

SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES

SOS Children's Villages is a non-governmental and non-denominational child-focused organization that provides direct services in the areas of care, education and health for children at risk of losing, or who have already lost, parental care. The organisation builds the capacity of the children's caregivers, their families, and communities to provide quality care. In addition, SOS Children's Villages advocates for the rights of children without parental care.

Founded in 1949, SOS Children's Villages operates in the spirit of the UN Convention on the Right of the Child and the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children in over 130 countries.

The Applying Safe Behaviours project was implemented with the direct participation of five SOS Children's Villages member associations that coordinated all activities in:

- Belgium
- France
- Italy
- Romania
- Spain

PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The participation of children and young people within the project activities has been vital in ensuring that their voices shaped the content of all resources developed and implemented during the project.

A **National Child and Young Expert Group (NCYEG)** was formed with 8-12 children and young people in each project country. The groups were responsible for sharing their expertise and providing inputs and recommendations, and for creating the content of the children's booklet.

Two young people from each national project team were engaged in the project as part of the **International Young Expert Group (IYEG)**. The group started their role in the project by holding peer-to-peer interviews with 47 other young people, in order to understand what adults can do to better support children and young people affected by peer violence. They continued to have a key role throughout the project, for example, by developing scenarios for the awareness-raising videos and a set of key messages that you can find on page 14 of this publication. The group will also have a very active role in presenting their experiences and key messages during the final project event in Brussels.

Young people also had a crucial role as trainers within the project. Five young people were trained to be Master Trainers who were part of training teams who delivered trainings to professionals and Peer Trainers. A further 70 young people were then trained as Peer Trainers, who then led the peer-to-peer workshops for children aged 11-15 years old.

In addition, young people participated as representatives in each of the project teams that were responsible for steering the project at international and national level.



THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE PROJECT'S INTERNATIONAL YOUNG EXPERT GROUP

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PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVE

PROJECT OBJECTIVE

Through the project, we aim to make children and young people active agents in creating a safe environment for themselves and their peers, and to enable professionals who work with and care for children and young people to respond appropriately to peer violence amongst them.

HOW WE ACHIEVE THIS

Capacity building	Peer-to-peer workshops for children aged 11-15		Face-to-face trainings for professionals	
Awareness-raising and advocacy	E-learning module for adults	Booklet by children for children aged 8-11	Awareness-raising videos for young people	Policy recommendations

At the beginning of the project, we conducted a **scoping exercise** in order to gather information about peer on peer violence in the five participating countries. There were two principle elements to the scoping:

- 47 peer-to-peer interviews conducted by and with young people
- An online questionnaire completed by 121 child and youth care practitioners and other stakeholders who care for and work with children and young people

Group discussions with care-experienced children and young people and those from vulnerable families also contributed to the information gathering exercise.

From the questionnaire with professionals we heard that they were missing guidance on how to support children and young people affected by peer violence as well as those who instigate peer violence, and that there was a need for more knowledge-sharing and training on the topic. 63% of respondents said that they would like more information on how children and young people can protect themselves, and 1 in 4 respondents felt that their organisation did not issue sufficient guidance to staff on peer on peer violence.

From young people we heard that there is a need for adults to be role models, and that they should promote equality, respect and acceptance of diversity. Children and young people also need to have a person of trust who they can confide in, and there should be safe spaces where peer on peer violence can be discussed. They also expressed that more education is needed for adults, children and young people to understand peer violence and how to better prevent and respond to it. We also heard that it is important to support all children and young people who are affected by peer on peer violence, including those who witness it and those who initiate it.

All the information we gathered in the scoping exercise was then used to shape the content of the resources developed within the project.

Quotes from peer-to-peer interviews with young people

"Listening's very important, especially to young people. Above all, listen."

"Talk about it [peer violence] a lot. Raise awareness about it. Tell children what's going on in the world and talk a lot about what can be done about it...And I say, talk to the children a lot to prevent it, to avoid it as much as possible. And yes, discuss it. Don't ignore it. Really discuss it."

