ROLE OF ETHICAL PRINCIPLES IN SOCIAL WORK TEAM IN SHELTERED HOUSING

K. Benkova¹, N. Vlaeva¹, S. Georgieva²

¹Department of Social Activities, Faculty of Medicine, Trakia University, Stara Zagora, Bulgaria
²Masters, International Human Rights Law

ABSTRACT

The paper deals with social work in protected homes from the position of the so-called. approach of principles - through the analysis of three fundamental principles – of rights; of utilitarianism and of justice. Ethical principles in social work practice contain arguments and motivation for actions of the social workers. They rationalize environment, outline rules and possible ways of solving problems. The authors argue that awareness and observance of ethical principles is a prerequisite for the formation of modern, professional and ethical relationships in social team work.

Key words: ethics, social team work, protected homes

Social service - Sheltered Housing

Social work is a professional activity. It is a complex business which needs professionals prepared to work effectively. It is a form of professional guidance, counseling and solving social problems of the individual, so that he/she increases his/her individual security. Social work is aimed at helping people to obtain adequate social services and social benefits, to provision of advice and protection, to support communities and groups, to provide social services or to improve the existing ones. Social services are provided in the community and in specialized institutions. One of the social services, provided in the community, is Protected Housing. Disclosure of this social service is carried out by the state, municipalities, individuals or legal entities, registered under the Commercial Act. These should be registered in the Social Assistance Agency for the provision of social service Sheltered Housing. Users of social service Sheltered Housing lead independent living, assisted by specialists. Social service Sheltered Housing may be provided with joint participation on the basis of a contract between the state, municipalities, individuals or legal entities, registered under the Commercial Act.

The provider of social services presents to the potential customers written information on: the provided social services; the expertise of the supplier in the provision of social services and the qualification of the staff; terms and conditions for use of the services and the procedure for making complaints. The municipal council shall decide on the opening of a Sheltered Housing, stating the capacity, number of staff, funds for salaries, material maintenance and the opening day of the social service.

The decision is submitted to the Regional Directorate for Social Assistance. The director of the Regional Directorate for Social Assistance makes a proposal for opening of a Sheltered Housing to the Executive Director of the Agency for Social Assistance. Sheltered Housing is a social service within the community, delegated by the state, according to the Decision of the Council of Ministers № 743, 2003.

The provision of financial resources, the determination of fees for the use of social service, selection and appointment of staff shall be in accordance with approved standards. The rules for organization and operation of social service Sheltered Housing, rights and obligations of the users as well as of the team of specialists are determined by the Internal Rules of the Sheltered Housing.

*Correspondence to: Prof. Krasimira Benkova, PhD. Department of Social Activities, Faculty of Medicine, Trakia University, 11 Armejska str., 6000 Stara Zagora, Tel.: 042/644417, e-mail: b_enkova@abv.bg
One of the most important activities entrusted to the responsibility of the team of specialists is connected with the organization of the service. Its purpose can be represented in the following three main points:

- Creating conditions for support, assistance, effective protection and social integration of people with mental retardation;
- Carrying out activities to achieve social inclusion and recovery of lost social skills and habits;
- Providing full and independent life in a suitable environment close to the family settings, with the possibility of support and expression.

Services, provided in *Sheltered Housing* have to meet the criteria and standards of the Rules for implementation of the Law of Social Assistance Act: location and facilities, catering, health care, educational services and information, organization of leisure time and personal contacts qualified personnel. Services need to be based on social work when applying individual approach and be tailored to the specific needs of each accommodated person. The possibility of realizing of the objectives of social service *Sheltered Housing* requires elaboration of a concept for providing services in the short and long term. In response to this individual programs for social inclusion are being prepared and implemented. Their general focus is search and realization of the specific needs of each accommodated individual. It is connected with the organization of the service. It is related to the resolution of social problems and conflicts, on the personal level and to realizing the change for better adaptation in personal and social aspects. Personal change is connected to increasing the autonomy of the individual; social change - to organizing and adapting existing resources to improve the living conditions of the individual. It is also related to facilitating social interactions and to increasing capacity for social integration. In this respect, social work needs professionals prepared to carry out the mission of the profession and the realization of social workers requires a range of social skills: communication, persuasion, abilities to solve problems and to make decisions, reflection (1). The real practice of social work in the implementation of social service *Sheltered Housing* however shows that particularly important are the skills for teamwork due to the specificity of the service. Their importance can be summarized in the following points:

