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Comprehensive Employer Support for Social Workers in Dementia Care: Insights from the Czech Republic

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Abstract: *The ageing demographic structure in Europe poses significant challenges for social care services, especially for employees providing direct care for clients with dementia in residential facilities. This qualitative study critically examines the forms and effectiveness of employer-sponsored support for social service workers in the Czech Republic. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with ten participants and analysed using thematic analysis, identifying four key areas: access to essential work information, onboarding processes, professional training support, and clinical supervision. The findings emphasise the need for structured onboarding manuals, peer-guided information sharing, role-shadowing programmes, comprehensive onboarding programmes, continuous professional training, and regular supervision to mitigate burnout and enhance worker satisfaction. This study provides recommendations focusing on enhanced frequency of supervision, formal documentation flow, and digital onboarding tools for improving working conditions and the quality of care.*

Keywords: *ageing population; dementia care; employee support; social work.*

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1. Introduction

The demographic structure of Europe's ageing population is changing, with major implications for social, economic, and health systems. The proportion of people over 65 in the EU has increased from 16% in 2002 to 21% in 2022 (Eurostat, 2023). Italy and Portugal have the highest proportions (24% in 2023), while Iceland, Luxembourg, and Turkey have the lowest (below 15%), where higher fertility and migration are influencing the demographic structure (Statista, 2023).

The ageing population is also increasing the number of people with dementia. In Europe, the number of people diagnosed annually is increasing by 5.4%, with the rate of increase doubling every 20-25 years (Holmerová, Horecký, & Hanuš, 2016). In the Czech Republic, in 2017, there were 17,856 clients, 70% of whom were women, in homes with special care, with unmet requests increasing from 15,488 (2013) to 22,348 (2017) (Wija, Bareš, & Žofka, 2019). The capacity of these facilities reaches 23,674 beds (Registr poskytovatelů sociálních služeb [Register of social service providers – personal assistance], 2024).

11 million people are working in social services in the EU (4.7% of all jobs), including 75,656 FTEs in the Czech Republic, or 105,100 people according to Eurostat (2023). Women comprise 81.56% of the workforce, with the 50-64 age group accounting for a third of the workforce (Horecký, 2020). Supporting workers in direct care of the elderly and people with dementia is essential, especially given the physical and psychological demands of this work. Employers should introduce support mechanisms to improve conditions and motivation in this sector.

The research study aimed to critically evaluate the forms and effectiveness of support provided by employers to social service workers who care for clients of residential social services who are living/suffering from dementia.

2. Characteristics of the Chosen Research Strategy

A qualitative research strategy was chosen for the implementation of the research study, which was focused on the critical evaluation of the forms and effectiveness of the support provided by employers to social service workers, who care for clients of residential social services suffering from dementia. Hendl (2016) describes qualitative research as a technique that focuses on non-numerical aspects of the phenomenon under study and seeks to understand its nature and meaning from the perspective of the research participants. The activities of a qualitative researcher can be compared to conducting detective work, as the researcher seeks and analyses information that leads to answers to the research questions. This activity is carried out in the field, where the centre of the action is. The gathering of information and its analysis takes place over an extended period of time. At the researcher's discretion, the researcher chooses the place of observation of the individual and continues to observe him at different points in time. Data acquisition and data analysis take place simultaneously.

Specifically, the method of data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews, which allowed for a deeper understanding of respondents' individual experiences and attitudes. Chráska (2016) defines the interview as a method of collecting data about reality that involves direct verbal communication between the researcher and the respondent.

Interviews were conducted with a total of ten social service workers (referred to as KP1 to KP10) and focused on four key areas:

a) Examining the processes of transfer and availability of key information necessary for the performance of job duties, including methodological guidance, internal rules and working procedures, is essential to ensure quality and efficiency in social services. Effective communication and the availability of relevant information enable staff to perform their duties competently and in accordance with current standards and procedures. A study highlights the importance of information processing when focusing on social workers' efforts to integrate knowledge from other professionals (Greve et al., 2024). This study shows that effective information transfer between professionals is

crucial for decision-making and the quality of service delivery. Other research analyses the transferability of social workers' skills when changing practice areas (Arendt, 2017). This study suggests that the ability to effectively transfer and apply key information and skills between different areas of practice is essential for the adaptability and professional development of social workers. This research supports the importance of examining the processes of transfer and accessibility of key information in social services, as effective methodological guidance and clearly defined internal rules contribute to higher quality service delivery and professional development of social workers.