"A child is not born a racist; a child is not born a bully. Teachers should do something which I believe should be an obvious answer. They are called upon to educate, not just to teach, but to promote the respect for diversity against exclusion of weaker persons; this is something they don't do. Usually disabled children are put in a different classroom and the foreign student is left aside and given an easier text. This kind of attitude doesn't help them."

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PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES



The resources developed within the project are available in all languages of the national project partners. You can find all the resources on the project webpage at <https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/applying-safe-behaviours> or by using the QR code.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE



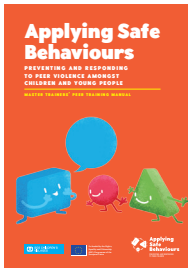
The Practice Guidance has been developed to inform and equip all those who care for and work with children and young people who may be at risk of or are experiencing peer on peer violence.

This includes those directly working with and caring for children and young people on a day-to-day basis, such as primary caregivers and those in sectors such as education, social work, health, sports and social activities, law enforcement, the judiciary, faith-based organisations, internet/website providers, etc. In addition, the Practice Guidance can be used for informing and advising policymakers, decision makers and legislators regarding the requirements of children and young people impacted by peer on peer violence and strategies to prevent such circumstances.

The Practice Guidance sets out information which we hope will contribute to the creation of safe and caring environments for children and young people, related to **three principle aspects**:

- Well-trained and aware staff, care practitioners and other stakeholders
- Organizational safeguarding policies and practice that fully incorporate actions to prevent and appropriately respond to peer on peer violence
- Children and young people are able to seek and receive all the support they need if impacted by peer on peer violence.

PEER-TO-PEER WORKSHOPS



The Peer-to-Peer Workshops are six half-day sessions aimed at children aged 11-15 years old, which are delivered by pairs of Peer Trainers aged between 18-20 years old.

Within the workshops, children learn about topics such as what peer on peer violence is and why it happens, ways they can look after themselves and their peers, and topics such as:

- **Stereotyping and discrimination**
- **Respecting differences and strengthening acceptance**
- **Friendships and what it means to be a good friend**
- **Personal space and boundaries**



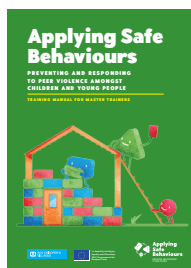
As part of the workshops, children also think about what support they need from adults to better prevent peer on peer violence and help children and young people affected by it. You can find a collection of these messages on page 20 of this publication.

As peer violence happens between children from all backgrounds and in all settings, the workshops are held with diverse groups of children in different settings such as schools, alternative care programmes, and with groups in the community.

Within the project:

70 Peer Trainers were trained	Belgium: 29	France: 9	Italy: 11	Romania: 10	Spain: 11
33 Peer-to-Peer Workshops were held	Belgium: 10	France: 4	Italy: 5	Romania: 6	Spain: 8
433 Children participated in the Peer-to-Peer Workshops*	Belgium: 143	France: 54	Italy: 102	Romania: 67	Spain: 67

TRAINING FOR PROFESSIONALS



The face-to-face training for professionals takes place in 2x 3-day blocks, and is delivered by a team of Master Trainers, including one young person with care experience.

The aim of the training is to equip and empower participants to prevent, identify and respond to peer violence amongst children in a balanced, safe and caring manner, ensuring the best interest of every child.

Within the training, participants learn about topics such as:

- What is peer on peer violence
- Viewing peer violence through a developmental lens
- How organisations can keep children safe
- Relationship-based practice

* 538 children registered for the workshops or attended only some sessions, and 433 children attended all workshop sessions.

