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SESSION

Peer support and homelessness

3.1 Introduction

Homelessness is a complex phenomenon that affects the lives of at least 700.000 people in the European Union . There is a great stigma attached to this extreme form of poverty, complementarily attached to other disadvantages such as mental health challenges or an addiction. Is it a personal responsibility? Is it a governments' responsibility? Many believe it is a personal issue and place the responsibility with the individual themselves. However, since all the core EU or UN texts plus the majority of the Member States' Constitutional Charts protect Housing and since persons are denied some of their most basic human rights while their health and life are at danger, no one shall consider it a personal issue.

Through this unit we will explore the root causes of homelessness and the situation at the European level. We will also explore a general understanding of the role of a peer supporter in the recovery journey from homelessness.

3.2 Learning outcomes

- Understand and discuss the root causes of homelessness
- Acknowledge the situation at European Union level
- Discuss the role of the peer supporters in the homeless sector

3.3 Training session plan

DURATION

2,5 h

MATERIALS

- ATL Trainer Curriculum
- JCS Manual (it includes worksheets, case scenarios and self-assessment exercises)
- Worksheets and case scenario
- Stationery (paper in different sizes, cardboard, pens, pencils, markers, sticky notes, etc.)
- Flipchart/whiteboard
- Power Point presentations of the contents (optional)
- Computer (optional)

- Projector/TV (optional)

CONCEPTUAL CONTENTS

- ATL Trainer Curriculum, Unit 4, Peer Support & Homelessness
- JCS Manual, Unit 3, Peer Support & Homelessness

INTRODUCTION

Welcome the participants. Trying to move the lens from the close personal story to a different angle:
Is not just me, is not only because of me.



ACTIVITY 1	Homelessness: Brainstorming / group discussion
DURATION	40 min
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES	<p>Articles and pictures related to homelessness, i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness has grown in the Europe says ESPN's latest report • <i>Banksy – 'Keep your coins, I want change.'</i>
PROCEDURE	<p>The objective of the activity is to provide a critical understanding on how stereotypes and prejudices work, their supporting mechanisms, as well as their consequences on homeless persons' lives. We also want to highlight not easily visible factors that homeless persons need to overcome in order to recover and start their lives again.</p> <p>Pictures related to homelessness are given to the participants. The trainer, using the brainstorming method, asks them to express what comes first to their mind. After a short plenary discussion on these words, the trainees, divided in groups, are asked to answer the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which are the prevailing attitudes among the general population regarding homelessness today? • How have these attitudes been created? Are they a consequence of any particular procedures or mechanisms? In case they are, can you mention some of them? • What may such perceptions mean for a homeless person's life? For your life? How do you feel? • How are these attitudes and perceptions related to your everyday life? Please provide examples according to your personal experience. Do you accept this relationship? <p>Based on the results, the trainer starts discussing stereotypes and prejudices, the ways they are strengthened, their consequences and the exclusions they create and support, and how such stereotypes may be considered as caricatures for the persons they refer to.</p>
ACTIVITY 2	Homelessness and Rights
DURATION	30 min

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal Declaration of Human Rights (focus on the article 25) • European Social Charter (focus on the article 31) • UN Homelessness and Human Rights • Lisbon Declaration on the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness
PROCEDURE	<p>The participants, through brainstorming, are asked to express their thoughts on what the expression “rights for the homeless” mean to them. The trainer keeps notes of their thoughts and starts a brief discussion over UN and EU texts, as well as the constitutional and legal texts of the different countries.</p> <p>The trainer asks if their journey through homelessness has ever made them feel discriminated against and how. Different answers written or stuck on the flipchart act as a basis for a relevant discussion. A real “map of discrimination” will be created with the contributions of the participants, based on their personal experience, stories and perceptions.</p>
ALTERNATIVES/ TIPS	Human rights vs street reality: An impossible perspective, a difficult relation or a tale against a nightmare?

ACTIVITY 3	My role as a peer supporter
DURATION	30 min
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES	<p>Pictures from famous actors and actresses in different movies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • James Bond • Erin Brockovich • Jack Lemmon

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PROCEDURE	<p>Different roles: rescuer, fighter, crossing the boundaries actor: drawing the line on expectations. Ask participants how they understand their role and what they expect out of it. Discuss in how many ways it does not have to be perfect! Describe the word balance between edges.</p> <p>At this stage, you can discuss with the group the different possible roles of a peer supporter as explained in the ATL Trainer Curriculum Unit 4.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Role model/mentor in different moments of the recovery process 2. Breaking the boundaries 3. Individualized treatment 4. Social Support 5. Advocacy
ALTERNATIVES/ TIPS	<p>Choose famous characters from your region that concentrate the characteristics of the rescuer for justice, fighter, crossing the boundaries to achieve something.</p>