b) Analysis of employers' approach to the adaptation of new employees, with a focus on the training process, social integration into the work team, and the creation of a supportive work environment, is key to ensuring the effectiveness and satisfaction of employees in organisations. Effective onboarding programmes that include comprehensive training and social integration support can significantly impact the performance and retention of new employees. A study by Yu et al. (2023) investigated the effect of structured onboarding programmes on new employee performance. The results showed that clearly defined onboarding processes and peer support facilitate faster adaptation and increased job satisfaction. The authors emphasise the importance of social integration and mentoring in integrating new employees into the work environment. Additional research published by Van Mierlo & Bondarouk (2018) examined the role of a supportive work environment in the adaptation of new employees. The study found that organisations that actively promote open communication, provide feedback, and create opportunities for social interactions, facilitate new employee integration and increase new employee engagement. The authors recommend implementing programmes that foster social connections and teamwork as part of the onboarding process. These, and many other studies, emphasise the significance of a comprehensive approach to new employee onboarding that includes not only technical training, but also social integration and the creation of a supportive work environment. Implementing structured onboarding programmes with an emphasis on social aspects can lead to increased job satisfaction, improved performance, and reduced employee turnover.

c) Evaluation of training activities and training provided by employers is essential to identify their contribution to the professional development of employees and to improve the quality of services provided. Effective training programmes can increase the skills and knowledge of employees, resulting in higher customer satisfaction and overall organisational effectiveness. A study by Al-Refaei (2021) examines the impact of employee training and development programmes on service quality in the higher education sector. The results showed a positive relationship between the training provided and perceived service quality, with employees with higher qualifications showing more significant improvement. The authors concluded that the investment in staff training and development leads to improved service delivery and enhanced customer perceptions of the organisation. Other pertinent research was conducted by Sonia & George (2024), who examined the effect of employee training and development on customer satisfaction in service industries. The study highlighted that continuous training programmes improve the skills and competencies of employees, which in turn leads to increased customer satisfaction and organisational effectiveness. Many other studies underline the importance of systematic education and training of employees for their professional development and improvement of service quality. Implementing effective training programmes can provide organisations with a competitive advantage through increased customer satisfaction and overall performance.

d) The psychotherapeutic support offered to social service workers by their employer is key to maintaining their mental health and preventing burnout. Social workers who care for the elderly and people with dementia face high physical and psychological stress. The work is often associated with overburdening workloads, staff shortages, and limited access to modern technologies. In the case of care for people with dementia, the situation is further complicated due to the progressive nature of the disease and the emotional challenges associated with caring for clients with aggressive behaviour, restlessness or in palliative phases of the disease. A frequently addressed topic in the context of clients and workers in social services is social isolation. Social exclusion is examined by

Daněk & Klugerová (2023). Social exclusion is a major issue that modern society is attempting to address. It has detrimental effects not only on a local level but also on a national, European, and even global scale. In today's interconnected society, it is crucial to acknowledge that social exclusion issues in other countries or on other continents will have implications for our society. Therefore, it is crucial to strive for the elimination, prevention, and combat of social exclusion through all possible means. Cooperative learning, as an alternative to traditional competitiveness, plays a crucial role in strengthening social bonds among students and developing their collaborative skills (Bačová, 2024). Providing sufficient employer support is therefore essential to ensure quality client care and the long-term sustainability of the social services workforce. A study by Smith & Johnson (2020) examines the effectiveness of intervention programmes aimed at reducing stress and improving mental health in social workers. The results showed that programmes involving psychotherapeutic support, such as supervision and group therapy, led to significant reductions in stress levels and improvements in participants' overall psychological well-being. The authors of the study recommend the implementation of such programmes as a standard component of support for social service workers. Additional research published by Kohl, Angerer, & Weber (2023) focused on the impact of organisational support and the availability of psychotherapy services on job satisfaction and the prevalence of burnout syndrome in social workers, among other factors. The study found that employees who had access to employer-provided psychotherapeutic support reported lower burnout rates and higher job satisfaction. The authors stress the importance of employers adopting a proactive approach to their employees' mental health and recommend the introduction of regular support interventions. These studies, and others, underscore the importance of psychotherapeutic support for social service workers and suggest that employers should actively provide and promote access to these services. The implementation of psychotherapeutic support can lead to improved mental health of employees, increased job satisfaction, and reduced risk of burnout, which has a positive impact on the quality of social services provided.

The data were analysed through thematic analysis - a validated coding process that identified the main categories and subcategories related to the research objective. Through open coding, the collected data were broken down into separate parts and studied carefully. Subsequently, we coded and categorised the interviews. We chose the same level of generality for the choice of code category. The list of categories and codes (sub-categories) is given in the following table.

Table 1. List of categories and codes (subcategories)

Category	Subcategories
1. Information needed for the job	- methodological guidance; manuals; internal rules; - supervisors; personal experience; clarity of working procedures; trust in the methodologist; support when unclear; flexibility of procedures; practical application of information.
2. Employer's approach to new colleagues	- initial training; individual approach; supervisor; social integration; workplace atmosphere; leadership by a manager; support by the head/charge nurse; sharing of experience in the team; long-term adaptation; teamwork role.
3. Support through vocational training	- training on positioning; handling equipment; occupational safety and fire protection training; - practical exercises; training in the form of games; communication with clients; de-escalation of conflicts; professional growth; updating knowledge; adapting training to needs.
4. Psychotherapeutic support (supervision)	- regular supervision; group supervision; individual supervision; reflection on work conflicts; dealing with the death of a client; support for personal problems; sharing experiences; improving teamwork; preventing burnout; emotional support for staff.

