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CARING COMPASS



Empowering Support Persons in Social Sphere

Training Curriculum AND
Methodological Training Material



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INTRODUCTION

Support persons provide **vital emotional, practical, and educational assistance** to individuals facing various life challenges. Their core mission is to **help vulnerable people overcome difficulties, improve coping skills, enhance autonomy, and integrate into society**. Support persons work with diverse target groups, including, for example, **adults experiencing social or economic hardship, individuals with disabilities, people with mental health issues, those struggling with addiction, individuals with a criminal background, refugees and asylum seekers, and children with special needs**. Their work includes **building trust-based relationships, empowering clients to set and achieve goals, guiding them in daily activities, and helping navigate complex social and administrative systems**. By promoting independence and social inclusion, support persons play a crucial role in improving overall quality of life and fostering resilient, inclusive communities.

The project *Caring Compass: empowering support persons in the social sphere* was initiated to **strengthen the capacity and effectiveness of support persons across Europe**, fostering social inclusion and improving the quality of life for vulnerable individuals. Support persons play a crucial role in empowering people facing various challenges — from individuals with disabilities and mental health issues to refugees, migrants, and children with special needs.

The curriculum and accompanying methodological guide presented here have been developed as part of **Work Package 3 (WP3)** of the *Caring Compass* project. This work is directly based on the comprehensive transnational study conducted under **Work Package 2 (WP2)**, which collected insights from over 100 support persons across Estonia, France, Italy, Latvia, and Sweden.

This curriculum is designed to be **universal and adaptable**, targeting support persons who work primarily with **adults experiencing difficulties in coping with daily life** (so-called “adults with coping difficulties”). These difficulties may arise from a variety of reasons, including mental health challenges, disabilities, social exclusion, or prolonged crises.

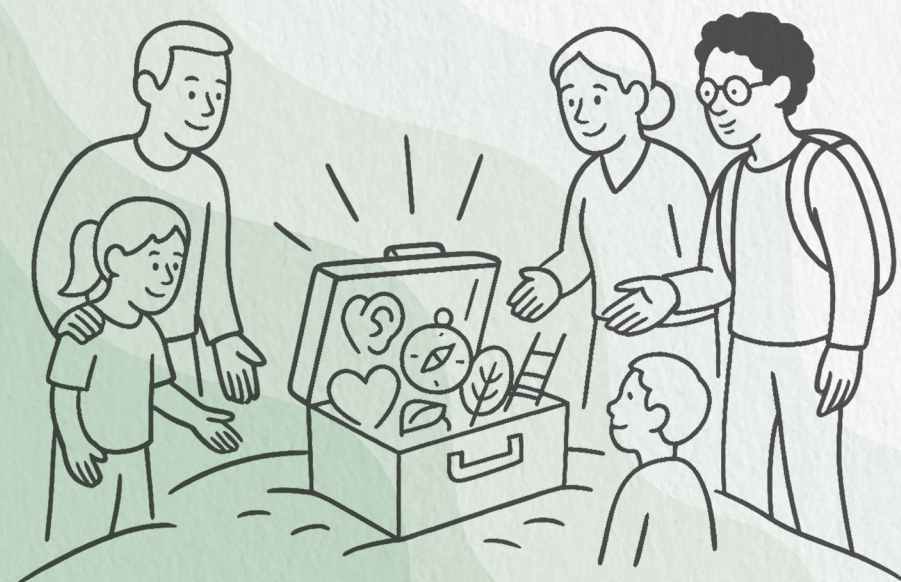
In addition to the core focus on adults, the curriculum includes **specialized elective modules** for working with **children with special needs and with migrants — including asylum seekers, newly arrived immigrants, and individuals under temporary protection**, particularly those affected by the war in Ukraine. These specific target groups were selected based on the project’s overall objectives and needs identified during the preparatory research. Adults with coping difficulties represent the **most universal and broad group**, encompassing people from various vulnerable backgrounds, including individuals struggling with addiction, former prisoners, long-term unemployed, and those facing social isolation. Children with special needs were prioritized to emphasize **early intervention and holistic family support**, while the inclusion of migrants addresses the urgent and growing need for **culturally sensitive support** in the context of recent humanitarian crises.

1. Project background & study insights

The findings from **comprehensive transnational study (WP2)** highlighted several **critical gaps and training needs** among support persons. Participants expressed a strong desire for **practical skills development**, especially in **building trusting relationships, active listening, crisis management**, and **working with difficult or vulnerable target groups**. They also emphasized the importance of **emotional and psychological support skills, stress and burnout prevention, and enhanced intercultural competence**.

Moreover, many support persons felt that their initial or basic training had been **insufficient**, often lacking practical content, clear tools, and structured guidance for handling real-life situations. There was a strong preference for **experiential, interactive learning methods**, including workshops, simulations, case analyses, and opportunities for peer learning and exchange.

Based on these findings, it became clear that a new training curriculum was needed – one that would be **practical, adaptable, and deeply rooted in real-world challenges**. This curriculum aims to fill these gaps, offering support persons a comprehensive framework to strengthen their skills, enhance their professional confidence, and ultimately provide higher-quality, person-centered support.



2. Curriculum structure, modules & standards

The training curriculum consists of **seven core theoretical modules**, one elective specialization module, and a practical placement component. This modular structure enables a comprehensive and flexible approach, allowing trainers and organizations to adapt the program to specific needs and contexts while maintaining a consistent standard of quality.

The approximate time allocation, expressed in **academic hours** (45 minutes per hour), is as follows:

- **Module 1 – Principles of support persons work:** 24 academic hours
- **Module 2 – Communication skills:** 56 academic hours
- **Module 3 – Social skills and operational capacity:** 40 academic hours
- **Module 4 – CARE methodology:** 24 academic hours
- **Module 5 – Human life circle and mental health:** 24 academic hours
- **Module 6 – Case management and networking:** 8 academic hours
- **Module 7 – Social welfare system:** 8 academic hours
- **Elective module 1 – Supporting children with special needs:** 24 academic hours
- **Elective module 2 – Supporting new-immigrants and refugees:** 24 academic hours
- **Practical placement (internship):** 50–60 academic hours

In total, the curriculum includes **approximately 260 academic hours**, providing a rich blend of theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and real-life experience to prepare support persons for high-quality, person-centered work. Additionally, while not included as a mandatory part of this curriculum, it is **highly recommended to incorporate basic first aid training** whenever possible, as first aid skills can be crucial when working with vulnerable clients and contribute to overall safety and preparedness.



3. Practical placement and case analysis seminar

To ensure that participants successfully integrate their learning and understand the importance of the support person's role, ethical principles, and impact of their work, each participant is expected to complete a **practical placement** of approximately 50–60 academic hours, typically spread over a six-month period at around 2–3 hours per week.

After completing the placement, participants prepare a **written case analysis** about a client using a provided template. This analysis should demonstrate their ability to apply theoretical knowledge to practice, reflect on professional behavior, and critically evaluate outcomes. The analysis is then **defended orally during a final seminar**, serving as the basis for awarding a certificate of training completion.

Other assessment methods may also be used to evaluate practical competencies, such as portfolio presentations, reflective journals, group discussions, role play assessments, or practical demonstrations. These flexible approaches help create a holistic understanding of each participant's progress and professional readiness.



4. Alignment with standards and international applicability

The curriculum structure and content are broadly aligned with **core professional standards and best practices**, ensuring participants are well-prepared to deliver high-quality, person-centered support. The modules comprehensively cover essential competencies such as **ethical and professional principles, building trust and relationships, supporting client autonomy and operational capacity, communication and conflict resolution, mental health awareness, social welfare systems, and community networking**.

This curriculum and methodological guide were **developed collaboratively**, with significant contributions from project partners across Estonia, France, Italy, Latvia, and Sweden. Each partner shared **national best practices, contextual expertise, and practical insights**, enriching the content and ensuring its relevance across different cultural and organizational settings.

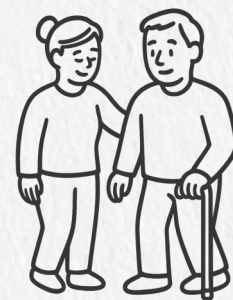
While certification requirements differ between countries and formal qualifications are not mandatory everywhere, this curriculum is designed to be **internationally applicable and adaptable**. The project team strongly encourages the use of this curriculum to **train and empower support persons regardless of national certification systems**.

Moreover, the **modular structure allows for flexibility**: individual modules can be used independently or combined in various ways to suit different training needs and contexts. This approach enables organizations and trainers to **adapt the curriculum to local priorities and participant profiles**, promoting wider accessibility and practical implementation.

Through this comprehensive design, the curriculum aims to **foster professional growth, inspire continuous learning, and encourage support persons to seek ongoing development opportunities**, ultimately contributing to more **inclusive, resilient, and empowered communities across Europe**.



5. CURRICULUM FOR SUPPORT PERSON TRAINING



MODULE 1: Principles of support persons work

Brief description of the module: to develop an understanding of support persons work, its values and ethical principles and its position in society.