ACTIVITY 4	Case scenario analysis
DURATION	30-40 min
WORKSHEET REFERENCE	Story of Chloe
IMPLEMENTACIÓN PASO POR PASO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the participants to read the case scenario. They can read it separately or someone can read it out loud. Ask them to recall what they've learned so far and to identify possible gaps related to Chloe's rights. Which are the possible violations of her rights? What is the meaning to identify them as a peer supporter? How can a peer supporter maximise the protection of human rights regarding what is happening in "real life" according to their experience? Do homeless persons have their rights respected? • Based on these questions, the participants will explore the possibility to develop a common understanding on what human rights and their violations are. They will also try to propose possible solutions on cases they may encounter at their work as peer supporters, especially using formal referral systems. Moreover, they will try to identify and discuss alternative referral scenarios, in accordance to the needs of the peers (clients).

CLOSURE OF THE SESSION

During the last 5-10 minutes, invite the participants to reflect upon what they got from this session. Invite them to share what they liked most and what could improve. Let them choose if they wish to do it anonymously.

3.4 Bibliography

- Alayne M. Adams, Rushdia Ahmed, Shakil Ahmed, Sifat Shahana Yusuf, Rubana Islam, Ruman M. Zakaria Salam & Rocco Panciera, [Modelling improved efficiency in healthcare referral systems for the urban poor using a geo-referenced health facility data: the case of Sylhet City Corporation, Bangladesh](#), BMC Public Health volume 20, 2020
- [The Plan to end Homelessness, Chapter 4 Public attitudes and homelessness](#), 2018
- Leading Families Home. [The Face of Homelessness \(It Isn't What You Think\)](#), 2020.

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SESSION

worksheets and case scenario



Accommodating a travelling **life**

Story of Chloe

Chloe was born in 1967 and she has never met her biological parents since she was given to a child care facility at birth where she remained until she was 13. She has never attended a public primary or secondary school and was only taught handcrafts internally. As a result, she is illiterate. She was adopted when she was 13 years old by a couple that she describes as very different from each other. A very kind and sweet stepfather and quite an abusive stepmother.

Her stepfather died a couple of years after adoption and she lived with her stepmother until she was 25. In between her stepmother got a partner who abused her sexually with her stepmother's silent approval. At 25 she met a man and got married to him. He has proven to be an abusive, addictive husband with whom she had four children who are all adults now. Her mother-in-law was supporting the family financially and she was the one significantly influencing the raising of the children. She was not on good terms with Chloe.

Chloe was only working occasionally as a cleaner. She could not leave because she was afraid that she would lose her children. She had never thought of it until her husband died. This is when she left her home, leaving her children behind with her mother-in-law. The youngest of them was already attending secondary school at that point (aged 13). She thought they would be better off with her mother-in-law.

To survive she worked as a sex worker for the following eight years until she engaged in a relationship with a new partner. The man turned out to be controlling and abusive. Eventually, Chloe left him, choosing to live on the street rather than going back to her previous job as a sex worker. While on the streets, she got connected with a neighbor that was feeding stray cats near her home. The neighbor helped her to find her way to the homeless shelter and she is still in contact with Chloe. Chloe is social and remains generally positive despite the long history of abuse. She has moments of withdrawal but she survives these moments. Today, she is finally sheltered in a homeless facility and her way to recovery might have finally started.

According to Chloe, her primary need is to get a home and earn a living in a way that would not make her children feel ashamed for her. Being illiterate means that she will need support to go through all the bureaucratic steps to access basic services (renew her ID, cover tax payments to access benefits etc.). It also limits the areas in which she could work. She wishes she does not have to sell sex ever again but then it is quite a challenge to get a job that could provide her sufficient income to make a living.

After being on her own for so long she has learned to survive. She seems willing to do whatever it takes, but there is still a long way to go. She seems to be consistent in what she considers important. All of her supportive environment is connected to the past in which she worked as a sex worker. Her relationship with her children is fragile. Over the years she maintained a distant relationship with them mostly because they were feeling ashamed of her. Her stepmother has died in a home for the elderly. She has never met her biological parents.

Questions for reflection

1. What kind of help does Chloe need that the professionals can deliver?
2. In your opinion, what services should be put in place to help Chloe deal with her problems and to start recovery?
3. Who could be the key person(s) in the intervention?
4. What could be your role as a peer support agent? How could peer support help?



Accommodating a travelling **life**

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end of session

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PROCEDURE	<p>Different roles: rescuer, fighter, crossing the boundaries actor: drawing the line on expectations. Ask participants how they understand their role and what they expect out of it. Discuss in how many ways it does not have to be perfect! Describe the word balance between edges.</p> <p>At this stage, you can discuss with the group the different possible roles of a peer supporter as explained in the ATL Trainer Curriculum Unit 4.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Role model/mentor in different moments of the recovery process 2. Breaking the boundaries 3. Individualized treatment 4. Social Support 5. Advocacy
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