Source: own investigation

3. The Reasoning for the Choice of Qualitative Research and Interview Method

Based on the essence of a deep understanding of subjective experiences, the qualitative approach allows us to capture the complex and multilayered nature of stress and strain, as perceived by social service workers caring for clients living with dementia. The use of interviews enabled a detailed exploration of their personal insights, emotions, and coping strategies. The interviews provided an opportunity to consider the work environment and specific conditions that influence stress, which standardised quantitative tools would not capture. Access to difficult-to-measure subjective realities such as emotions, fatigue, burnout, workplace atmosphere, quality of human relationships, sense of meaningfulness of activity/work, and psychological distress are phenomena that are difficult to quantify and require a personal and narrative approach to understand. Semi-structured interviews allowed them to adapt to the respondents and their specific situations, resulting in a richer data set. Due to the small sample size, the focus was on gathering in-depth, qualitative insights rather than aiming for statistically significant results.

3.1. How Were the Interviews Conducted

A neutral setting was used, always in a quiet café near their workplace. They were always offered the option of interviewing at the facility where they work, specifically in an office or other location where they would feel more comfortable. None of the interviewees took up such an offer and always went to the same café. The meetings always took place without the presence of the persons concerned. The establishment of open contacts was initially induced in all interviewees by general questions on the topic, the aim being to gain trust. Creating a friendly atmosphere, demonstrating tact, and showing reasonable interest in the respondent's statements helped to achieve a relaxed conversation. During the interview, it was important not to use words that the respondent would not understand. Questions were phrased neutrally to avoid implying an expected answer. We tried to ask concise questions, preferably in bare sentences. The questions started with more general issues and then focused on very specific topics. The interviewer's task was to ask questions consistently, with the same emphasis, in all interviews. The analysis of the respondents' reactions, behaviour, and also non-verbal expressions (body movements, gestures, facial movements, facial expressions, smiles, laughter, eye glances) was not neglected. All ten interviews were conducted without any sudden or awkward situations that could have broken the trust between the respondent and the interviewer. All ten social service workers showed maximum helpfulness, but also interest in the topic. The average length of one interview was 75 minutes. The interviews were digitally recorded on a mobile phone, always with the consent of the respondent. Subsequently, all interviews were transcribed verbatim to prevent any possible loss of data.

3.2. Characteristics of the Respondents

The research sample was made up of social service workers from a residential social service home with a special regime, so it can be said that this is a selected research sample of respondents caring mainly for people living with dementia. The selection of the research sample was deliberate, purposeful, given the chosen topic and the aim of our research probe. Mišović (2019) states that the sample selected was systematically and deliberately constructed, taking into account the issues identified.

The characteristics of the respondents include ten conversation partners with different educational backgrounds, length of experience in social services, and specifically in residential social service facilities of homes with special regimes. In accordance with Act No. 108/2006 Coll. (2006), on social services, workers performing direct care activities in services must meet a minimum qualification at the level of basic education, supplemented by a qualification course for social service workers, unless they are educated in fields of study focused on social work and nursing (secondary vocational schools or secondary vocational schools). All respondents fulfil this legal obligation. In terms of gender, the sample consists of six women and four men, reflecting the prevailing gender composition in the social services sector. The respondents' length of experience in social services ranges from two to ten years. Respondent KP7, who also has a university degree in

social work, has the longest experience. This combination suggests a higher professional qualification, which is beneficial in the context of caring for clients living with dementia, but is rare in practice. The length of experience in residential social services for people living with dementia ranges from two to eight years. Longer experience can be a key factor in coping with the challenges of caring for clients living with dementia. Research, such as the study by Gvelesiani et al. (2023), suggests a link between the length of experience and the ability of staff to respond effectively to emotionally challenging situations, and to minimise the risk of burnout syndrome. These workers show better coping with stressful situations and implementation of mental hygiene strategies. The education of the respondents ranges from primary education with the addition of a qualifying course to a bachelor's degree. This spectrum illustrates the diversity of approaches to professional training and reflects the different needs of facilities, providing services for clients with dementia.