TOPICS	SUBTOPICS	HOURS	METHODOLOGY	LEARNING OUTCOMES
1. Principles of support persons work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support persons role, tasks, goals and boundaries Support person as a promoter of socialisation Ethics and confidentiality Stereotypes and prejudices 	8	Mini-lectures (short theory inputs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> knows support person's role, tasks, goals knows, how to set boundaries in supportive relationships understands the role and importance as a promoter clients of socialisation is aware of the nature of the support service and its ethical aspects know different stereotypes and prejudices
2. Attitude of the support person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Client's stigmatization Client's vulnerability Client's safety Support persons presence and empathy 	8	Discussions and value exercises Case analyses Role plays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> considers the client's safety, vulnerability and potential stigmatisation understands the meaning of presence and empathy refrains from exposing themselves and their clients to danger, considering security risks
3. Support person's personal sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preventing burn-out Stress development and phases, coping with stress Assessing the emotional capacity Self-directed learning Self-regulation Time management Safety 	8	Self-reflection exercises Pair and group work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> appreciates their emotional ability to work in the field and protects themselves against negative influences analyses their learning behaviour, motivation, and attitudes understands relations between self-awareness and self-directed learner knows the importance of mental health maintenance and burnout prevention knows, how to ensure personal safety

MODULE 2: Communication skills

Brief description of the module: to provide knowledge of how to establish an effective counselling relationship and conduct the counselling process, and the skills to apply this knowledge in practical work with clients to identify their primary problems.

TOPICS	SUBTOPICS	HOURS	METHODOLOGY	LEARNING OUTCOMES
1. The concept of diversity in society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The concept and types of diversity • Diversity Management and Society 	4		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understands diversity and recognizes different groups in society
2. Establishing contact with client	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication skills and techniques • Verbal and non-verbal communication • Communication styles and communication levels, empathic communication • communication with an aggressive client 	16	Mini-lectures (short theory inputs), immediately followed by practical group activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knows how to build trusting client relationship • knows how to interact with aggressive/difficult clients • communicates with the client in a respectful and understandable language.
3. Developing and maintaining a working relationship with the client	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivational interviewing • Active listening • Basics of counselling • Empowering the client • Mentoring skills • Signs of toxic client relationship 	16	Interactive exercises and simulations Active listening workshops Role plays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knows and uses different communication techniques • understands the differences between counselling, empowerment, mentoring • knows how to set boundaries
4. Conflict and crisis management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognising danger signs • Self-management in conflict situations • Communicating in conflict situations • Role of support person in different conflict situations • Communicating in crisis • Case analysis 	16	Case analyses Group discussions and reflections Video analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knows, how to communicate bad news • knows, how to communicate in mental health crises • knows, how to behave in conflict and crises situations
5. Ending the client relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing the client to end the support relationship • Disengagement by both parties • Feedback 	4		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knows, how end client relationship respectable way

MODULE 3: Developing the client's social skills and operational capacity in everyday life



Brief description of the module: provide competences for developing, maintaining and supporting the client's social skills and operational capacity, guiding and supporting the client in everyday life activities

TOPICS	SUBTOPICS	HOURS	METHODOLOGY	LEARNING OUTCOMES
1. Developing client's social skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting the client in communication Supporting the client in learning behavioural norms Supporting the client's emotional well-being Supporting the client in resolving conflicts and learning assertive behaviour 	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mini-lectures (short theory inputs) Practical workshops and simulations Role plays Case analyses and problem-solving tasks Group discussions Field-based assignments or community-based tasks Reflection exercises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> instructs the client on establishing and maintaining different relationships, considering the client's willingness, ability and communication skills uses various alternative communication forms in activities, considering the particularities of the client supports the client in learning how to behave appropriately by developing the client's universal human values, self-regulation and empathy while considering general behaviour rules and the client's cultural background, and themselves setting an example notes meaningful behaviour by observing the expression of the client's feelings in different situations supports the client in expressing and coping with feelings, explains other people's feelings and behaviour explains different levels of communication (friendship, family, work and sexual relationships) instructs the client on behaving appropriately in different relationships and situations directs the client to notice, prevent and resolve a conflict; supports the client in learning assertive behaviour

TOPICS	SUBTOPICS	HOURS	METHODOLOGY	LEARNING OUTCOMES
2. Development, maintenance and support for client's everyday operational capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment and analysis of the client's operational capacity and need for assistance • Monitoring and noting changes in the client's state of health • Shaping health behaviour • Client empowerment 	8	Mini-lectures (short theory inputs) Practical workshops and simulations Role plays Case analyses and problem-solving tasks Group discussions Field-based assignments or community-based tasks Reflection exercises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifies the client's strengths and need for assistance, analyses the level of the client's operational and participatory capacity and in accordance with their competence adapts the environment to suit the activities • monitors the client's state of health, considering the information available; in the case of changes, informs the relevant specialist (e.g. nurse, family physician, mental health professional etc) • instructs the client to monitor their own state of health by explaining to them the symptoms of a diseases • shapes the client's awareness about their health behaviour (including sexual health) by developing with the client an agenda that meets the client's needs and is in accordance with the balance between work, leisure activities and exercise/outdoor activities, etc. • instructs and motivates the client to pursue a healthy lifestyle using a variety of methods • instructs and motivates the client to use their medication according to the treatment plan prescribed by the doctor, noting possible side-effects • based on the client's ability, guides and instructs the client to set achievable goals; motivates and encourages the client to use the acquired skills consistently • helps to set up a calm and relaxed environment for the client for performing activities • motivates and engages the client to participate in activities planned to support their development (including work-like activities) and supports the client in achieving their goals



TOPICS	SUBTOPICS	HOURS	METHODOLOGY	LEARNING OUTCOMES
3. Instructing and supporting client in everyday life activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting the client in planning their day-to-day living. Creating a household budget with the client. Supporting the client in self-care. Instructing the client on housekeeping. Instructing the client on nutrition. Guiding and including the client in leisure activities. 	8	Mini-lectures (short theory inputs) Practical workshops and simulations Role plays Case analyses and problem-solving tasks Group discussions Field-based assignments or community-based tasks Reflection exercises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> instructs and supports the client in planning daily activities, adjusting the daily and weekly rhythm to the client's needs monitors and supports the implementation of planned activities, adapting them to changes in needs and living arrangements instructs the client on planning financial operations, considering the client's resources assists the client in deciding whether transactions are reasonable and necessary and helps to make transactions; debt-counselling if necessary instructs and supports the client in personal hygiene activities, dressing and other self-care activities; motivates the client to take care of themselves; instructs the client on household chores, including cooking, using household appliances, activities related to home and property maintenance, takes into account the client's ability to work and complies with health, environmental and other safety requirements instructs and supports the client in choosing and eating balanced food monitors the client's nutrition, considering the client's needs and health instructs the client to find and participate in leisure activities suitable for them, considering the client's budget, needs and wishes



TOPICS	SUBTOPICS	HOURS	METHODOLOGY	LEARNING OUTCOMES
4. Supporting client in contributing to society in accordance with their abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding and maintaining appropriate learning, working and employment opportunities for the client Supporting the development of the client's work and study habits Supporting the client in learning the practical skills required for studying, working and other employment 	8	<p>Mini-lectures (short theory inputs)</p> <p>Practical workshops and simulations</p> <p>Role plays</p> <p>Case analyses and problem-solving tasks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> supports the client in finding areas of activity such as studying, employment or other occupations that conform to the client's abilities notes obstacles to participation in employment and supports in obtaining the necessary services and aid supports the client in developing learning and/or work habits by motivating and observing the client and providing feedback on their performance supports the client in the acquisition of the basic skills (e.g. use of time and working skills) needed for studying, working and other employment.
5. Supporting client in arrangement of everyday affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting the client in different affairs Supporting the client in using public services Supporting the client in using ICT tools 	8	<p>Group discussions</p> <p>Field-based assignments or community-based tasks</p> <p>Reflection exercises</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> supports client in everyday cooperation and communication between different parties, explaining mutual expectations, obligations and common rules instructs and supports the client in using public services and, where necessary, helps to fill in necessary documentation explains the need for personal documents (passport, ID-card, bank card etc) and options how to keep these safely supports the client in using ICT tools to access digital devices and communication in safe way



MODULE 4: Setting goals in client work based on care methodology

Brief description of the module: to introduce the central aim of the CARE (Comprehensive Approach of Rehabilitation) methodology, that is support the quality of life of people with a psychological or social vulnerability.



TOPICS	SUBTOPICS	HOURS	METHODOLOGY	LEARNING OUTCOMES
1. CARE methodology: basic principles and methodological steps Part I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meaning and history of CARE methodology Working towards strengths, recovery and presence Quality of life. Supporting quality of life based on life and personal domains. Assessment of wishes and needs, exploration of opportunities and experiences. 	8	Mini-lectures (short theory inputs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> knows the basic principles of psychosocial rehabilitation knows the principles of the CARE methodology knows how to emphasize clients' strengths and opportunities
2. CARE metoodika: metoodilised sammud II osa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating a personal profile Setting goals and identifying opportunities Supporting coping with vulnerability Strength as a response to vulnerability 	8	Case analyses Practical planning exercises Visual tools and mapping exercises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> knows, how to support the client in drawing up a Personal Strength Profile knows, how to support the client to formulate wishes and set goals knows the principles of teaching clients to cope with their vulnerability
3. CARE metoodika: metoodilised sammud III osa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing a relationship of equivalence, presence, adaptation and communication with the client Drawing up an individual action or support plan Evaluating and adapting the support process, assessing objectives and outcomes 	8	Reflection activities Group discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> knows the essential principles for building and maintaining a client relationship and being available for the client knows how to develop a supportive environment for the client supports the client's independent coping in the community understands the importance of networking and working with the client's family knows how to evaluate and monitor the process and outcome of client and networking work

MODULE 5: Human life circle and mental health



Brief description of the module: to introduce human life circle and health related specifics.