First. The formulation of various problems is faster and more precise in terms of content. Problems have a latent phase. Very often what is seen does not carry the essence of the problem. The discussion by the members of the team provides conditions to cover all aspects of the problem;

Second. Teamwork ensures the active participation of each member increases internal and external motivation of the member of the team. Everyone is involved with the power of his experience and information; this is a precondition for the exchange of more opinions and the emergence of various new ideas;

Third. In the teamwork there is interdependence and complementarity. In this way of interaction, each member participates in joint work with his strengths - professional knowledge and skills. Thus cooperation allows for more complete coverage of the problem, its solution and implementation.

Fourth. Teamwork creates security and confidence in the process and the favorable end of the assigned tasks.

In recent years, research into the theory and practice of social work more emphatically displayed in priority the professional competence of social workers skills for teamwork. This largely refers to specialists in social service *Sheltered Housing*. In the form of this service, various experts are united in a working group, which, unlike hierarchically structured organization of work, work together to carry out certain tasks. The distinctive characteristics of teamwork in this case are:
peer behavior; mutual respect of qualification in the specialty and personal integrity; equal participation of all team members in discussions about methods, content and objectives of the work and its implementation. Teamwork is particularly advantageous in the social service Sheltered Housing due to the following preconditions:

- Complex problems and intentions, for solution of which can be used different qualities and synergistic effects of the group;
- Need for adaptability and efficient respond to changes;
- Dependence of the success of the intention or assignment on different motivations and competence of team members;
- Frequent radical changes in the social sphere that require simultaneous action of different competencies, synergy effects and a high degree of continuity;

In the specialized literature and practice are displayed a number of checked and approved for the successful teamwork factors. Despite their versatility, these factors have their importance for successful social teamwork at Sheltered Housing. The most important of them, observed by the authors of this article, are:

- Vision – connected with the notion of identity and belonging to all and desire to achieve a common goal;
- Communication and internal interaction - connected with the idea of equality and interchangeability;
- Publicity and emotional stability - ensuring an open and frank dialogue aimed at seeking solutions;
- Overcoming unequal power relations;
- Mutual support;
- Empathy and commitment - providing the possibility for all team members to have equal share in a collective result, to comment on the issues and to carefully listen to each other.
- Taking responsibility - requires a willingness to bear sole and collective responsibility and to defend own contribution. It is important to ensure that it is not required too much from anyone, all are identified with the objective of the team and agree with the allocation of the tasks.

Besides the above, for the team social work at Sheltered Housing especially important is the profile of each member of the team. Teamwork in this social service requires different profile of skills and behavior. To cope with the mentioned factors and to transpose knowledge of successful teamwork social workers and other professionals need not only to know these factors, but to apply them properly in the course of different situations and challenges. Namely, the changed requirements in interpersonal behavior of managers and team members must be taken seriously and the appropriate behaviors to be explored. It is generally accepted that the competence of a team depends on the individual competence of each team member. Competence in this context means not only professional knowledge and experience in their application; in much greater degree to the profile of the team members belong skills and readiness for training, self-organization and care about relationships.

Professional knowledge and readiness for training

The experience of the authors of this article shows that from the members of the team at Sheltered Housing should be required a high level of professional skills and abilities. As at Sheltered Housing usually is absent or prevalent only a limited division of labor it is not required from the members of the team excessive unilateral specialization - everyone should have such extensive professional knowledge as possible. This is one of the most important prerequisites for solving complex problems, and for using most effectively the synergistic effect of the group. Last but not least, the team should not lose their ability to work in case of failure of any member of the team. But this is not enough by itself and the team members should continuously improve their qualification. That is why from the team members is required increased readiness for training and ability for continuing personal education.

Self-organization

Team members at Sheltered Housing often work independently and on their own responsibility. Sometimes even regular working hours drop in favor of free distribution of time. Under such conditions each team member must be able to sensibly allocate his time and to motivate yourself to achieve rationality and efficiency. Assigned tasks need to be performed by the team members systematically and within the agreed timeframe. Routine activities also need to be carefully and reliably met, as well as work-related challenges.