Table 2. Graphical representation of respondents' characteristics

Conversations partner	Gender	Education	Age	Length of experience in social services	Length of experience in social services with clients with dementia
KP1	Woman	Secondary education with a high school diploma, social worker course	28	5 years	5 years
KP2	Woman	Secondary education with a diploma, social worker course	24	4 years	4 years
KP3	Man	Basic education, social worker course	42	8 years	5 years
KP4	Man	Secondary education with a diploma, social worker course	55	4 years	3 years
KP5	Woman	Secondary education with a diploma, social worker course	29	3 years	3 years
KP6	Woman	Secondary education with a high school diploma, social worker course	36	6 years	6 years
KP7	Man	Bachelor's degree in social work	39	10 years	8 years
KP8	Woman	Secondary education with a diploma, social worker course	27	2 years	2 years
KP9	Woman	Secondary education with a high school diploma, social worker course	48	7 years	5 years
KP10	Man	Basic education, social worker course	51	5 years	4 years

Source: own investigation

4. Ethical Issues and Researcher Ethics

The ethical aspects play an important role in the research practice. The researcher should be guided by their conscience, taking into consideration the generally accepted ethical rules and norms, but also the existing standards that define the ethical rules applicable to research. The purpose of adhering to research ethics is to avoid conflicts between individual researchers, but also between researchers and research participants or third parties, which may include publishers or administrators.

What is or is not 'ethical' or 'moral'? According to Zich & Roubal (2014), the answer can be stated as follows: "To be moral is to behave according to generally acceptable practices".

Moral responsibility is based on a combination of sensitivity, consideration, and common sense. There should be complete respect for security, anonymity, and privacy in research. Providing information about oneself, knowing that it will be subsequently published, is difficult for some respondents. This is not a question of mere anonymity, but of maintaining privacy. Sources of personal information obtained should be kept confidential unless the informant wishes to be quoted. If the respondents are easily identifiable, the researcher is obliged to instruct them about the possible consequences of publishing the data and the conclusion of the research. Verbal consent was obtained from the respondents to participate in the research before the research began. Respondents were informed about how the data would be handled and, most importantly, what purpose their responses would serve. Every effort was made to ensure maximum anonymity so that the identity of the participants would not be revealed to others. During the interviews, the choice of refusal and non-participation in the research was left open. No one did so in the interviews. The researcher's task is to eliminate risks and to ensure the protection of all participants, not only through adherence to ethical codes, but also with the help of their own conscience (Pavelkova, 2012). We kept all the materials used to evaluate the interviews in a secure location, so that they were not accessible to strangers and unauthorised persons.

5. Interpretation of Findings from the Research Probe

Considering the amount of data/information found, but also the scope of this report, we interpret here the reactions/information/positions, or ideas, that are either of professional interest, or represent the majority of responses to a given question/topic.

5.1. First Category: Information Needed for Work

Interpretation of the findings from the research probe shows that access to information necessary for the performance of work in social services varies significantly between respondents. Several key trends emerged from the responses of the ten conversation partners (KP1-KP10), that indicate the diverse ways in which workers obtain information and their subjective perceptions of the quality of these resources.

One of the most frequently mentioned forms of support is the methodological guidance provided by specialist staff:

- KP1 stated: *"We have direct care methodologists, so we know who we can always turn to"*. This was similarly confirmed by KP3, who added: *"Yes, we have a care methodologist who helps us when we need something"*. Similarly, KP6 mentioned that the care methodologist is a key figure for dealing with specific situations, for example, when introducing new procedures: *"Our methodologies are very detailed so it is easy to navigate them"*. This type of support was rated positively, especially for its structured nature and accessibility.

Some respondents, however, draw their information primarily from supervisors:

- KP2 stated: *"We have supervisors who always give us the information we need, but they also give us the space to try some things out ourselves"*. KP5 elaborated on this perspective by emphasising the erratic nature of social work: *"We have information from supervisors, but because we work with people, every day is different, and we don't always find answers in advance"*. KP8 added that supervisors often serve as mediators in dealing with more complex situations: *"When we are unsure, we can always go to a supervisor to help us decipher the situation"*.

Another important resource is the manuals and work procedures that are commonly available in some organisations:

- KP1 mentioned: *"We have manuals that are very clear, so I think we have this well managed"*. KP4 and KP7 then stressed the importance of internal rules: *"I follow the rules that are set in my job"*, said KP4. KP7 added: *"The rules give us a clear framework, although of course some situations cannot be handled by paper alone"*.

A preference for drawing information from personal experience also emerged in the responses of some conversation partners:

- KP4 stated: *"I have gained experience that helps me a lot because a lot of situations are repetitive"*. This view was supported by KP10, who emphasised the practical nature of the work: *"You learn a lot of things over time, so experience is often better than theory"*.

Although the majority of respondents perceived the availability of information positively, there were also critical voices:

- KP9 pointed to occasional inconsistencies in the information provided by different sources: *"Sometimes we have rules or methodologies that do not match what our superiors tell us. Then it is difficult to decide what is correct"*. In addition, KP10 mentioned that in some cases, there is a lack of more detailed training on specific situations: *"We could have more information on how to handle crisis situations, because they are not always intuitive"*.