TOPICS	SUBTOPICS	HOURS	METHODOLOGY	LEARNING OUTCOMES
1. Personal development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview of the general patterns and factors influencing human development 	4	Mini-lectures (short theory inputs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> knows developmental regularities of human development in different stages problems and specifics of aging, the impact of diseases on an adult hormonal changes
2. Mental health and mental well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is mental health What is mental well-being Healthy behaviour How to maintain mental health? How to achieve mental wellbeing Trauma, grief 	8	<p>Case descriptions and analysis</p> <p>Role plays</p> <p>Group discussions and reflections</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> knows the difference of physical mental health knows the difference between psychological problems and mental illness knows what mental well-being is knows the importance of mental health in everyday life and how to achieve it knows the possible traumatic experiences
3. Most common (mental) health disorders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview of different diagnoses Behavioural characteristics 	8	<p>Practical self-assessments</p> <p>Visual tools and diagrams</p> <p>Simulation activities</p> <p>Reflection exercises</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> has an overview of anxiety and panic attacks, depression and bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), eating disorders (anorexia, bulimia, emotional eating), stress-related disorders and burnout; addictions (alcohol, drugs, gambling addiction). monitors the client's state of health, considering the information available about the client's health
4. Responding to health-related specificities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different action strategies to cope with different disorders 	4	Guest speakers (e.g., clinical psychologists, mental health professionals)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> knows and can use different communication and action strategies for different mental health disorders. Knows different therapies and methods, for example behavioral therapy and positive reinforcement, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), art, music and play therapy, sensory stimulation methods

MODULE 6: Case management and networking

Brief description of the module: to create prerequisites for the development of knowledge and skills of case management and networking to assess and resolve the need for assistance of the person in need based on the principle of case management.

TOPICS	SUBTOPICS	HOURS	METHODOLOGY	LEARNING OUTCOMES
1. Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mapping the client network Building and/or expanding client network Process initiation 	2	Mini-lectures (short theory inputs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> organises a suitable network for the client notes the need to include close family members and, with the client's consent, establishes contact with them cooperates with the client's relatives and guardians, involving them in matters concerning the client
2. Cooperation in networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication with family Communication with other network members 	2	Case analyses Role plays Practical workshops and exercises Group discussions and reflections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> knows specifics of conversations about problems with relatives cooperates with the network's members by exchanging relevant information with them cooperates with an educational institution, employer or other organisation cooperates with other professionals
3. Assessment of client needs in the network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mapping the services Determining the client's need for help and assessing the need for help, drawing up a case plan and action plan 	2	Network mapping exercises and visual tools Simulation activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> supports the client network members in finding areas of activity such as studying, employment or other occupations that conform to the client's abilities
4. Community work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community activation, prevention and outreach in the community Engaging voluntary activities/volunteers 	1	Reflection exercises Guest speakers (e.g., cross-sector professionals)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cooperates with the community instructs and supports the client in using the services offered in the community (e.g. hairdresser, sauna and public transport), considering the client's operational capability; accompanies the client, if necessary organises participation in leisure activities and community events and participates with the client, if necessary Encourages client to take part in voluntary work

TOPICS	SUBTOPICS	HOURS	METHODOLOGY	LEARNING OUTCOMES
5. Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protecting client's rights, promotion of clients wishes, client's dignity 	1	<p>Mini-lectures (short theory inputs)</p> <p>Case analyses</p> <p>Role plays</p> <p>Practical workshops and exercises</p> <p>Group discussions and reflections</p> <p>Network mapping exercises and visual tools</p> <p>Simulation activities</p> <p>Reflection exercises</p> <p>Guest speakers (e.g., cross-sector professionals)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> explaining the client's needs and supporting the client in resolving organisational issues within the limits of their competence, explains to the client the rights and obligations arising from the client's employment rights supports the client's self-representation skills with reference to recognition and promotion of fundamental human rights <p>provides guidance on how to get assistance in the exercising of rights and supports them in reaching out to relevant organisations</p>



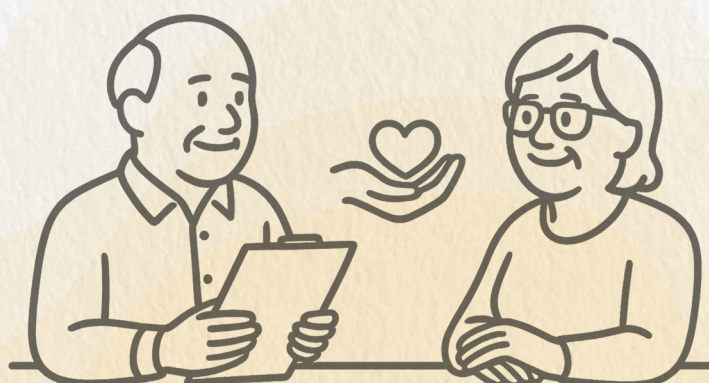
MODULE 7: System of social welfare

Brief description of the module: to provide the necessary knowledge of the nature, development, and principles of the welfare system



TOPICS	SUBTOPICS	HOURS	METHODOLOGY	LEARNING OUTCOMES
1. Social welfare, terminology, legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic concepts: social welfare, social protection, well-being General principles of rights and obligations Overview of key laws and regulations (e.g., Social Welfare Act, Child Protection Act) International principles and conventions 	2	<p>Mini-lectures (short theory inputs)</p> <p>Case analyses</p> <p>Group discussions</p> <p>Practical workshops (e.g., service mapping exercises)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knows key concepts related to social welfare, social protection, and well-being Understands clients' rights and obligations within the welfare system Knows the main laws and regulations governing social welfare Is aware of relevant international conventions and principles
2. Types, directions and tasks of social welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Main directions of social welfare: preventive, rehabilitative, crisis support Goals of welfare: promoting independence, improving coping skills Target groups and assessing need for assistance Core work principles (e.g., individual approach, accessibility, inclusion) 	2	<p>Reflection activities</p> <p>Guest speakers (e.g., representatives from social services)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands different directions and functions of social welfare (preventive, rehabilitative, crisis support) Knows the main goals of welfare work (e.g., promoting independence, supporting coping) Identifies target groups and understands the process of assessing assistance needs Knows and follows the core work principles (individual approach, accessibility, inclusion)

TOPICS	SUBTOPICS	HOURS	METHODOLOGY	LEARNING OUTCOMES
3. Social benefits and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial benefits (e.g., subsistence benefit, disability allowance, family benefits) Services: support person services, care services, home services, day centers Conditions and application process Combining services and benefits 	2	<p>Mini-lectures (short theory inputs)</p> <p>Case analyses</p> <p>Group discussions</p> <p>Practical workshops (e.g., service mapping exercises)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knows different types of financial benefits and their purposes Knows main social services and understands their functions Understands the conditions and application process for benefits and services Is able to explain the importance of combining different support options
4. Services provided by the public and private sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services offered by the state and local municipalities Role of private sector and NGOs Cooperation and networking Innovation and new solutions (e.g., social entrepreneurship) 	2	<p>Reflection activities</p> <p>Guest speakers (e.g., representatives from social services)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knows the structure and roles of services provided by the state and municipalities Understands the contribution of private sector and NGOs in social welfare Understands the importance of cooperation and networking in service provision Is aware of new and innovative approaches (e.g., social entrepreneurship)



ELECTIVE MODULE 1:

Supporting child with special needs

Brief description of the module: enable knowledge and skills for working with children (and families), get an overview of the methods of education and influence of children and young people with special social, behavioural and developmental needs.



TOPICS	SUBTOPICS	HOURS	METHODOLOGY	LEARNING OUTCOMES
1. Child's developmental stages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0-2 years 3-6 years 7-15 years, 15-21 years including guiding the child's sexual behaviour 	6	Mini-lectures (short theory inputs) Workshops and creative practical exercises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> supports the child, considering a child's developmental stages and noting age-related and health-related peculiarities supports the child in the acquisition of sexual behaviour skills, considering the child's age and developmental peculiarities
2. Pedagogical work with family and loved ones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different support mechanisms Collaboration with family and multi-disciplinary teams Role of support person in conflict situations 	6	Case analyses Role plays Parent engagement simulations Group discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knows different support mechanisms (adapted learning, family therapy, parenting programs) Collaborates with family and a range of different professionals for the well-being of the child notes conflict, responds to the situation as appropriate and engages the child as well as their parents, guardians, and support professionals in resolving the conflict
3. Supporting the child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting the child with social needs Supporting the child with behavioural needs Supporting the child with developmental needs 	6	Visual and developmental tools Video analysis (e.g., child-adult interaction) Reflection activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knows the difference of social, behavioural and developmental needs can create suitable atmosphere for the child cooperates with a parent and other child-related network members
4. Cooperation with the educational institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting a child with special educational needs at school 	6	Guest speakers (e.g., child psychologists, special educators)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> supports the child in the learning process by working with the educational institution, including the teacher/supervisor, helping the teacher; supports communication between a parent and the educational institution


ELECTIVE MODULE 2:

Supporting new-immigrants and refugees


Brief description of the module: give an overview of the specifics of working with beneficiaries of international protection and/or refugees.



