



Erasmus+



Erasmus+ Project

“European Profile for Peer-worker”



The training programme

for managers and leaders of therapeutic teams

on the cooperation with peer supporters

(max. 100 hours)

Concept of training for managers (leaders) of mental health organisations, psychiatric institutions and social organisations on the functioning of diverse peer teams.

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Concept of training for managers (leaders) of mental health organisations, psychiatric institutions and social organisations on the functioning of diverse peer teams.

Partners in “European Standards for Peer Supporters” Project.



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Introduction

Training needs analysis carried out as part of the project “European Profile for Peer-worker” no. 2019-1-DE02-KA202-006547 showed that managers and leaders of teams whose members include peer supporter workers need to broaden their knowledge and competences.

Diverse knowledge and competences are determined by:

- the workplace, i.e. type of employing organisation,
- position held in the organisational structure,
- occupation.

The type and nature of the organisation where the peer supporter worker (PSW) works is very important. It may be a medical facility, a social welfare centre, a foundation or a company providing nursing, social and mental support services. The mission, purpose, principles of functioning of the organisation determine its character (organisation as an enterprise). This directly translates into professional relationships within the teams.

The superiors or supervisors of PSWs may hold managerial positions (e.g. president, director, manager of a medical facility, social organisation, social welfare centre, foundation), but they may also be people who are not directly involved in management. Doctors, therapists, nurses and social workers are among partners who most often have direct contact with PSWs. The variety of these positions reflects the diversity of stakeholders who may be interested in this product (training). It also shows that the stakeholders have a wide range of knowledge and competences connected with personnel management, but also diverse skills and experiences.

The team leader’s knowledge is directly connected with their profession (usually medical), whereas successful management of employees requires this person to:

- be a good coach, i.e. be able to identify and unlock the potential of their colleagues,
- influence the team, assign and strengthen roles, use various management tools,
- care not only about the success of the team, but also about each member’s success and well-being as well as the overall atmosphere,
- be effective, productive, able to set goals and achieve results (not only in terms of profit or revenue, or any other numerical parameter; a new idea about how to overcome a crisis or a new, effective form of support on the way to recovery are also results),
- be a good communicator, listen and share information,
- support their colleagues’ professional career development by focusing on tasks, challenges, career path,
- have a clear vision of the team’s work and development,
- have decision-making competences (ability to make decisions efficiently) as well as key technical skills to be able to advise the team,
- successfully create an atmosphere of cooperation and respect for diversity in the organisation and team.

Apart from the fact that there is large variation in managers’ knowledge and competences (management and medical skills, soft skills connected with aspects such as communication in the

organisation), PSWs' attitude towards new tasks, learning and acquiring new skills is also determined by a number of factors concerning the organisation of training.

It is crucial for the training groups to be as uniform as possible, so that the participants would have similar needs and fulfil similar roles in the organisation. Ideally, they should be composed of psychologists, nurses, social workers, and health care managers, for example. However, we are aware that these are ideal conditions, which rarely occur in organisations; therefore, team diversity is a characteristic that should be taken into account in the selection of contents and during the workshops. The diversity of training groups can also be used to improve knowledge about effective cooperation within diverse teams, ways of building a friendly atmosphere at work, eliminating tensions and waste.

To create optimal learning conditions, the following recommendations should be followed:

1. The training programme must take into account the uniqueness of the learners and of their experiences.
2. Learning goals should be clearly defined – the participants must know the exact subject of learning, the intended effects and methods of verification.
3. Drawing on experience – learning new material in the context of what is known and familiar.
4. Gradual acquisition of knowledge – first the basics, then expansion; first individual elements, then structures; first individual problems, then the wider scope – problems of the entire organisation (company).
5. Feedback from participants in order to assess the learning outcomes [M. Sloman, R.M. Smith, P. O'Connell].

This proposal is a training roadmap that should be used to prepare the right programme for specific groups. However, it is the training participants and specific teams – not strict adherence to the programme – that should ultimately determine the content of the workshops and the selection of the discussed case studies. The best training is tailor-made, i.e. preceded by needs analysis, analysis of the team's functioning, observation of how tasks are fulfilled by its individual members.

Due to the nature of contemporary organisations – hospitals, medical centres, social organisations, social welfare centres, companies and public institutions – and the contemporary management models, teams are required to be flexible. Because of organisational problems, varying workload and resources, the permanent staff may be supplemented by temporary employees, who may work according to non-standard rules. Part-time work, periodic reduction of working time, combinations of paid and unpaid employment, permanent employment and employment on a project basis not only result in the emergence of flexible forms of work, but also pose a number of challenges for the managers. The need for new tools and new approaches to personnel management was reflected in surveys conducted not only among PSWs, but also among people holding managerial positions. On the one hand, the emphasis was on flexibility, employee agility in carrying out various tasks, openness to challenges and new experiences, but it is worth bearing in mind that it also raises a number of problems that the managers must be able to address.