The answers also show that the way of obtaining information affects not only the efficiency of work, but also the overall satisfaction of employees:

- KP5 summarised this aspect by saying: *"A good information transfer system makes our work easier and gives us a sense of confidence that we know what we are doing"*. In contrast, KP9 pointed out the risk of frustration when information is not available promptly or is unclear: *"When we have to look for information in multiple places, it is unnecessarily stressful"*.

Thus, the findings of the research probe show that social service workers have a variety of sources of information at their disposal, and their effectiveness depends on the quality and consistency of the data provided. The variety of responses also suggests that access to information is subjectively perceived and that its availability can affect overall performance and staff satisfaction.

5.2. Second Category: Employer's Approach to New Colleagues

Interpretation of the findings regarding the employer's approach to new colleagues suggests that the process of adapting new social workers is systematically organised and involves several key aspects, which are reflected in the responses of the conversation partners (KP1-KP10). The importance of training, promoting integration into the team and creating a supportive working environment are repeatedly mentioned as essential elements.

All respondents agree that new employees are given initial training by a designated staff member:

- KP1 described this process by saying: *"We actually have one care worker who always trains whoever is new. So she's with him... He's actually like an extra person on duty. She shows him everything, explains everything"*. This caregiver devotes herself to new workers, not only during the day shifts, but also during the night shifts, so that they can fully participate in the operation of the facility. KP3 adds: *"We have a care manager and also a trainer who trains new caregivers"*. It is clear from the responses that this form of individualised approach ensures a thorough familiarisation with working practices and the environment.

Another important aspect of adaptation is the role of managers:

- KP2 stated: *"We have a designated staff member who always takes the new employee under his or her wing on that first day"*. This worker not only ensures that key information is passed on, but also helps new colleagues to integrate into the team and adapt to client care. Similarly, KP5 stressed the importance of the atmosphere in the workplace: *"We all try to create a fine atmosphere and make new colleagues stay in our facility"*. This approach shows that employers not only support the training of new workers, but also place emphasis on their social integration.

In addition to one-to-one support, some facilities have more than one team member dedicated to the new staff:

- KP4 mentioned: *"When someone new comes in, we all try to help them... And the warden and station nurse are also dedicated to them"*. This ensures that the new staff member has access to a wider range of professional and practical experience. KP7 further stated that teamwork and shared responsibilities make it easier for new colleagues to adapt: *"We have this rule that if someone new needs help, we all pitch in"*.

Some respondents stressed the importance of longer-term support:

- KP6 said: *"In our company, the training process is divided into several phases, so that the new colleague has time to gradually learn all the tasks"*. This approach allows new employees to better cope with the demands of the job while minimising stress. However, KP9 warned of the risk of being too dependent on the induction officer: *"It's good to have a designated person who is dedicated to new people, but sometimes it takes a long time for them to become independent"*.

The responses also show that employers' attitudes can be influenced not only by organisational conditions, but also by workplace culture:

- KP8 noted: *"There is a lot of care in our team to make the new colleague feel comfortable and to give them space to ask anything"*. This emphasis on open communication and support contributes to a positive new employee experience.

To summarise the findings, employers' approach to new colleagues is, in most cases, systematic and includes individual and team support, with an emphasis on training, social integration, and creation of a supportive working environment. This comprehensive support contributes to higher satisfaction and adaptation of new workers, although there may be some challenges, for example, in the length of the training process or the variability of access in different facilities.

5.3. Third Category: Vocational Training as a Form of Organisational Support

Interpretation of the findings in the area of support through training reveals that employers in social services systematically provide various forms of training activities. These activities focus on developing professional skills, learning specific work practices, and improving the quality of client care. The responses of the conversation partners (KP1-KP10) reflect a positive perception of these training opportunities and their concrete impact on working practices.

All respondents stress that they have access to regular training and courses as part of their employment:

- KP1 stated: *"We have training here quite regularly. For example, I was very interested in the recent training on positioning because there are a lot of lying clients here"*. Similarly, KP3 mentioned: *"We have different training, now it is on positioning"*. Training on client handling and the use of equipment not only improves job skills but also facilitates daily care. KP2 added: *"Recently, it was training on into aids for example, which definitely helped us all"*.

Some respondents point to the regularity and systematic nature of training:

- KP8 stated: *"At our work, training is quite frequent and regular"*, which is confirmed by KP5: *"Well, we certainly have the possibility of training"*. This frequency ensures that staff can consistently update their knowledge and respond to changing care needs.