TOPICS	SUBTOPICS	HOURS	METHODOLOGY	LEARNING OUTCOMES
1. Key terms, legal statuses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New migrant Refugee Beneficiary of international protection Temporary protection Reasons for migration Human trafficking Culture shock, assimilation, integration, segregation, etc. 	4	<p>Mini-lectures (short theory inputs)</p> <p>Practical workshops and exercises</p> <p>Case analyses</p> <p>Role plays</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understands key concepts of migration understands differences of key terms in migration knows the causes and consequences of exile, is familiar with the cultural and political context of exile can search for further information on the politics and economy of different countries is motivated to be supportive of refugees from different backgrounds
2. Cultural, educational and religious differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tolerance and values Different ethnic refugee nationalities, ethnic groups Help and assistance in different cultures Gender differences Community relations 	4	<p>Simulations (e.g., service navigation)</p> <p>Visual mapping tools</p> <p>Group discussions</p> <p>Reflection activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is aware of his/her values and boundaries is tolerant of people from different cultural backgrounds understands the impact of different worldviews and religions on human behaviour supports the client in coping with their cultural particularities and adapting to their new physical and social environment, considering the client's cultural background
3. Trauma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post-traumatic stress, help with post-traumatic stress disorder (chronic and acute), working with female and male refugees family member crisis/stress 	8	<p>Guest speakers (e.g., community leaders, experienced support persons)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understands the meaning of family in different cultures understands the stages and the course of a crisis can ask questions that will help him/her to find out about the refugee's life so far and his/her departure is willing to seek professional support to solve refugee problems can provide help in different phases of a crisis

TOPICS	SUBTOPICS	HOURS	METHODOLOGY	LEARNING OUTCOMES
4. Legal boundaries, migration law, labour law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview of relevant legislation 	4	Mini-lectures (short theory inputs) Practical workshops and exercises Case analyses Role plays Simulations (e.g., service navigation) Visual mapping tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is aware of the problems that a person who has grown up in another culture may encounter in Estonia has an overview of the relevant legislation supports the client in communication with the Police and Border Guard Board and relevant international organisations in activities related to residence permits, family reunification and voluntary return
5. Administrative support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Networking Mapping of services Refugee children at school 	2	Group discussions Reflection activities Guest speakers (e.g., community leaders, experienced support persons)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> has an overview of the information a refugee needs and how to find it knows where to turn for refugee issues supports the client in dealing with the local authorities, educational facilities, Labour Market Board etc considering the client's case plan



TOPICS	SUBTOPICS	HOURS	METHODOLOGY	LEARNING OUTCOMES
6. Communi- cating with the public and the media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role and representation rights of the support person (when you may / may not speak on behalf of the client) • Privacy, confidentiality and ethics in media communication • Portrayal of refugees and migrants in the public sphere – stereotypes and stigmas • How to give an interview or speak at a public event • Cooperation with local media and safe messaging • How to direct journalistic interest to the appropriate channel (e.g. press officer, public authority) 	2	Mini-lectures (short theory inputs) Practical workshops and exercises Case analyses Role plays Simulations (e.g., service navigation) Visual mapping tools Group discussions Reflection activities Guest speakers (e.g., community leaders, experienced support persons)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands the role of the support person and knows when they have the right or obligation to communicate with the public on behalf of the client, and when not • Follows the principles of privacy, confidentiality, and ethics in media communication • Is able to observe and analyse how refugees and migrants are portrayed in the public sphere, and can avoid reinforcing stereotypes and stigmas • Is prepared to give interviews or speak at public events in a professional and clear manner • Is able to cooperate with local media by formulating safe and supportive messages • Is able to direct journalists' interest to the appropriate channel (e.g. press officer, public authority), thereby ensuring the safety of both the client and themselves



6. METHODOLOGICAL TRAINING MATERIAL: practical recommendations, methodological suggestions, and illustrative examples for trainers



The methodological training guide is designed as a **practical and flexible tool** to support trainers in implementing the curriculum effectively. Trainers are expected to be experienced professionals capable of **adapting the content and delivery methods** to different participant needs, organizational contexts, and cultural environments.

Instead of providing a rigid, step-by-step script, this guide offers **practical recommendations, methodological suggestions, and illustrative examples** to support dynamic, interactive, and participant-centered learning. Trainers are encouraged to select and combine activities freely, making adjustments according to the group's background, prior knowledge, and real-life challenges they may face in their work.

Each module section in the methodological training guide includes the following components:

- **Description of the module:** A short overview explaining the focus and content of the module.
- **Purpose of the module:** The main objectives and why this topic is essential for support persons.
- **Importance of the module/topics:** Key reasons why the topics are relevant and impactful in practice.
- **Brief theory about module topics:** A concise theoretical background to ensure trainers have the necessary conceptual foundation.
- **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):** Typical questions participants may raise and suggest ways to address them.
- **Methodical recommendations:** Practical suggestions for delivering the module, including possible methods (e.g., role plays, discussions, case analyses, group work).
- **References and recommended reading:** Additional resources for deepening understanding or exploring specific subtopics in more detail.

This structured yet adaptable approach ensures that trainers can maintain **consistency and quality** while also fostering **creativity, responsiveness, and engagement** among participants.

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MODULE 1:

SUPPORT PERSON'S ROLE AND ETHICS



1. Description of the Module

This module focuses on understanding the role, tasks, goals, and boundaries of a support person. It explores ethical considerations, confidentiality, and the support person's role as a facilitator of socialisation. Stereotypes and prejudices affecting support work are also addressed.

2. Purpose of the Module

To provide learners with a clear understanding of the essence of support work, its ethical foundations, and professional boundaries in client work. The module lays a foundation for a professional attitude and awareness to avoid burnout and ethical pitfalls.

3. Importance of the Module

Many support persons begin working based on personal experience, which may lack formal awareness of ethics and professional limits. Without role clarity, support persons risk burnout or forming inappropriate client relationships.

4. Theoretical background

Support work is grounded in **respect for human dignity, self-determination, and professional ethics**. Unlike clinical or therapeutic roles, support persons are not there to fix or diagnose—but to **walk alongside the client**, empowering them to live with autonomy, confidence, and dignity.

The support person serves as a **relational guide and facilitator**, not as a rescuer or problem-solver. Their main task is to **support the client's everyday functioning**—whether emotionally, socially, or practically—without overstepping professional boundaries.

A good support relationship balances **closeness with professional distance**. The role requires building a **relationship based on trust, confidentiality, and empathy**, while maintaining a clear awareness of one's own limits and responsibilities.

Ethical work with clients relies on the following foundations:

- **Self-Determination:** Clients have the right to make their own choices. The support person's role is to inform, not decide (Banks, 2021).
- **Confidentiality:** Trust is built through respecting privacy. Confidentiality can only be broken in legal exceptions (e.g. risk of harm).
- **Professional Boundaries:** A clear boundary protects both the client and the support person. Emotional involvement must not turn into personal dependency (Munson, 2013).
- **Empathy and Respect:** Unconditional respect for the client's background, worldview, and behaviour is essential—even when values differ.

Due to the close and informal nature of support relationships, **boundary awareness is critical**. While trust and warmth are essential, role confusion may lead to:

- Burnout or compassion fatigue
- Over-involvement or blurred roles
- Misuse of power or unintended harm

Training should highlight the importance of **emotional neutrality**—being present and caring, but not emotionally overwhelmed or enmeshed. Regular **self-reflection** and peer support help maintain ethical clarity.

Ethics in support work is not limited to knowing the rules—it is also about **adopting a mindset of responsibility, respect, and reflection**. A support person's ethical conduct is rooted in their **values and attitudes**, which shape every interaction with the client.

Key ethical attitudes include:

- **Humility** – recognising the client as the expert of their own life
- **Accountability** – being transparent, reliable, and accepting responsibility for one's actions
- **Non-judgment** – setting aside personal beliefs or moral judgments, especially when working with clients whose values or behaviours differ
- **Cultural sensitivity** – being aware of one's own biases and avoiding ethnocentrism
- **Willingness to learn** – ethics requires continuous self-reflection and openness to feedback

Professional ethics is not about being perfect—it is about **staying aware, asking questions, and being willing to adjust**. Especially in emotionally intense or ambiguous situations, a support person must regularly ask themselves:

“Am I acting in the client's best interest—or according to my own emotions or assumptions?”

“Am I offering support—or taking control?”

Cultivating an **ethical stance** is a lifelong process. It grows through **experience, dialogue, and supervision**, not just formal education. Trainers should encourage learners to see ethics as a **daily practice**, not a one-time lesson.

5. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

How close can a support person get to the client?

What to do if the client shares very personal information?

When should the support person decline a task?

