

Empow'Them

Who decides? Citizen Empowerment in Mental Health:
from a laboratory of ideas to operational prospects for
user self-determination

Professional practices promoting self-determination for people living with mental health problems

Skills repository

October 2021



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Introduction

This competency framework has been produced as part of the European project co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme *Empow'Them - Au fond qui décide? Citizen Empowerment in Mental Health: from a laboratory of ideas to operational prospects for user self-determination*.

The project is in line with the actions advocated by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2008), which aims to contribute to the respect and dignity of mental health users through emancipatory professional practices that support their individual freedom.

Its aim is to encourage and support the emergence of self-determined behaviour on the part of mental health service users by improving the support skills of professionals working in this field (carers, educators, support staff, etc.), thereby making it easier for people with mental health problems to express their wishes within institutions.

In order to ensure that the work carried out on self-determination and empowerment is passed on to as many professionals as possible at European level, the project is part of a pedagogical engineering approach and will be replicated both upstream and downstream.

- Upstream, the work of the experts is translated into a precise reference framework, broken down into skills and theoretical, procedural and behavioural knowledge. An educational engineer ensures that the research results can be used for educational purposes.
- Downstream, a pedagogical deployment methodology is developed, taking into account the linguistic challenges and organisational complexity of the medico-social sector.

This document therefore answers the following question: **if the skill consists of "supporting a person with a view to promoting their self-determination", what knowledge is needed to put it into practice?**

- Theoretical: what is self-determination?
- Procedural: what are the principles of support (knowing how to put them into practice)?
- Behavioural: how can we provide better support?

Methodology and sources

The deployment of the project consists of an initial phase of exploration of concepts and professional practices:

Interviews conducted by user/professional pairs with thirty-one experienced professionals in the health, psycho-social and socio-professional fields in five countries. The interview grid was used to explore professional practices across all the dimensions that make up the theory of self-determination and the factors that facilitate the expression of self-determined behaviours in people receiving support.

Their analysis shows that self-determination is a well-known concept, close to the notion of support for decision-making and respect for the values of the person being cared for. However, definitions are imprecise or incomplete, there is some confusion and there is often a gap between theory and practice. Professionals feel that training is lacking and needs to be developed.

A review of the scientific and professional literature: the results enabled us to define the concept of self-determination on the basis of a variety of approaches and theories based on the notion of empowerment, capability, theories of motivation and action, and recovery in mental health. We have chosen to refer to the theory of self-determination (TAD-Deci and Ryan, 2012; 2008) because it is the subject of numerous research studies that support its validity.

This theory postulates that contexts in which interpersonal relationships and the environment encourage the satisfaction of the three fundamental needs (feeling of autonomy, competence and belonging) have the effect of developing a more autonomous motivation that favours self-determined behaviour and better mental health.

A guide to professional practice: on the basis of these observations, it seemed important to be aware that everyone, in their role as a professional, can be a hindrance or a facilitator of the process of self-determination for people, and therefore of their journey and process of recovery. A guide to analysing professional practices was used to identify the ways in which professionals' postures and actions help to satisfy these three fundamental psychological needs.

A reference framework of skills: as a result of this exploratory work, three areas of specific skills to promote the self-determination of people living with mental health problems have been identified:

- **Creating and maintaining a partnership relationship (as equals)**
- **Decision-making support**
- **Identifying possibilities and assessing risks**

It enables a specific training programme to be drawn up to improve professional practices.

The reference system

Creating and maintaining a partnership relationship (as equals)

The skill I'm trying to develop: I know how to facilitate the expression of the people I'm working with. I know how to maintain trust within a relationship built up with others.

Theoretical knowledge

- I know that representations of mental health problems influence the way we approach support for the people concerned.
- I know the spirit of the texts on which today's professional practices are based

Procedural knowledge

- I start from the premise that people have resources and potential for development, and that they can be actors in the change they wish to bring about in their lives.
- I focus communication on the person's concerns, wishes and complaints
- I support the feeling of belonging/social affiliation
 - I work with the person to establish the terms of the collaboration
 - I'm developing participation opportunities

Life skills

- I set aside my own frames of reference to look at those of the person I'm supporting
- I take account of issues relating to position and power in the relationship
- I regulate the asymmetry in the relationship according to the context
- I can share emotions
- I offer a welcome where the person feels welcome

Decision-making support

The skill I'm trying to develop: I can understand the person's situation and motivation. I use an analytical framework and tools to help them make their own decisions.

Theoretical knowledge

- I situate the theory of self-determination in the history of ideas and models of support.
- I know the different motivations and stages of change
- I know the three fundamental needs

Procedural knowledge

- I can assess the level of motivation of the person I am supporting
- I support your independence
 - I help people to find their own solutions by encouraging proposals to emerge, by asking questions, without inducing answers, and by giving them the time they need.
 - I help her to explore what is important to her, what her personal goals are
 - I help people to give meaning to their actions by connecting them to their aspirations
 - I offer her spaces where she can make choices, however small.
 - I encourage self-monitoring or self-assessment

Life skills

- I adapt my response to the situation of the person I am speaking to
- I know how to let go and give up control over things that should/cannot be controlled
- I know how to listen to people's questions, doubts and thoughts.

Identifying possibilities and assessing risks

The skill I'm trying to develop: I can manage any risk-taking by involving the person I'm working with at every stage of their projects, and by mobilising partners and the network.

Theoretical knowledge

- I know that empowerment is an interactive process of emancipation that takes place between the individual and his or her environment.
- I know that personal and contextual aspects can be an obstacle to the realisation of the person's project
- I know that to enable people to feel capable of taking action, I have to help them define as concretely as possible what is standing in their way here and now

Procedural knowledge

- I support his sense of competence
 - By focusing on your talents and resources, on what works
 - By encouraging experimentation and allowing it to take place within a secure, shared framework
- I help people to anticipate and plan ahead
 - By encouraging people to think about and discuss the consequences, advantages, disadvantages, risks and benefits for themselves and others
 - By highlighting any discrepancies in their perception between the imagined result and the path to get there
 - By outlining the steps and series of tasks required to achieve the objective
- I help people to prioritise by asking them what is important in the short, medium and long term
- I provide a safe, shared environment in which people can create situations in which they can act, experiment and assume their responsibilities, while taking risks.

Life skills

- I encourage, support and promote the acquisition and reinforcement of knowledge
- I resist the temptation to do things "in place of" or to respond directly to requests.
- I adapt my support to the person's emancipation, vulnerability and need for protection.
- I don't take risks alone on behalf of the person I'm supporting
- I manage risk-taking in partnership with the network (family and friends, professionals involved) and my superiors.

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