Respondents appreciate the practical benefits of training, which are reflected in the improvement of their work skills and the introduction of new procedures:

- KP1 mentioned: *"New tools were ordered as a result of the training, which made our work and client care much easier"*. This view is supported by KP6, who stated: *"Training not only helps us acquire new skills, but also helps us to do the work better and faster"*. The practical nature of education is also highlighted by KP4 and KP5, who appreciate the inclusion of interactive elements. KP4 said: *"Right now we have a workplace safety and fire protection training that will be combined with a fire drill, which will help us a lot"*. KP5 described an emotionally powerful experience of the interactive training: *"When the home opened, we had a training session in the form of a play, where we felt we were the person suffering from Alzheimer's disease. That was very emotional and helped us to better understand the needs of the clients"*. This approach highlights the importance of experiential learning, which has a deeper impact on staff understanding and empathy.

It is clear from the responses that the training focuses on a wide range of topics:

- Handling clients and using equipment (for example, training on positioning or incontinence aids);
- Occupational safety (e.g., occupational safety and fire protection - fire drills);
- Specific client needs (for example, care for people with Alzheimer's disease).

KP7 added that training activities also include training on communication with clients: *"We have been on a course on non-verbal communication, which has helped us a lot in working with clients who have speech problems"*. KP9 mentioned the importance of training for crisis situations: *"We had a course on stress management and conflict de-escalation, which is much needed in our work"*.

All respondents rate training as a key element of professional development:

- KP5 summarised his view by saying: *"Training is essential for us, because it gives us the opportunity to improve and bring something new to our work"*. This positive view is shared by KP8: *"Training always makes me more confident in what I do"*.

Nevertheless, there were some critical remarks:

- KP10 said: *"Some training is too general and not always relevant to what we really need"*. This view points to the need for more tailoring of content to the specific needs of workers and their clients.

The responses show that training has a major impact on the quality of services provided. Training not only increases professional competencies but also contributes to a better understanding of clients' needs and more effective management of challenging situations. KP3 summarised: *"Every training helps us do our job better, which is especially important for our clients"*. This approach shows that training is not only a means to improve work practices but also a tool to strengthen relationships between workers and clients.

Interpretation of these findings confirms that vocational training plays a key role in the professional development of social service workers and contributes significantly to the overall quality of care. Regularity, practicality, and a focus on the specific needs of clients are the factors perceived as most beneficial by workers.

5.4. Fourth Category: Psychotherapeutic Support

The interpretation of the findings in the area of psychotherapeutic support deals primarily with supervision and shows that this form of support is an integral part of the working environment in social services. Supervision, which is provided either individually or in groups, is a key tool for coping with work and personal challenges. The responses of conversation partners (KP1-KP10) indicate that supervision is perceived as a valuable source of reflection, support and development.

All respondents confirm that supervision is organised regularly and includes both individual and group meetings:

- KP1 stated: *"We have supervision once a month, which is great because it gives us a space to vent anything that is bothering us"*. Similarly, KP3 mentioned: *"Group supervision sessions are held regularly and are a great opportunity to hear that I am not the only one dealing with something like this"*. KP6 added that the regularity of supervision is important for maintaining mental well-being: *"I know that every three weeks I have the space to talk to someone and address things that build up during work"*.

It is clear from the responses that supervision covers a wide range of topics, from professional to personal matters:

- KP2 stated: *"We often deal with work conflicts, for example with colleagues or with clients' families. Supervision helps us to find ways to handle the situation without unnecessary stress"*. This view was supported by KP5, who mentioned: *"We recently dealt with the death of a client in supervision. It was emotional, but it helped us a lot to cope"*.

In addition to work issues, supervision is also a platform for dealing with personal issues:

- KP4 stated: *"If I feel that something personal is affecting me at work, I can discuss it in supervision. It helps me to separate my work from my personal life"*. Similarly, KP9 shared his experience: *"I once dealt with family issues in supervision, because they were affecting my approach to clients. It made me feel better and allowed me to focus on my work"*.

Group supervision is often rated by respondents as very beneficial for strengthening team spirit and sharing experiences:

- KP7 stated: *"Hearing how others deal with similar situations makes me realise that I am not alone in facing challenging moments"*. KP10 added: *"Supervision allows us not only to solve problems, but also to give each other advice and support"*. This type of supervision helps workers build trust with each other and promote open communication.

Individual supervision is valued primarily for its ability to address specific topics in depth:

- KP8 stated: *"In individual supervision I have the space to talk about things I wouldn't say in a group. For example, about my own fears or insecurities"*. KP3 shared a similar perspective: *"Individual supervision gives me the opportunity to look at situations that stress me out from a different angle and find solutions that I wouldn't have thought of"*.

All respondents agree that supervision has a positive impact on their psychological well-being and work performance:

- KP1 stated: *"After each supervision session I feel more in control of things. It's a significant relief"*. KP6 added: *"Supervision is a great way to manage workload and avoid burnout"*. This view was supported by KP5, who emphasised: *"Without supervision we would be far more stressed. It's something that helps us stay motivated and energetic in the long run"*. Supervision contributes to better relations between colleagues and improves the atmosphere in the workplace. KP7 said: *"Supervision makes us closer as a team. When we share our problems, it helps us understand each other better"*. KP10 added: *"Supervision is a place where we can talk openly without being judged. This improves not only relationships but also our ability to work together"*.