Is it acceptable for a support person to lend money to the client?



6. Methodical Recommendations

The methodology should be a combination of short lectures, discussions, case analyses, role plays, and self-reflection exercises to deepen understanding and support personal development. Emphasize creating a safe, judgment-free environment for exploring values and ethics. Encourage participants to share real experiences and reflect on personal boundaries and professional roles. Support self-awareness as a foundation for ethical practice.

Encourage learners to discuss ethical dilemmas and boundary challenges (e.g. role-play or case studies).

Use reflection rounds: “What should I *never* do?” and “Where do I draw the line?”

“Which values are most important to me as a support person?”

Include real-life examples (anonymized) and ask participants to share their own.

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MODULE 2:

COMMUNICATION SKILLS



1. Description of the Module

This module focuses on developing support persons' communication skills, including active listening, empathetic communication, nonviolent communication, and effective feedback. It also addresses intercultural communication and handling challenging situations.

2. Purpose of the Module

The goal is to enhance support persons' communication skills to build trustful relationships with clients, understand their needs, and effectively support them in various situations.

3. Importance of the Module

Effective communication is fundamental to support work. Without it, understanding clients' needs, building trust, and providing appropriate support become challenging. Communication skills help prevent conflicts and improve collaboration.

4. Theoretical background

Effective communication is the **cornerstone of support work** and a key tool for building trust with clients. Communication skills are not limited to talking and listening – they include a **complex interplay of social, emotional, and cognitive competencies** that enable support persons to respond to a wide range of clients, situations, and cultural contexts.

Based on **Carl Rogers' humanistic psychology**, active listening is more than silence—it is **full presence without judgment or interruption**. It includes:

- Reflecting back the client's words or emotions
- Asking clarifying or open-ended questions
- Avoiding unsolicited advice or interpretation

Active listening fosters **psychological safety**, which is essential for building trust—especially when working with clients who have been dismissed or misunderstood in other systems.

Empathy involves putting oneself in the client's position emotionally – not to absorb their distress, but to understand it deeply. Empathy from the support person helps clients feel seen and not judged, which is vital for individuals who have experienced stigma, rejection, or trauma.

Empathy means the ability to **understand another person's experience emotionally and cognitively**, while **remaining grounded in one's own role**. Support persons are not expected to "feel for" the client, but to "feel with" them—demonstrating sincere care and emotional attunement.



Empathy is critical for:

- **Reducing shame and self-judgment**
- Helping clients feel **seen and validated**
- Encouraging clients to open up without fear of rejection

Empathic responses can include statements like: *“It sounds like this has been very hard for you”* or *“I hear that you're feeling stuck—thank you for telling me.”*

Nonviolent Communication (NVC): Structure for Respectful Dialogue

Marshall Rosenberg’s Nonviolent Communication (2003) model offers a **practical structure for conflict-sensitive and respectful communication**. It is especially useful in emotionally charged situations or when discussing difficult topics.

NVC involves four steps:

- 1. Observation** – Describe what you see/hear without judgment
- 2. Feeling** – Name your emotion(s)
- 3. Need** – Identify the underlying unmet need
- 4. Request** – Make a clear, respectful request

This framework supports clarity, reduces escalation, and strengthens the client’s ability to **express themselves without fear**.

Training should also cover **intercultural communication**, as many support persons work with migrants or refugees. **Cultural norms** can differ significantly in terms of verbal/non-verbal behavior, social roles, and expression of emotion. Many support persons work with migrants, refugees, or clients from minority backgrounds. **Cultural norms shape communication deeply**—including how people express emotions, handle silence, or relate to authority.

To avoid misinterpretation or bias:

- Be aware of **your own cultural assumptions**
- Ask instead of assuming: *“How is this usually done in your culture?”*
- Consider **non-verbal differences** (e.g., eye contact, gestures, tone)



Hofstede’s cultural dimensions (2001) and **Ting-Toomey’s intercultural competence model** offer useful tools for trainers introducing diversity awareness.

Communication in challenging situations – such as with anxious, angry, or trauma-affected clients – requires emotional regulation and contextual sensitivity. Understanding trauma reactions (e.g. freeze, flight, fight) can help support persons **not take behaviour personally**, but respond with informed empathy.

Giving and receiving feedback is vital for motivating clients and building cooperation. Constructive feedback strengthens **self-awareness, trust, and motivation**. It should be: specific, not vague, also behaviour-focused, not personal and delivered respectfully, followed by encouragement. Support persons can model **growth-oriented feedback** and teach clients how to **ask for and reflect on feedback** themselves.

Communication is a skill that can be learned and refined. In support work, it is not just about *saying the right thing*, but **building a relationship where the client feels heard, understood, and safe**. This foundation is what enables empowerment and personal growth.

Skill	Key Concept	Practical Application
Active listening	Presence & empathy	Build trust through reflection and non-judgment
Empathy	“Feel with”, not “for”	Recognise emotion without over-identifying
Nonviolent Communication	Observation, Feeling, Need, Request	Framework for de-escalation and connection
Intercultural communication	Cultural self-awareness	Adapt to verbal/non-verbal differences
Feedback	Respectful reflection	Build motivation and learning climate

5. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

How to respond when a client expresses strong emotions?

How to provide feedback that is constructive and supportive?

How to communicate with clients from different cultural backgrounds?



6. Methodical Recommendations

The methodology here should focus on role plays, practical exercises, active listening practice, case analyses, short theory inputs, group discussions, and video analysis, to build concrete, usable communication skills. Focus on building trust and confidence in communication through repeated practice and feedback. Highlight the importance of cultural sensitivity and clear language when working with diverse clients. Use humor and spontaneity to make learning engaging and realistic.

- Use role-plays to practice various communication scenarios.
- Discuss case studies to analyze the impact of communication on client relationships.
- Encourage self-analysis and reflection to increase awareness of one's communication style.
- Provide opportunities to practice active listening and empathetic responses.

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3. MODULE:

DEVELOPING THE CLIENT'S SOCIAL SKILLS AND OPERATIONAL CAPACITY IN EVERYDAY LIFE



1. Description of the Module

This module focuses on how support persons can assist clients in developing social skills, coping with daily life, and participating in society. It includes assessing client capacity, providing guidance in everyday activities, and creating a supportive environment.

2. Purpose of the Module

To equip support persons with skills and knowledge to assist clients in daily functioning and promote their independence and social inclusion.

3. Importance of the Module

Clients with psychosocial, cognitive, or developmental challenges often struggle with everyday routines, emotional regulation, and participation in the community. Without skilled support, these challenges can lead to increased dependence, isolation, and deteriorating well-being. This module empowers support persons to foster sustainable change, independence, and inclusion through consistent, respectful, and structured support.

4. Theoretical background

The role of support persons working with vulnerable populations—such as individuals with substance use disorders, those with difficulties in daily functioning, or people with mild intellectual disabilities—is both vital and complex. These support workers help their clients build independence, develop life skills, and manage daily challenges. To be effective in this role, it is important that support persons are equipped with practical tools grounded in psychological theory and adult learning principles. Two particularly useful approaches in this context are:

Cognitive-behavioural strategies (CBS) – to help clients change unhelpful thought and behaviour patterns and

Authentic learning theory – to foster meaningful, real-world learning experiences.

Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) is an evidence-based psychological approach widely used with diverse groups, including those with mental health challenges, addiction issues, or cognitive impairments. While support workers are not therapists, they can apply core cognitive-behavioural strategies in everyday interactions to encourage more adaptive thinking and behaviour.

Key strategies for support persons are:

- **Cognitive restructuring:** Help clients identify and challenge negative automatic thoughts (e.g., “I can’t do anything right,” “There’s no point in trying”) and replace them with more balanced, realistic beliefs (e.g., “I’ve succeeded before,” “I can take small steps”).
- **Behavioural activation:** Encourage participation in positive, purposeful activities to interrupt cycles of inactivity, low mood, and hopelessness. Examples might include taking a walk, completing a simple household task, or making a social connection.
- **Self-monitoring and reflection:** Support clients in tracking their moods, behaviours, or thoughts using simple journals or verbal check-ins. This increases self-awareness and highlights patterns they may not otherwise notice.
- **Relaxation and breathing techniques:** Teaching basic stress-reduction tools such as deep breathing or muscle relaxation can help clients better manage anxiety and emotional distress.
- **Problem-solving skills:** Guide clients through structured problem-solving steps: identifying the issue, brainstorming solutions, evaluating options, and choosing a course of action.

These techniques can be integrated informally into conversations, daily routines, and planning activities with clients.

Authentic learning is an educational approach that emphasizes real-life, meaningful tasks. It is particularly effective for individuals with low motivation or learning difficulties, as it aligns learning closely with practical life needs and personal relevance.

Key principles of authentic learning in support work are:

- **Learning through real-life activities:** For example, teaching budgeting during a grocery shopping trip, or demonstrating home cleaning routines in a client’s own living space.
- **Meaningful tasks:** Learning activities should support the client’s own goals—such as living independently, finding work, or caring for their children—not abstract or irrelevant exercises.
- **Collaboration and dialogue:** Learning happens through supportive conversation. The support person acts not as a traditional “teacher,” but as a facilitator, helping the client discover answers and reflect on experiences.
- **Reflection and feedback:** Support persons can prompt questions like: *What worked? Why is this important? What could I do differently next time?* This builds metacognitive skills and internal motivation.
- **Connecting tasks to personal experience:**
The more personally relevant the task, the more likely it is that the client will engage with it and retain the learning.