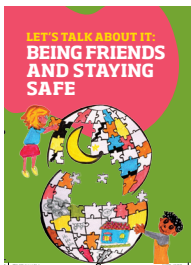
- Restorative conversations and other interventions
- Wider support needed to keep children safe

One of the key elements of the training is the importance of inter-sectoral working, and so the trainings were held for a range of professionals who care for and work with and for children and young people, such as teachers, social workers, police, and others.

Within the project:

28 Trainings for professionals were held	Belgium: 8	France: 4	Italy: 4	Romania: 5	Spain: 7
368 Professionals were trained*	Belgium: 62	France: 34	Italy: 71	Romania: 95	Spain: 106

CHILDREN'S BOOKLET



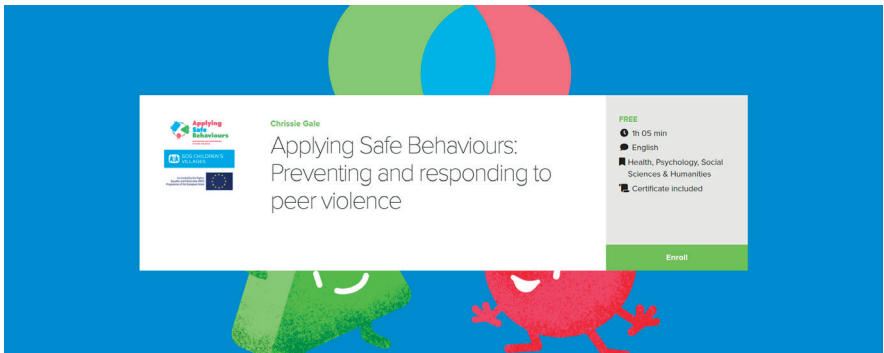
The children's booklet, "Let's Talk About It: Being Friends and Staying Safe", is a collection of short stories and activities aimed at children aged 8-11 years old, on how children can look out for themselves and their peers.

The content was created directly by the children and young people who are part of the National Child and Young Expert Groups in each of the project countries.

* 553 professionals registered for the training or attended only some training sessions, and 328 professionals attended the full training.

The booklet covers topics such as what peer on peer violence is, the importance of friendship and acceptance of differences, respecting boundaries and personal space, the importance of self-esteem, and how to turn to adults for help if they are affected by peer violence.

E-LEARNING MODULE



An online awareness-raising module was developed in order to inform adults why children and young people think peer on peer violence happens and what they would like adults to consider when supporting children and young people who have been affected by it. The course is targeted at all adults who care for and work with or for children and young people.

Peer on peer violence happens in all settings and affects children and young people from all backgrounds, and so it is relevant for all adults to understand what it is and how they can help to prevent it. The course only takes approximately one hour to complete, and so we highly recommend you to take this time to complete the course to understand what you can do to support children and young people and help prevent peer violence.

The course covers topics such as:

- What is peer on peer violence
- Where peer violence happens
- What makes children and young people vulnerable to peer violence



- The importance of understanding children and young people's behaviours when they have been affected by peer violence and how they want adults to support them
- What children and young people think would help prevent and protect them from peer violence

As part of the e-learning course, three explainer videos on the following key topics were also developed:

- Why it is important for adults to be good role models for children and young people
- The importance of being respectful and accepting of one another
- The importance of speaking to children and young people about violence

AWARENESS-RAISING VIDEOS



Two awareness-raising videos aimed at young people aged 16-19 years old were developed based on scenarios created by young people in the International Young Expert Group.

The first video is on the impact of peer violence and the importance of supporting each other and being kind, and the second video is about discrimination and how this can lead to bullying.



You can find all the videos that have been developed within the project by using the QR code.

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MESSAGES FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

KEY MESSAGES FROM THE INTERNATIONAL YOUNG EXPERT GROUP

These key messages were developed by the International Young Expert Group, a group of 10 young people with care experience that have provided their expertise throughout the *Applying Safe Behaviours* project. **These are the messages that they would like to share with governments, decision-makers, and professionals who care for and work with children and young people, in order to highlight what needs to be done to better prevent and respond to peer violence amongst children and young people.**

CHILDHOOD IS NOT A FIGHT ARENA!