Care for the relationships

Positive atmosphere in the team is the result primarily of the fact that the team members maintain harmonious relations with each other. To this are attributed primarily skills such as careful listening to each other; giving and
sending personal messages; expressing and accepting of constructive criticism; self-assertion; tolerance and readiness to compromise; honesty; responsiveness.

Analysis of the importance of teamwork to achieve effective social practices in social service Sheltered Housing refers to a less developed in the literature problem - the role of ethical principles. The authors of this article defend the thesis that ethical principles in social work practice include arguments and motives for the actions of social workers. They rationalize working environment rules and outline possible ways of solving problems. Awareness and respect for ethical principles is a condition for the formation of modern, professional and ethical relationships in the social work team. In this sense, their knowledge and implementation can be defined as a key factor for successful social practice. Ethical awareness is a necessary part of the professional practice of any social worker. His ability to act ethically is an essential aspect of quality of service offered to customers.

The most common approach to the ethics of social work is to set common ethical principles that provide guidance on how to act. As a practical activity social work is carried out through relationships and interactions of social worker with individuals or communities. The main tasks of the social worker in the process of assistance is directly determined by the need to organize and structure the situation of interaction with the client in such a way as to achieve mutual consistency of purpose and effective results from their help and protection. In this regard, the social worker needs to be explained, justified certain decisions, evaluated one's behavior. They can do this effectively and ethically on the basis of certain principles. In their daily activity social workers need arguments, reasons for their actions. They are contained in ethical principles. That is why the language of principles is important for social work. This is the language of the moral justification.

Principles create a homogeneous environment for social work. They in a much greater degree than the values, attitudes, cultural and religious differences outline and unify the environment. In our opinion, two basic principles are of greatest relevance to the practice of a social work team:

1. **The principle of universalism (formalism).** Universalism is a principle of rights. Law in this context means "Hierarchical structure of norms" as a practical guideline. As rules reflect the degree of intensity with which practical law affects social relationships they regulate the most diverse relations: economic, political, personal, family and others. In its entirety, law is intended to serve people, their existence, morality and personal interests. Through the law individuals get a clear idea of their capabilities and responsibilities, they become individual legal entities. At the same time on the basis of Law people are given an indication of what they can realistically do. Thus, as a system of norms regulating the entire society, law provides cooperative life of people on the basis of personal freedom and minimum penalties for their violation.

The concept of moral rights is another important idea of universalism. Public life requires fair respecting the natural rights and freedom of man as a moral and civil being, provided in the language of moral and legal law (2).

2. **Principle of justice** - anti-discriminatory practice, the sources of which are rooted in the radical critique of social services, based on the principle of respect for human rights and achievement of social justice. Social justice, particularly in social work, is used in a broad sense and interpretation of the content. In most cases it covers relations in the social sphere in terms of equal access to services and equality of outcome or consequences. But as far as social justice is based on the idea of the distribution of resources in society according to the needs or merit, it challenges the existing power structures, repressive institutions and activities. This explains the need for a thorough analysis of the concept of "justice" as an ethical principle governing relations in the practice of social work. In principle, justice is inherently social as it relates to humans as social beings and is implemented in society. But when looking for emphasis in justice, related to the relationships in social life and being of great significance to the order in the society the use of the term "social justice" is accepted. Key leading principle of justice is equality, often perceived as justice itself.

Distributed justice has a central place and importance in social work, particularly in the structures of the public sector. Social workers there are responsible for the allocation of public resources no matter whether it concerns
money, care, or other type of goods and resources according to specific criteria, according to the rights, needs and merits. This problem is becoming more important in today's social situation when the resource allocation becomes a part of the daily practice of social workers (3).

Analysis, presented here, leads to the following conclusion:
For proper execution of the functions of social workers is necessary not only vocational training but also the willingness to comply with certain professional and ethical standards and principles. Social workers, who have knowledge and experience, can help and support their customers and solve their professional tasks. Behavior, consistent with ethical principles, is a prerequisite for the formation of modern, professional and ethical relationships in social teamwork.

REFERENCES
1. Шошева В., К. Бенкова, Ст. Динчийска (2008) Умения за социална работа, Стара Загора