When training support workers, it is essential to equip them with tools that combine practical application and psychological insight. Cognitive-behavioural strategies help clients break out of limiting beliefs and behaviours, while authentic learning promotes active, relevant skill-building in everyday life. Training should include both theoretical background and practical exercises to build the confidence and competence of support workers in applying these methods effectively and compassionately.

5. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

How to motivate a client who seems disinterested in doing things independently?

When should a support person step in and when should they let the client try and fail?

How to support clients with cognitive impairments in everyday tasks?



6. Methodical Recommendations

Methodology should include practical workshops, role plays, case analyses, group discussions, short theory inputs, field-based assignments, and structured reflections, to prepare participants to support clients effectively in everyday life. Encourage creativity and flexibility when working on practical skills. Emphasize real-life problem solving and fostering client independence. Use local examples and culturally relevant activities to make learning meaningful.

Use hands-on exercises (planning a daily routine, managing money, hygiene discussions).

Use real-life examples as much as possible to illustrate challenges

Develop case scenarios where learners plan and assess interventions.

Facilitate reflection: what does it mean to support, not substitute?

Emphasize personalized and culturally aware approaches.

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MODULE 4:

SETTING GOALS IN CLIENT WORK BASED ON CARE METHODOLOGY



1. Description of the Module

The CARE methodology (Client-centred Approach to Rehabilitation) is a strengths-based, recovery-oriented approach used primarily in mental health and psychosocial rehabilitation. It focuses on supporting individuals to live meaningful and fulfilling lives by building on their personal strengths, goals, and social context.

2. Purpose of the Module

CARE is a tool for professionals working with psychosocially vulnerable target groups. The module introduces the core principles of the CARE methodology and trains support persons to carry out practical client work in accordance with these principles

3. Importance of the Module

The CARE methodology promotes dignity, autonomy, and social inclusion. Instead of focusing only on problems or diagnoses, it helps individuals move forward, rebuild their lives, and participate actively in society.

4. Theoretical background

The CARE methodology (Comprehensive Approach to Recovery) was developed in the **Netherlands** by Jean Pierre Wilken and Dirk den Hollander during the 1990s. The first handbook was published in 1994, and since then, the methodology has been continuously developed based on qualitative research and recovery narratives. Although its roots lie in the field of mental health, the application of the CARE methodology has expanded into social work and rehabilitation.

At the heart of the CARE methodology is a **holistic and recovery-oriented approach** that aims to support individuals on their personal recovery journeys. It is built around the following key principles:

Building a collaborative relationship: Establishing a trusting and supportive connection with the client is the foundation for all further work.

Focusing on strengths and resources: The emphasis is on the client's existing capabilities and assets, not just on their problems.

Creating a personal profile: The client and support worker map out life domains, personal goals, and specific needs together.

Supporting the recovery process: The support worker helps the client define and work toward meaningful, personal recovery goals.

Network-based collaboration: Engaging with other professionals and community resources is an integral part of the CARE approach.

The CARE methodology is implemented in **nearly 20 countries**, including the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, and other parts of Eastern Europe. It is used with a **variety of target groups**, including:

People with mental health difficulties: This was the original focus group for the CARE methodology.

Socially vulnerable individuals: Such as those experiencing long-term unemployment, substance use issues, or social exclusion.

People with special needs: The CARE methodology is also applied to support individuals with disabilities, helping them achieve greater independence and improved quality of life.

5. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

How can we distinguish between a client's genuine wishes and momentary desires or external expectations?

What if the client says they have no wishes or doesn't know what they want?

How can we avoid setting goals on behalf of the client?

How does the CARE methodology address setbacks or a decline in motivation?

How should we respond when a client's wish seems "unrealistic" or socially difficult to achieve?

How can work with the client be documented in a way that supports the CARE methodology and avoids becoming mere bureaucracy?

When should the support network be involved, and how can this be done in line with CARE principles?



6. Methodical Recommendations

Stress the importance of a strengths-based approach and active client participation in planning. Encourage iterative learning – reviewing and adapting goals continuously. Promote a supportive group atmosphere where mistakes are seen as learning opportunities.

Focus on attitudes, not just techniques. The CARE methodology is not just a set of tools—it's a person-centered worldview. The training should emphasize how participants understand the person, change, and their role as a support figure.

Use case-based learning – understanding CARE deepens through real-life scenarios. Introduce CARE methodology's practical tools (e.g., personal profile, strengths map, recovery path) and action plan. Use concrete client stories to make theory relatable.

Adapt to your target group, because different professionals (e.g., support workers, psychologists, social workers) may need different emphasis—some want hands-on tools, others theoretical framing.

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MODULE 5:**HUMAN LIFE CYCLE and MENTAL HEALTH****1. Description of the Module**

This module introduces the human life cycle and related developmental and health-specific features. It provides learners with essential knowledge of human development stages, mental health, mental well-being, and the most common mental health disorders. The module also covers effective strategies to support clients with mental health difficulties and trauma.

2. Purpose of the Module

To enable support persons to understand the different stages of human development and recognize common mental health issues throughout the life cycle. The module aims to equip them with skills to support clients' mental health, promote well-being, and respond appropriately to psychological and behavioral challenges.

3. Importance of the Module

Support persons frequently work with clients at various stages of life and with diverse mental health needs. Understanding human development and the basics of mental health is crucial for responding empathetically and effectively. With rising awareness and prevalence of mental health concerns, having foundational knowledge helps avoid stigma, recognize early signs, and offer timely support or referrals.

4. Theoretical background**Human Development and Life Stages**

Human development is a continuous process influenced by biological, psychological, and social factors. The life span is generally divided into several stages: infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age. Each stage presents typical developmental tasks and challenges (e.g., identity formation in adolescence, independence in adulthood, integrity in old age). Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory is commonly used to understand these tasks.

Mental Health and Well-being

Mental health is more than the absence of illness—it includes emotional resilience, life satisfaction, and the ability to cope with stress. Key components are: cognitive balance (thinking patterns), emotional regulation, and social connectedness.

The WHO defines mental well-being as a state in which an individual realizes their own abilities, can cope with normal life stresses, and can contribute to their community.

Common Mental Health Disorders

Support persons should be familiar with the characteristics of common conditions:

- Depression, anxiety disorders
- Bipolar disorder
- Schizophrenia and psychosis
- PTSD and trauma-related symptoms
- OCD and eating disorders
- Addictions and burnout

Understanding symptom patterns (e.g., withdrawal, aggression, panic) is essential for adjusting support strategies.

Responding to Mental Health Needs

Support persons are not therapists but should:

Recognize warning signs (e.g., prolonged sadness, disorientation, hallucinations),

Communicate nonjudgmentally,

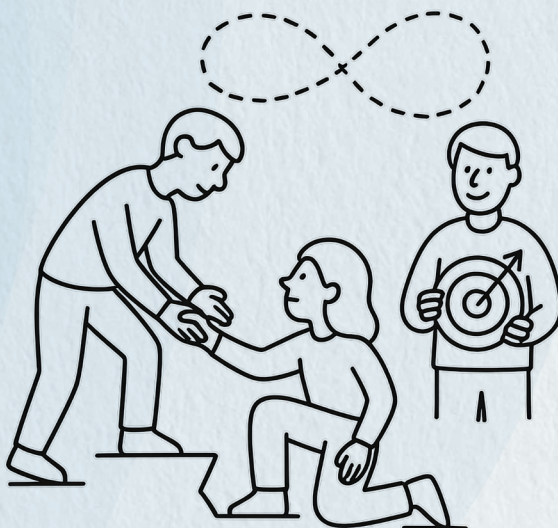
Encourage access to professional help,

Use grounding techniques and emotional support skills (especially for trauma-affected individuals),

Avoid reinforcing stigma.

Common Mental Health Conditions – Practical Guide for Everyday Support

This worksheet provides a comparative overview of common mental health conditions, including their typical signs, everyday examples, and practical tips for communication and support. It's designed to help professionals, support workers, and caregivers engage empathetically and effectively.



CONDITION	TYPICAL SYMPTOMS	REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE	SUPPORT & COMMUNICATION TIPS
Depression	Low energy, hopelessness, loss of interest, sleep/appetite changes	Client says: "I don't care anymore, I just lie in bed."	Be patient, offer structure, suggest small achievable tasks. Acknowledge feelings without pressure.
Anxiety Disorders	Constant worry, tension, avoidance, overthinking	Client avoids group activities, checks things repeatedly, asks for reassurance	Provide calm, predictable communication. Avoid surprises. Encourage gradual exposure.
Bipolar Disorder	Mood swings between depression and mania (high energy, impulsivity)	Client is talkative, makes big plans, then crashes into apathy days later	Maintain routine, don't feed into manic impulses. Be a steady presence.
Schizophrenia & Psychosis	Hallucinations, delusions, disorganized thinking	Client believes others are spying on them or hears voices	Stay calm and respectful. Don't argue about beliefs. Focus on shared reality and grounding tasks.
PTSD / Trauma	Flashbacks, hypervigilance, emotional numbness, startle response	Client avoids certain places, gets overwhelmed by loud noises	Respect boundaries, avoid sudden touch/sound. Build trust. Use grounding techniques.
OCD & Eating Disorders	Intrusive thoughts, compulsions, strict routines; control around food/body	Client washes hands excessively or refuses meals in social settings	Avoid criticism. Support healthy routines. Focus on emotional needs.
Addictions & Burnout	Dependence on substances; emotional exhaustion, cynicism	Client is always "too tired" or misses appointments; may smell of alcohol	Don't moralize. Encourage small steps. Show care without enabling.

5. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

How can I support a client in an emotional crisis?

How do I help clients set realistic goals that match their abilities and developmental stage?

What are common emotional crises linked to specific life stages (e.g., identity crisis in adolescence, loneliness in older age)?

How do I recognize signs of depression or trauma?

What is my role vs. the role of a psychologist or psychiatrist?

How can I talk about mental health without sounding intrusive?

How do I avoid burnout while supporting clients with complex mental health needs?



6. Methodical Recommendations

The methodology should include theory inputs, case descriptions and analysis, role plays, group discussions, practical self-assessments, reflection activities, and visual tools, to strengthen practical skills and understanding of mental health across the life course. **It is very important to create a safe environment for discussing sensitive mental health topics. Remind participants of the importance of self-care and recognizing personal limits when working with vulnerable clients.**

Use case examples to discuss different diagnoses and situations.

Encourage role-plays simulating communication with clients in distress.

Use age-specific fictional case studies

Facilitate reflection on biases or fears around mental illness.

Provide self-care checklists and burnout prevention tools.

Emotion mapping: Have participants identify emotions commonly linked to each developmental stage and discuss supportive responses.

Invite guest experts (e.g., clinical psychologists or psychiatric nurses).

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MODULE 6:

CASE MANAGEMENT AND NETWORKING



1. Description of the module

This module focuses on the principles and practices of case management and networking. Participants learn to assess client needs, activate and coordinate support networks, and ensure comprehensive, person-centered assistance in cooperation with families, professionals, and communities.

2. Purpose of the module

To develop support persons' skills in case management, including mapping resources, collaborating with the client's support network, initiating appropriate services, and advocating for clients' rights and needs in a structured and ethical way.

Networking plays a key role in **empowering the client**. A well-functioning support network enhances autonomy, builds trust in the system, and helps the client move from dependence to active participation in their own life decisions.

3. Importance of the module/topics

Support persons often work with clients who face complex, interconnected challenges that cannot be solved in isolation. Effective support requires navigating institutional systems, activating social support, and facilitating collaboration among various stakeholders.

Networking:

- helps reduce fragmentation of services;
- supports consistency in care and communication;
- fosters inclusion and long-term recovery;
- and ensures that the client is not left alone in their situation.

4. Theoretical background

In social work practice, **network-based work** refers to the intentional engagement with a client's social environment to strengthen support, collaboration, and overall well-being. Rather than viewing the client as an isolated individual, this approach recognizes that **each person is embedded within a web of relationships**—family, friends, professionals, community members, and institutions—all of which influence their functioning and quality of life.

The purpose of network-based work is not only to identify and address the client's needs, but also to **mobilize the existing strengths within their support system**, promote shared responsibility among stakeholders, and foster long-term sustainability through collective problem-solving.

This method is particularly relevant in situations involving complex or long-term challenges, where individual support alone is not sufficient. For example:

- A young person struggling with mental health may need coordinated involvement from school staff, parents, mental health services, and peers.
- An older adult dealing with isolation may benefit from community-based social engagement, family connections, and health care coordination.

Effective network-based work requires professionals to understand not only who is in the client's network, but also how these relationships function—where trust exists, where conflicts lie, and where opportunities for collaboration may be found.

To understand and apply this approach effectively, two key theoretical frameworks are particularly valuable: **social network theory** and **systems theory**.

Social network theory provides a framework for analyzing the **structure and function of the client's social relationships**. It explores how individuals are connected to others and how these connections shape their experiences, access to resources, and resilience.

In practice, social workers use tools such as **ecomaps** and **network diagrams** to help clients and professionals visualize and reflect on:

- Who is involved in the client's life?
- How strong, supportive, or stressful are those relationships?
- Where are the gaps, and how can they be filled or strengthened?

This theory encourages practitioners to work not just for the client, but **with the client and their network**, enhancing informal support alongside formal services.

Systems Theory complements this by emphasizing that people live and operate within **interconnected systems**—family, work, school, community, and society. A change in one part of the system can affect all others, which means that social work interventions must consider **the broader context** in which clients live.



Systems theory guides practitioners to:

- View clients as **active participants within systems**, rather than passive recipients of support
- Involve relevant parts of the system (e.g., family, service providers, institutions) in assessment and intervention
- Facilitate **cooperation and alignment across the system**, improving communication, shared goals, and mutual accountability

When integrated, social network theory and systems theory create a robust foundation for **network-based work** in social work:

- **Social network theory** offers the tools to map and understand the client's relationships
- **Systems theory** explains how those relationships function within broader, dynamic environments

Together, they help support workers:

- Promote **empowerment** through inclusion and participation
- Design **holistic interventions** that address the person *and* their context
- Build **sustainable support systems** that continue beyond formal service provision

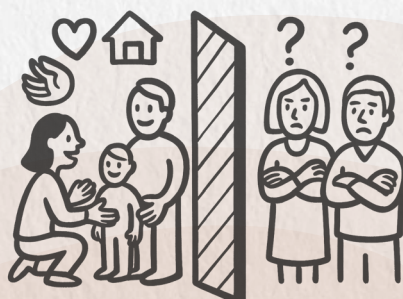
Understanding NIMBY (*not in my back yard*) in Social Work Context

The NIMBY phenomenon refers to situations where community members support certain social services or developments in principle but oppose their implementation near their own residences. This attitude can significantly impact the placement and acceptance of facilities such as affordable housing, shelters, or rehabilitation centers.

In social work, network-based approaches emphasize collaboration among clients, their families, service providers, and the broader community. Understanding NIMBY attitudes is crucial because:

Community Resistance: NIMBY sentiments can lead to opposition against essential services, hindering clients' access to support within their communities

Stigmatization: Such attitudes often stem from misconceptions and can perpetuate stigma against marginalized groups, affecting their integration and well-being.



Policy and Planning: Recognizing NIMBY dynamics aids in developing strategies that address community concerns while ensuring the equitable distribution of social services.

Recent studies suggest **several strategies to mitigate NIMBY opposition:**

Community Engagement: Early and transparent communication with community members can alleviate fears and build trust.

Education: Providing accurate information about the benefits and safety of proposed services can counteract misinformation.

Inclusive Planning: Involving residents in the planning process fosters a sense of ownership and reduces resistance.

For instance, a [study](#) highlighted the importance of community resilience and social inclusion in countering anti-homeless NIMBYism, emphasizing collaborative approaches to foster acceptance of supportive housing initiatives.

5. FAQ-s

How do I map a network when the client has few close contacts?

How can I communicate sensitive information with other professionals while maintaining confidentiality?

What is my responsibility when initiating referrals or organizing case conferences?

How do I support the client in speaking for themselves?



6. Methodical recommendations

Methodology should include practical workshops, role plays, case analyses, group discussions, mini-lectures, simulation activities, and reflective exercises, to strengthen participants' skills in case management and effective networking.

Highlight the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration and flexibility.

Emphasize building professional networks and advocating for clients' rights.

Support critical thinking about ethical dilemmas and practical solutions in complex cases.

Use network-mapping exercises with visual tools (e.g., ecomaps, relationship diagrams).

Practice real-life communication scenarios through role-play (e.g., with school staff, caseworkers).

Analyze simulated or real case studies focused on coordination and problem-solving.

Assign a community-mapping task—learners identify and document local resources and services.

Invite cross-sector professionals (e.g., child protection, employment specialists) as guest speakers.

Discuss challenges in advocacy and supporting client self-representation

Discuss ethical dilemmas in information sharing and confidentiality

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ELECTIVE MODULE 1:

SUPPORTING CHILD WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

1. Description of the module

This module focuses on supporting the development and well-being of children with various needs—social, behavioural, or developmental. It covers the stages of child development, the specific features of each age group, and strategies for working with children and their families. Participants will gain tools for recognizing developmental patterns, building safe environments, and collaborating with educational institutions and professional networks.

2. Purpose of the module

The purpose of this module is to provide support persons with the knowledge and practical skills necessary to assist children in coping and thriving, taking into account their age, developmental level, and health-specific needs. The module also teaches support persons how to collaborate with families and professionals to empower the child, promote resilience, and support holistic development.

3. Importance of the module/topics

The foundation of adult capabilities is built during childhood. Providing timely and appropriate support to children, especially those with special needs, is critical to preventing long-term difficulties in relationships, learning, and mental health. Early intervention increases the chances of developing into confident, adaptable adults. A well-supported child brings relief to their family—reduced stress, better communication, and improved quality of life for all involved.