Experience gained during the project and the literature on the subject raise the issue of flexible employment in healthcare and social work, which is connected with the concept of flexicurity. Issues such as undertaking a wide range of activities, combining various forms of work, making decisions about one's own professional activity (taking initiative) were reflected in PSWs' statements and questionnaires describing the challenges they face. They were accompanied by uncertainty regarding the continuity of projects, programmes, internships and employment. These issues should be brought to managers' attention. The PSW profession falls within the contemporary model of flexible organisation, and the COVID-19 pandemic has had further implications for this model, resulting in new problems destabilising the employee's position in the organisation.

Flexibility of employment gives PSWs the opportunity to function in a broader context, share experiences gained in many fields and in many environments. The proposed model includes real tools for managers to use in the event of a crisis situation experienced by employees. It should be stressed that ensuring patient safety and continuity of processes, fulfilling tasks and implementing the mission of the organisation are the prerogatives of the management.

Many PSWs consider full-time work for one employer to be the best solution; however, according to research, in most cases employment is more flexible and closer to freelancing. Although cooperation with freelancers may seem beneficial for the organisation, managers who supervise the tasks entrusted to freelancing PSWs need the right skills, mainly organisational, connected with planning and coordinating work, controlling the performance, preventing discontinuity in work, analysing the intensity and causes of conflicts in the team, setting deadlines, delegating duties, changing the workflow, managing the communication and reporting processes.

Due to the reasons listed above, it is very important for managers to be able to manage diverse teams. Recognising and appreciating diversity may be a key competences for managers supervising teams whose members include PSWs.

Importantly, diverse competences and experiences as well as multiculturalism increase the likelihood to successfully develop the following strategic issues:

- lean and agile process management,
- increase in knowledge and promotion of mental health protection,
- fostering a creative environment that breaks down barriers.

When deciding on the contents of the training programme as well as methods and techniques of competency development, various barriers and obstacles should be taken into account. Managers of the health care system and team leaders must improve their competencies to be able to manage diverse teams, so that the employees' unique experiences and skills can contribute to the improvement of the efficiency of processes across the organisation. An organisational culture that is open to PSWs, encourages self-development and organisational improvement will provide the right opportunities for learning by creating the optimal working environment, which will eventually contribute to patients' recovery.

Following the definition of Anthony et al., the authors of the training programme define recovery as a deeply personal, unique process of changing one's attitudes, values, feelings, goals, skills and/or roles. It is a way to a satisfying, hopeful and full life despite the limitations caused by the illness.

Organisations and their managers should have the right tools to use the individual potential of PSWs to improve the mental health care system.

Hence the suggestion to base the contents of the training and exercises on the diversity management model put forward by R. Kandola and J. Fullerton. Their approach, resulting from in-depth analyses and research of nearly 500 organisations, advocates for the ongoing evolution from traditional equal opportunities policies to an integration-based (inclusive) strategy focusing on the contribution of an individual employee (in our case, PSW) to the organisation.

The researchers' work has led them to propose the MOSAIC model – a tool for effective analysis of organisational activities regarding the diversity policy.

MOSAIC is an acronym for:

M – mission and values

O – objectives and fair process

S – skilled workforce: aware and fair

A – active flexibility

I – individual focus

C – culture that empowers

Adopting this model increases the likelihood that the training will make the managers more aware of the importance of diversity. Diverse teams can contribute to the emergence of different collaborative viewpoints, creative problem-solving, innovation and creativity.

1. General assumptions of the concept

The training programme developed in the project “European Profile for Peer-worker” no. 2019-1-DE02-KA202-006547 (product 6) consists of four modules (from 1 to 4 on the list below).

The training programme is based on:

1. **work standards for peer supporter workers,**
2. **job specifications,**
3. **competence profile,**
4. **legal framework,**

taking into consideration PSW’s place in the organisation and in the therapeutic team.

Organisations interested in the training – stakeholders

- **BUSINESSES,**
- **HEALTHCARE ORGANISATIONS,**
- **NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS,**
- **SOCIAL WORK ORGANISATIONS.**

3. People employed in the organisation (professionals) to whom the training is dedicated.

Training for TEAM LEADERS:

- **DOCTORS**
- **OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS**
- **PSYCHOTHERAPISTS**
- **PSYCHOLOGISTS**
- **THERAPEUTIC NURSES**
- **DIRECTORS, MANAGERS OF ORGANISATIONS**
- **SOCIAL WORKERS.**



Structure of the training (segments)

1. Working together in a multi-professional team (the therapeutic team)
2. Strengthening the PSW in their role as a competent team member (competence development)
3. Holding meetings with a multi-professional team
4. Employing the PSW and developing a career path together

1.	Working together in a multi-professional team
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Skills to be practiced by team leaders:

How does the PSW influence team efficiency?

What PSW skills does the team need?

How can the team be formed taking into consideration PSW's individual competences and predispositions?

How to divide tasks and roles in the team?