There is a big gap between generations. We all have the responsibility to fill it with trustful connections, with love, kindness, and respect. Mistrust and negative opinions won't fill the gap, and a small puddle of a gap can become an entire ocean in less than a minute.

Violence is a place of personal misery, and so be aware that we depend on our peers' actions and words. Make room for love, not for fighting!

STAND BY ME, BUT DON'T VIOLATE MY SPACE

Feelings and personal space can be broken by adults and other young people when there is not enough understanding of boundaries. Individualized help and conversations would empower young people to speak up about their limits, and adults would understand each person's individual needs.

Professional and trauma-informed guidance can help authorities, governments, and responsible adults to better understand that not everyone needs the same solution.

Respecting each person's pace, personal space, and offering time for young people to voice their opinions is crucial when preventing any type of space violation.

DON'T HURT ME BECAUSE YOU'RE HURT IN YOUR HEART

When a young person doesn't get the help they need to express their anger, they will express it the only way they know how, and that is by hurting another peer. It is possible to stop this cycle of peer on peer violence by promoting communication between young people or by offering them psychological support. It is also necessary to normalize the fact that needing help is normal and that it can be requested. The people capable of making this change happen are, firstly, the young people involved and the adults who are role models for young people, but also organizations, governments and institutions.

**LET'S TALK ABOUT PEER ON PEER
VIOLENCE TO PREVENT IT! WE ARE
DONE! IT IS THE 21ST CENTURY!**

We live in the 21st century and we believe this is the time to put an end to peer on peer violence and move forward! Violence should not be a taboo topic. Talk about it and put words into action, so that children can recognize it, report it, and maybe avoid it. By better understanding what are the causes and the consequences of peer on peer violence, children and young people can work side by side with responsible adults, authorities, and governments to reduce the numbers, to increase security, and to ensure that every child is safe. In the long term, this will increase children's self-confidence and will contribute to creating a world in which we are able to build trustful relationships.

Now is the time to start!

**WE ARE THE FUTURE,
SO DON'T STAY IN THE PAST!
LISTEN TO US!**

Violence can happen everywhere: online and on social media, in schools, in alternative care, in social and sport clubs, in the streets or on public transportation. There is not always an adult present. It is, therefore, crucial that you listen to what children and young people have to say about it, and always take us seriously! Adults must take the words of children seriously when they report an act of peer on peer violence. Don't make them think they are exaggerating! Make sure to always validate their emotions! Be good role models for kids and young people, because we are the adults of tomorrow!

I SPOKE UP TO ELECT YOU, BUT YOU'RE NOT LISTENING

Politicians and representatives are chosen by individuals, but once elected they often seek improvements for themselves and do not listen to young people or take into account what is in their best interest. Young people have to be heard in order for changes, social reforms, policies, and laws to occur in their favour. This can only happen if they have the opportunity to participate actively in politics, and if there are better, more transparent, and clearer social policies targeting this specific group. Every individual plays an important role in this, but it is specifically governments, institutions, stakeholders, and young people who have the proper skills that lead to long-term solutions.



You can find a video of these key messages presented by the young people in the International Young Expert Group at <https://youtu.be/dZBh32ITiVo> or by using the QR code.

MESSAGES FROM CHILDREN AT NATIONAL LEVEL

These messages come from children who participated in the Peer-to-Peer Workshops that took place in each of the five participating project countries.

The children were asked to gather messages for adults on what they can do to better support and protect children and young people from peer on peer violence.

WHAT SHOULD ADULTS DO MORE OF TO HELP SUPPORT THOSE IMPACTED BY PEER ON PEER VIOLENCE OR TO HELP PREVENT PEER ON PEER VIOLENCE?