Moreover, in line with UNICEF's and WHO's child rights and development frameworks, **inclusive support services are essential to equitable development.**

4. Theoretical background

Children with social, behavioural, or developmental needs benefit most from support that is not only targeted but also **comprehensive and responsive to their whole context**. Whether a child is struggling with emotional regulation, developmental delays, social integration, or learning differences, **support persons** (e.g., mentors, aides, or caregivers) play a crucial role in facilitating their growth and inclusion in everyday life.

To be truly effective, support must be grounded in **evidence-based theory**, while also being attuned to **individual differences** and the **lived realities** of each child. Three key theoretical frameworks help structure this understanding: the **holistic approach**, **developmental psychology**, and **social pedagogy**. While each offers a distinct lens, together they provide a **complementary foundation** for supporting children in a way that is both structured and empathetic.



The **holistic approach** emphasizes that children are not just learners or patients—they are **whole human beings**, whose social, emotional, physical, and cognitive needs are deeply interconnected. This perspective encourages support persons to consider the child's environment, family context, and relationships as part of the developmental picture (ASCD, 2021).

Layered onto this is **developmental psychology**, which provides critical insight into **how children grow and what they need at each stage**. Classic theorists like Piaget, Erikson, and Vygotsky have shown that development is both structured and variable—children don't just grow "up," they grow **through** relational experiences and cognitive challenges (Berk, 2018; Vygotsky, 1978). For support persons, this means offering **scaffolded opportunities** just beyond the child's current abilities, adapting communication and tasks to age-appropriate levels, and understanding when behaviours are developmentally expected—or when they signal a need for support.

Social pedagogy ties these threads together by emphasising **relationship-based practice and learning through everyday life** (Cameron & Moss, 2011). It reframes care not as something done *to* a child, but as something done *with* them, respecting their agency and voice. Social pedagogy highlights that **learning and healing happen through shared activities**, emotional safety, and consistent relationships.

Together, these frameworks support a vision of the child as **active, capable, and unique**—not despite their needs, but including them. For support persons, these theories provide not only understanding but a **practical ethical compass**: to support with dignity, respond with knowledge, and relate with care.

5. FAQ-s

How do I know if a child's behavior is age-appropriate or a sign of deeper issues?

How can I support a child whose parents are in denial or overwhelmed?

What do I do if the child has experienced trauma (violence, loss, neglect)?

How do I address challenging behavior without punishment?

What is my role in school-related support and how do I build cooperation with educators?



6. Methodical recommendations

Methodology should include workshops, role plays, case analyses, group discussions, mini-lectures, creative and visual tools, parent engagement simulations, and reflective exercises, to effectively prepare participants for working with children and families with diverse needs. Emphasize **playfulness and creativity** throughout. **Encourage the use of creative methods such as art, play, and storytelling to build trust and engagement.**

Include case-based simulations of various needs (e.g., ADHD, autism, trauma).

Practicing meetings with parents or family members to discuss progress or conflicts

Use developmental timelines to illustrate milestones and warning signs.

Integrate video analysis of child-adult interactions for group discussion.

Discuss ethical dilemmas, confidentiality, and cultural sensitivity

Provide simple tools for behavioral observation and structured play.

Practice communication techniques with children, parents, and professionals.

Invite guest professionals (e.g., special educators, child psychologists).

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ELECTIVE MODULE 2:

SUPPORTING NEW- IMMIGRANTS and REFUGEES



1. Description of the module

This module introduces the specifics of working with refugees, asylum seekers, and other migrants. It provides an understanding of migration-related terms and legal frameworks, cultural diversity, trauma awareness, and strategies for navigating public systems. The focus is on building empathy, cultural competence, and trauma-informed support skills when working with individuals from refugee or migrant backgrounds.

2. Purpose of the module

The purpose of this module is to equip support persons with knowledge and tools to effectively assist new immigrants and refugees. Special attention is paid to empowering clients by:

- promoting their self-reliance and integration,
- supporting them in navigating services and societal systems,
- and facilitating communication and cooperation between them and local communities or authorities.

Empowerment means not doing things for the client, but helping them to reclaim agency, overcome fear or passivity caused by trauma or disorientation, and rebuild their lives with dignity.

3. Importance of the module/topics

Migration—whether forced (e.g., due to war) or voluntary—is a life-changing experience often involving trauma, uncertainty, and loss. Many refugees and newcomers arrive in unfamiliar cultural and bureaucratic contexts, often with mental health burdens, language barriers, or disrupted family systems. Effective support prevents marginalization and promotes faster integration.

Support persons:

- bridge the gap between the individual and society,
- reduce feelings of isolation and powerlessness,
- and foster inclusion, which benefits both the newcomer and the host community.

4. Theoretical background

Working with refugees, asylum seekers, and other migrants requires more than goodwill—it demands a nuanced understanding of **migration, trauma, cultural identity, and empowerment**. Individuals who flee their countries or migrate under pressure often encounter **multiple layers** of vulnerability, shaped by their legal status, past experiences, and the challenges of resettlement.

To prepare support persons for this complex and sensitive work, training should be grounded in key **interdisciplinary theories** that frame migration not only as a legal or social process, but also as a **deeply human journey**. These theories provide a foundation for helping professionals respond with empathy, effectiveness, and ethical awareness.

Understanding who qualifies as a *refugee, asylum seeker, or person with temporary protection* is not just a bureaucratic issue—it defines a person's access to services, housing, employment, and legal protection. A **human rights-based approach** ensures that support is built on **dignity, non-discrimination, and participation**, regardless of legal label (UNHCR, 2022).

Migration involves crossing not only borders but also **cultures**. The transition can be disorienting. Cultural frameworks like **Hofstede's dimensions** (e.g., individualism vs. collectivism, power distance) help explain differences in communication, parenting, gender roles, and expectations. **Berry's acculturation theory** outlines strategies people use to navigate new cultures—ranging from **integration** (a positive, two-way process) to **marginalization** (a risk factor for exclusion and mental distress) (Berry, 1997).

Support persons must also cultivate **intercultural sensitivity** (Bennett, 1993), learning to recognize their own biases and build respectful, trust-based relationships across cultural boundaries.

Refugees often carry with them **unresolved trauma**—from war, persecution, separation, or violence. Trauma is not only psychological; it affects memory, trust, and the nervous system (van der Kolk, 2014; Herman, 1992). **Trauma-informed support** does not ask “What is wrong with you?” but “What happened to you?” It prioritizes **emotional safety, predictability, respect, and choice**—especially when navigating stressful systems.

Migrants often face systems they do not understand, in a language they may not speak. Here, **empowerment theory** (Zimmerman, 2000) becomes central: people are not passive recipients—they can learn to **advocate, decide, and navigate**. Support persons should offer guidance without control, ensuring migrants gain the confidence to **exercise agency** within systems.

Freire's **critical pedagogy** reinforces this view, positioning learning as a dialogical and consciousness-raising process that fosters **self-awareness and social participation** (Freire, 1970). Bronfenbrenner's **ecological model** reminds us that change happens within a broader social system—so empowering a person also means **mobilizing community, institutions, and policies**.



By integrating legal literacy, cultural competence, trauma awareness, and empowerment-based approaches, support persons can provide **holistic, ethical, and culturally responsive support** to refugees and migrants. These theories are not abstract—they are **practical tools for dignity-building work**, where understanding context is as important as offering care.

5. FAQ-s

How do I talk about trauma without re-traumatizing the client?

What should I do if the client refuses help or is passive?

How do I set boundaries when the client has urgent needs?

How can I support someone when I don't speak their language?

What do I do if the client mistrusts institutions or has had negative experiences?



6. Methodical recommendations

Methodology should include practical workshops, role plays, case analyses, group discussions, mini-lectures, simulations, visual mapping tools, and reflective exercises, to build skills and confidence for working with new immigrants and refugees. Encourage **cultural humility** and openness to different worldviews. Highlight **trauma-informed approaches** and the **importance of not making assumptions**. Promote advocacy skills and emphasize the need for clear, simple communication when explaining complex systems.

Map out services and support networks for refugees

Presentation of key concepts such as integration, assimilation, cultural shock

Use real-world scenarios for practicing service navigation (e.g., applying for residence, finding housing or school).

Facilitate intercultural awareness exercises (e.g., exploring value clashes or unconscious bias).

Simulate communication with limited language using gestures, visuals, or translated resources.

Encourage reflection: how does one's own culture influence helping behavior?

Involve experienced support persons or community leaders from migrant backgrounds as co-trainers.

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CONCLUSION

This curriculum and methodological training guide have been developed to support the professional growth, ethical practice, and practical competence of support persons working with diverse and vulnerable target groups.

By combining theoretical knowledge with hands-on methods, self-reflection, and real-world practice, the curriculum aims to strengthen both the confidence and the resilience of support persons, ultimately leading to higher-quality, person-centered support services.

Trainers and organizations are strongly encouraged to adapt, personalize, and expand on this material to meet the specific needs of their participants and local contexts. We hope that this resource serves as a valuable foundation for empowering support persons, promoting inclusive practices, and fostering more resilient and compassionate communities across Europe and beyond.

Through this comprehensive and adaptable design, the curriculum aims to foster professional growth, inspire continuous learning, and encourage support persons to seek ongoing development opportunities – ultimately contributing to more inclusive, resilient, and empowered communities across Europe.



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