How to run multi-professional team meetings in order to control the course and focus of attention?

How to start active work of the team?

How to adapt PSW's work dynamics to the tasks of the team?

How to react in difficult situations?

Content areas for Segment 1

- PSW's role in the team
- Unique characteristics of a team with a PSW
- Communication in the team and running meetings
- Active forms of working with the team
- Managing team creativity

1.	Total number of teaching hours in Segment 1:	Optimum: 12	Max: 18
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2.	Strengthening the PSW in their role as a competent team member (competence development)
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Skills to be practiced by team leaders:

- How to choose skills for development?
- How to use development to motivate?
- How to select development support tools?
- How to introduce coaching in a team?
- How to agree on the course of joint work?
- How to give feedback without jumping to conclusions and judgement?
- How to build awareness and a sense of responsibility in the team member?
- How to react when a team member disrupts the team, looks for excuses, justifications, makes mistakes, questions goals etc.?
- How to tell resistance from the need for support, lack of experience, competence?

Content areas for Segment 2

- Techniques for working in the multi-professional: instructing, assisting, coaching
- Introducing coaching into the team and coaching peer supporters
- Coaching categories – analysing work, monitoring competence development
- Motivating PSWs to engage and develop – dealing with PSWs’ resistance
- Feedback – communication without judgement

2.	Total number of teaching hours in Segment 2:	Optimum: 24	Max: 38
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3.	Holding meetings with a multi-professional team
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Skills to be practiced by team leaders:

How should a PSW plan an effective meeting with a patient?

How should strategy be built in cooperation with the patient?

How can the participants' stress be reduced?

How to control the course of the meeting?

How to adapt communication between the multi-professional team and individual patients?

How to approach identified risks and differences?

How to use team diversity to work effectively?

How to promote constructive situations, behaviours, attitudes?

How to deal with difficult situations during meetings with stakeholders in the patient's recovery process?

How to effectively use communication techniques, organise meetings, address problems/solutions/benefits?

Content areas for Segment 3

- Preparation for the meeting with the patient – introduction, introduction to the case, "levels of initiation" in the documentation
- Meeting techniques and methods for active 1:1 work with the group
- Verbal, non-verbal and unconscious communication
- Difficult situations: crises, silent patient, "undisciplined", protesting...
- Summary of the effects of the meeting, effective reporting, formal reporting

3.	Total number of teaching hours in Segment 3:	Optimum: 24	Max: 32
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4. Employing the PSW and developing a career path together

Skills to be practiced by team leaders:

How to plan the employment of a PSW?

Are there difficulties in cooperation with, and understanding the functioning of, the employing organisation?

How to integrate the PSW in the work of the therapeutic team?

How to use legal and organisational possibilities to prepare the workplace for the PSW?

How to adapt the work of the team to the legal requirements with regard to diverse members?

How to delegate and implement tasks in accordance with law and ethics?

Content area for Segment 4

- PSWs' role and place in social welfare, health care and NGO systems
- Forms of employment
- Responsibilities, career path, remuneration and method of payment
- Responsibilities for supervision and control of work
- Dividing and delegating tasks
- Legal basis for the employment of PSWs
- Work regulations, code of ethics – areas of cooperation with PSWs

4.	Total number of teaching hours in Segment 4:	Optimum: 12	Max: 12
	Total Segments 1+2+3+4	Optimum: 72	Max: 100

Summary/conclusions

The foundation for a knowledge-based economy and the development of the information society is the continuous improvement and adaptation of employees; skills to the dynamically changing labour market. The adaptation processes require us to be open to change, but change does not exist without conscious learning (Fontana, 1998; Illeris, 2009).

There is a growing awareness of the importance of continuous development of employees' skills for the processes of economic growth, but we also see how important it is to reach for "unique resources." Activities aimed at increasing the quality of human capital in accordance with the idea of lifelong learning

take various forms and use various programmes, often experimental ones, intended to gain a competitive advantage, bring out the unique potential of employees, teams and entire organisations. A peer support worker with their inimitable experience can be such a unique tool for improving patient support and recovery processes. Employees' skills and competences are often developed in order to generate and use non-standard solutions. For many organisations and representatives of various professions, employing a PSW is an innovation in itself. How to prepare for it? How to make the organisation open to diversity?

Traditional school and academic education is insufficient to keep up with the pace of changes in the economy. Training programmes are not adapted and updated as quickly as the market for support, nursing and mental health services needs them. For this reason, it is crucial to support employees and promote modern education, including the idea of lifewide and lifelong learning. Its main principles include the appreciation of learning in various forms and places at every stage of life, recognising learning outcomes regardless of the way, place and time of gaining them, effective investment in learning and the universal character of these actions.

The goals connected with the development of human resources can be achieved by supporting vocational education, both formal and non-formal education, including courses and training. The proposed training programme is consistent with the concept of initiatives promoting the acquisition of skills and recognition of the effects of non-formal education.

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