- **Be attentive and observant. Pay more attention to us.**
- **Listen more to us and our problems. Adults need to know that communication between children and adults is important and that every child has the right to express his or her opinion.**
- **Be understanding and have empathy.**
- **Know that peer violence is not just physical. It exists whenever there is an attack on the person.**
- **Understand that they need to get past prejudice and not put students in boxes (e.g. everyone has the right to cry, whether they are male or female. We are all human and we all have sensitivities).**
- **Teach children the proper way to respond to such situations.**
- **Give useful advice.**
- **Support us even if we have made mistakes.**
- **Help children to make peace.**
- **Help the young person to see the other point of view; not to rely on reasons and blame, but to reflect on the problem.**
- **Understand what happened, talk to the parents and the children, the bully and the victim.**
- **Lay down rules and provide sanctions (even before violent situations occur) and raise awareness of positive, non-violent behaviour.**
- **Help the child by instilling calmness.**
- **Stand by us and support us.**

- **Be more attentive to our needs, be closer to us, be more caring and involved, be more attentive to our health, mental and moral state.**
- **Be a good listener.**
- **Treat every situation seriously.**
- **Be there for us even when we're wrong.**

WHAT SHOULD ADULTS NOT DO WHEN SUPPORTING THOSE IMPACTED BY PEER ON PEER VIOLENCE OR WHEN HELPING TO PREVENT PEER ON PEER VIOLENCE?

- **Don't talk about our situation with other adults without telling us. Keep what we share with you confidential.**
- **Don't criticize us.**
- **Do not ignore the problem.**
- **Do not tell us: "I'm overwhelmed", "Try to solve it by yourself", "It's not a big deal", "I don't care", "I'm tired", "I'm sick of it", "When I finish eating", "Later", "Each one on his own", "You are big now (grown up)", "You don't set an example".**
- **Don't minimize the situation or trivialize violence.**
- **Don't act without thinking.**
- **Don't be blunt (be gentle, respectful).**
- **Do not help or defend only one person. Don't show favouritism.**
- **Do not make the situation worse.**
- **Respond without getting angry.**
- **Do not take initiatives without the child or young person's consent.**
- **Do not stand by and watch.**
- **Don't ignore signs given by the child.**
- **Please don't force us to do what we don't want to do.**
- **Don't pressure me to talk.**
- **Don't force me to talk to the initiator.**

WHAT DO CHILDREN FIND HELPFUL ABOUT TELLING AN ADULT?

- To be advised and to find a solution.
- To have someone listening to us and to feel accompanied because it relieves and takes a weight off our shoulders.
- To be protected and keep us safe, and in some cases, prevent serious injury.
- To keep your self-confidence up.
- The problem can become bigger if you don't tell them.
- To know how to defend yourself if the problem happens again.
- They can defend you.
- To have an impartial person.
- It might help to solve the problem and fix the conflict.
- Maybe in this situation the adult will be able to understand you better.



WHAT ARE CHILDREN'S CONCERNS ABOUT TELLING AN ADULT?

- When we tell them, they will not do anything and nothing happens after.
- That they take the problem lightly or do not take us seriously.
- That there will be retaliation and that it generates new problems.
- That they shout at us, blame it on us and that they give us a punishment.
- They're going to tell someone we didn't want to tell.
- We're afraid they won't understand.
- The other students call us "snitches".
- We will be seen as "fearful" or "weak".
- We don't know if we can trust them.
- Because we are ashamed of some things.
- Because adults may not be interested in our state of mind and the problem we cannot solve.
- Because we are afraid of the adult's reaction - they might overreact or they might get angry.
- Because they might ruin an important relationship (e.g. friendship between peers).
- Because the adult might act too quickly and make the child uncomfortable.
- They can give wrong advice that hinders us more.
- If they don't understand us we can't express ourselves.
- That they think it's childish nonsense. Don't say that our problems are not important.

PROJECT WEBPAGE

Applying Safe Behaviours

<https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/applying-safe-behaviours>



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#endviolenceagainstchildren

#protectchildren

#safebehaviours

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