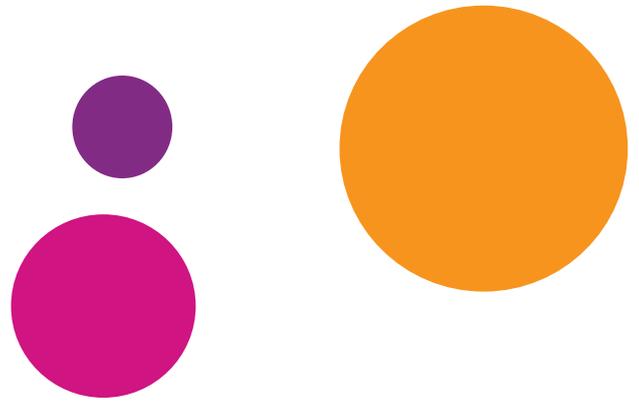


Advisory Board of Young People Manifesto



We, the young people of the Advisory Board of the project SUPPORTS state that:

1. Every practitioner dealing with young people, in any organisation, should know the rights of the child and young person and, more importantly, should know how to implement those rights in their professional practice and how to give orientation to young people to, when in need, revindicate the access to said rights. Namely, preparing us to leave care.
2. We value the care that every practitioner in the Alternative Care Homes show and we consider that they should all be qualified people and their work should be acknowledged as very important. We believe that these people should love what they do and feel motivated to encourage and support children and young people overcome the hardships that constitute their past.
3. Each Alternative Care Home should have a number of staff sufficient to meet the requirements of said Home and not overload each element of staff.
4. We love when practitioners:
 - Listen to us and give us attention.
 - Know all of us really well.
 - Are kind and respect us.
 - Sit on the ground with us.
 - Leave us notes of encouragement or comfort.
 - Show that they understand our past and perceive its impact on our lives.
 - Make us laugh.
 - Talk to us in a way that we understand.
 - Explain our rights and demonstrate what is beyond the care home.
 - Devise the rules of the children's home with us.
 - Make us grow and, above all, help us to build our own path.
5. We know that the best period to prepare leaving care is when we still are in care. Thus, we want to participate more in the lives of the children's homes: we want to be allowed in the kitchen, to help decide what is for dinner, to learn how to cook, to be able to decorate our bedroom and other rooms, to make proposals, to assess.
6. We want to be able to organise small parties and to receive our friends without jeopardizing the right to privacy of the other children and young people that are in care. It would be lovely to have facilities to make that possible. Ah! ... For those in care and who are 18 or older, it is very important to go out with friends, from time to time. Alas, have a normal life!
7. We are young like the others. We do not want to be looked at differently, with pity or recrimination. We have fears and dreams; abilities and problems like everybody else. We are young citizens with rights and duties.

8. We would like to have a (small) space to call our own.
9. We believe that the Alternative Care Homes that welcome us should be small, in order to create a cosy and familiar environment.
10. 10. Before leaving care, we want to know how to cook, how to run a house and manage our budget to make financial ends meet. We want to be able to take public transportation without making a fool of ourselves. We want to know how to fill an income tax form and to know our rights and duties when we finally start a job. For this to happen, we acknowledge the importance of the life project, but it is essential that we are heard and that our needs, desires, abilities and talents are known and acknowledged as well.
11. We want to have access to information on sexual and reproductive health. Taboos regarding this issue is not good for any of us, whether you are a boy or a girl.
12. 12. We do not want you to have low expectations about us. We can go far! Like any other young person, we can go to university, but we do need a push sometimes. Sometimes, there is a need to make us understand that we also have the right to education and that university is a space for us as well! Why not?!
13. 13. For some young people leaving Alternative Care Homes, there is a need of specific support before finishing higher education. Not only study support, but also scholarships that allow further studies to those who lack support and have economic difficulties.
14. 14. For some of us, it may be hard to establish affective relationships with people beyond those that surround us. But those positive affective relationships should happen in our lives. For those who most struggle with this, there should be a free and qualified psychological support.
15. 15. More than finding employment, it scares us finding a house. There should be special housing programmes for young people leaving care.
16. 16. But of course that having a job is super important. Without jobs there is no money, without money there is no way of being independent. We need support to enter the labour market and, since we know how vital it is to have a good CV and show experience, we would like to propose the establishment of internships in the City Council of Matosinhos or other organisations that would like to participate in our proposal. This could be a good example to be followed in other locations.
17. 17. Finally, we hope to be able to count on the Local network that supports young people leaving care in the City Council of Matosinhos. We do not want to feel that we are alone!

The Advisory Board of Young People

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SUPPORTS

The project SUPPORTS is co-financed by the European Commission (Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers) through the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme, occurring between 2019 and 2021.

Is a transnational project involving CESIS - Centro de Estudos para a Intervenção Social -, the Pulse Foundation (Bulgaria) and the Defence for Children International (Italy). In Portugal, the project has the direct support of the City Council of Matosinhos and three organisations with alternative care for children and young people.

One of the objectives of this project is to promote young people's participation in the lives of the Alternative Care Homes and in the decisions concerning them, namely in producing their life projects.

This Manifesto is one of the results of the work produced by the young people who constitute the Advisory Board - composed of young people who have left Alternative Care Homes in Matosinhos.

The Manifesto contains the most relevant aspects in the process of leaving care and transitioning to adulthood and a life in society.



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