The interpretation of these findings confirms that supervision is perceived as a key tool in social services for managing psychological stress, resolving conflicts, and supporting professional, personal development. A regular and well-organised supervision system contributes to the overall satisfaction of workers, their resilience to stress, and strengthens teamwork.

6. Evaluation of the Objective of the Research Probe

The research study focused on a critical evaluation of the forms and effectiveness of support provided by employers to social service workers, especially in the context of care for clients of residential institutions with special regimes, who live with dementia. This topic reflects the complexity and multidimensional nature of work in the field of social services, which places high demands on professional preparedness, psychological resilience, and the ability to cooperate. The qualitative research strategy chosen allowed for in-depth insight into the individual experiences and attitudes of respondents through semi-structured interviews. Based on the thematic analysis of the data, four key categories were identified to answer the research questions. These categories reflect the main areas of support used by social service workers to manage work challenges and provide a framework for understanding the effectiveness of these mechanisms.

6.1. Information Needed for Work

The availability and quality of information appeared to vary between facilities. While the majority of respondents appreciated the clarity and structuring of methodological guidance, manuals, and internal rules, there were also critical voices pointing to the lack of specific guidelines for crisis management. Methodological guidance was positively assessed as a reliable source of information, but some respondents stressed the importance of personal experience and practical learning, which cannot always be completely replaced by formal materials. This discrepancy suggests that effective information transfer requires a combination of structured and flexible approaches.

6.2. Employer's Approach to New Colleagues

This category emphasised the systematic nature of the training process and the importance of individual support during the adaptation period. All respondents appreciated the role of

designated staff, who are dedicated to new colleagues, and the importance of teamwork in integrating them into the group. The answers showed that the adaptation of new employees is a process that focuses not only on professional training, but also includes a social dimension, which has a positive effect on the working atmosphere and the stability of teams. This comprehensive approach to adaptation contributes to greater satisfaction of new employees and minimises the risk of them leaving the industry prematurely.

6.3. Vocational Training as a Form of Organisational Support

This category highlighted the importance of regular training focused on practical skills and the specific needs of clients. Training on positioning, manipulation of aids, or crisis management was rated as very beneficial by respondents, who appreciated its practical nature and the possibility to immediately apply the acquired knowledge to everyday practice. Responses also indicated that modern forms of training, such as interactive workshops or simulation games, were perceived as particularly effective. This category reflects the importance of continuous professional development, which increases not only professional competence but also the confidence and self-esteem of staff in handling challenging tasks.

6.4. Psychotherapeutic Support (Supervision)

This aspect was clearly perceived as a key tool for coping with psychological stress and promoting teamwork. Regular supervision, whether individual or group, was identified by respondents as a space for reflection, sharing experiences, and finding solutions to work and personal challenges. Topics such as workplace conflicts, client deaths, and work stress were frequent subjects of discussion, indicating the need for such support mechanisms. Moreover, supervision contributes to the prevention of burnout syndrome, improved team cohesion, and overall staff satisfaction.

The results of the research probe provided a comprehensive picture of the form of support mechanisms in social services, their perception by workers, and their contribution to the effectiveness and quality of work. The identified categories show the strengths of the current support system, but also suggest areas that could be further developed. The research confirms that effective staff support requires an integrated approach that combines organisational, professional, and psychological dimensions. These findings provide a valuable basis for formulating recommendations aimed at improving working conditions and enhancing the quality of client care.

7. Recommendations for Practice

On the basis of the results of the research probe, which analysed the forms and effectiveness of support provided by employers to social service workers, specific recommendations can be formulated aimed at improving working conditions and the quality of services provided. These recommendations reflect the findings in each area of support and suggest measures that can contribute to higher worker satisfaction, improved work efficiency, and overall improvement of client care.

7.1. Improving Access to Information

Quality access to information is the basis for effective work in social services. Research findings have shown that information is often provided in different forms, which can lead to inconsistencies and frustration for staff. It is therefore recommended:

- The introduction of a unified electronic system of methodologies and manuals:
 - o Electronic databases should be accessible online so that staff can easily search for information from any location;
 - o The database should include up-to-date working procedures, crisis manuals, and client care guidelines.
- The increased emphasis on crisis training:

- o The training should cover topics such as conflicts with client families, sudden medical complications of clients, or dealing with unforeseen situations in care;
- o This training should include practical scenarios and simulations to help workers respond better in real situations.

