Enhancing Community Care

Social Services
A Force for Change

Executive Summary

What is Community Care?

Community Care refers to any form of support and care provided in the local community that enables people to overcome or manage any condition, disability or life difficulties, while living alongside others in their local communities, instead of in segregated institutions. As an alternative for the institutional care model, it empowers everyone in need of care to participate in society and to take control of their own life. Closing institutions alone is not a viable option to deinstitutionalise care and support - instead a range of community-based services need to be provided to support people with wide-ranging health and social needs to live in their homes and communities.

Why Community Care?

The transition to community care can be justified through strong arguments:

1. The voice of people who live, or who have lived, in institutions.
2. International human rights frameworks, guidelines and principles from the UN and the EU.
3. Public health arguments based on learnings from the Covid-19 crisis.
4. Cost-effectiveness as several studies have shown that community- based care can lead to better life outcomes and quality of life with similar spending.

How can Community Care be Put into Practice?

In 2011, ESN put forward three key requirements to advance towards community care. Reflecting on the discussions at 2023 ESN Seminar and various surveys, questionnaires, events and activities conducted with our members over the past years, we identified four reinforced or additional key components for the provision of community-based social services.

Key components (2011)

1) A vision and the leadership to bring about that vision

2) Funding to make it happen

3) The participation of all those affected

Reinforced components (2023)

4) An Engaged Leadership and Workforce

5) The Power of Prevention

6) Accessible Communities

7) Co-design with People using Services

Development of Community-Based Social Services - Check List for Decision Makers

To help decision-makers in setting up community care social services we have created the following checklist:

Leadership and Workforce

✔ Are staff adequately trained and qualified to cater for the needs of the people they support?

✔ Do staff receive suitable training in accordance with current evidence-based and best practice guidelines to deliver their services?

✔ Have staff the necessary resources to provide the support needed?

✔ Do workforce teams include people with experience of care and support?

✔ Do workforce training programmes include contributions from other professionals and people using services?

Power of Prevention

✔ Is there a system (including IT) in place to ensure data is being collected about the social care and support needs, barriers to services and resources and skills within the community?

✔ Is there a system (including IT) in place to ensure the service takes into account the social care and support needs of the community?

✔ Is there a system (including IT) in place to monitor usage of the service, its quality and impact?

✔ Are local needs being taken into consideration to ensure the service is adequately resourced to ensure it is successful?

✔ Is technology being used to ensure people are supported to remain in their homes and communities?

✔ Are protocols developed so that people can access and use the technology they need to remain in their homes and communities?

✔ Does the service work in an integrated manner with other services in the provision of support?

Accessible Communities

✔ Are services effectively indicated and promoted within the community?

✔ Have services been made easy to access? For example, through:

- mobile units or professionals
- extended opening hours
- child and age-friendly spaces
- ensuring physical accessibility for people with reduced mobility
- ensuring services are safe for persons of different gender and sexual orientation
- guaranteeing they are anonymous and confidential
- assuring they do not charge for use
- the provision of user-friendly information on available services in plain, accessible language and the possibility of accessing them through translations into different languages or the support of an interpreter in order to assist with making informed decisions
- being tailored to needs and protective characteristics such as sexuality, ethnicity, faith, gender, or disability?

Co-design with Persons who Use Services

✔ Are services delivered according to international standards on human rights?

✔ Is there a formal process in place to obtain the feedback of people using the services?

✔ Are people from the target community involved in service design, delivery and evaluation?

Governance

✔ Is there a national supportive legal framework and a plan promoting the development of care in the community?

✔ Can you identify which public administration is responsible for the plan and how do they cooperate with other public administrations?

While this checklist is not exhaustive, it provides an overview of key items to be considered when planning, delivering and evaluating community-based social services. Likewise, specific items on the checklist may vary depending on the nature and scope of the social services being provided and the unique needs of the community. Regularly reviewing and updating the checklist is also essential to adapt to changing circumstances and needs.