7.2. Support for New Employees

Adaptation of new employees is crucial for their long-term retention and effective integration into the work process. Recommendations in this area include:

- The standardisation of the training process:
 - o Each new employee should be assigned a mentor to help them adapt to the new environment, work practices, and teamwork;
 - o The training process should be clearly defined, involve a gradual transfer of information, and regular evaluation of progress.
- The support of social integration:
 - o Organising team meetings and informal activities to help new employees integrate more effectively
 - o Creating an open and friendly atmosphere to facilitate communication and relationship building.

7.3. Development of Vocational Training

Professional training was rated by staff as a key element of professional development. Recommendations in this area include:

- A wider range of specialised training:
 - o Offering courses tailored to the specific needs of the facility, for example, on caring for clients with dementia, working with aids or de-escalating conflicts;
 - o Regular updating of training content based on new knowledge and staff needs.
- The modernisation of the educational forms:
 - o The use of simulation games, interactive workshops, or e-learning courses that allow workers to actively engage and practice their skills;
 - o Support for soft skills training, such as communication with clients or stress management.

7.4. Promoting the Psychological Well-Being of Workers

The mental well-being of employees is essential to their long-term performance and satisfaction. Supervision was seen as a key tool for coping with work and personal challenges. Recommendations include:

- Strengthening the supervision system:
 - o Provide regular supervision for all staff, balancing individual and group formats;
 - o Supervision should include reflection on work conflicts, support in coping with challenging situations, and building mental resilience.
- Integration of psychological hygiene and stress management techniques:
 - o Supervision should include elements of psychological hygiene, such as relaxation techniques, mindfulness, or stress management strategies;
 - o Organisation of workshops focused on the prevention of burnout syndrome.

7.5. Promoting Teamwork

Teamwork is a key factor for effective work in social services. Recommendations include:

- Regular team meetings:
 - o Meetings should focus on sharing experiences, solving current problems, and planning;
 - o Promoting open communication and mutual understanding between team members.
- The support of informal communication:

- o Organising informal events that will contribute to building trust and team spirit;
- o Encouraging informal discussions during working hours to facilitate the sharing of experiences and solving everyday problems.

The implementation of these recommendations can significantly contribute to improving working conditions in social services, increasing staff satisfaction, and enhancing the quality of client care. These steps should be implemented, taking into account the specific needs of individual facilities and their staff. Regular evaluation of the impact of the measures implemented can ensure their effectiveness and provide new suggestions for further improvements.

8. Conclusion

The research probe presented an in-depth and structured view of the forms and effectiveness of support provided by employers to social service workers, particularly in the context of caring for clients in residential care facilities living with dementia. The categories identified - information needed for the job, employer access to new colleagues, support through training, and supervision support (therapeutic, peer-based, or administrative) - provided a comprehensive picture of the key areas that affect job quality and employee satisfaction.

The findings highlighted that employer support in social services must be designed as a holistic system involving practical, social, and psychological aspects. Information transfer was identified as essential to day-to-day work, but its quality and availability showed some variability between settings. Proven tools such as methodological guidance and manuals are seen as key, but their effectiveness depends on the consistency and currency of content. Shortcomings in this area point to the need to standardise and modernise information systems to make information easily accessible and relevant to different work situations.

The adaptation of new workers was rated as very effective, where employers had systematic training processes in place, including not only training, but also social integration support. Staff who provide individual attention to new colleagues were identified as essential to ensure smooth integration into the work team. This approach contributes significantly to building a positive working environment that promotes team stability and reduces turnover.

Vocational training was clearly identified as a key element of professional development. Regular and topic-specific training with a focus on practical skills not only increases professional competence but also improves work comfort and the quality of client care. Modern forms of training, such as interactive workshops and simulation games, have proven to be particularly effective as they encourage active involvement of staff and facilitate the transfer of acquired knowledge into practice.

Psychotherapeutic support through supervision was widely recognised by respondents as an essential tool for coping with psychological stress and preventing burnout syndrome. Regular individual and group supervision provides space for reflection, resolution of work conflicts, and personal issues, which contributes to improved teamwork and overall employee satisfaction. The importance of supervision lies not only in solving current problems but also in its preventive effect, which helps to maintain the psychological resilience of employees and their long-term motivation.

Overall, the results of the research probe showed that support for workers in social services is a complex process that must be flexibly adapted to the needs of employees and the specifics of individual facilities. Flexibility and systematicity are key principles that can ensure that support is effective and relevant to different contexts of social work practice.

Practical implementation of the recommendations from this study has the potential to significantly improve working conditions and increase the quality of client care. The implementation of unified information transfer systems, standardisation of training processes, expansion of vocational training, and strengthening of supervision can contribute to the long-term stability and satisfaction of workers in the field.

Future research should build on the findings and investigate the impact of the implemented measures on the working environment, quality of services and client satisfaction. Particular attention should be given to how the implemented support systems impact long-term burnout prevention and staff career development. This study thus provides a starting point for further exploration and development of effective support strategies in the field of social services.

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