

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE

1. Title of the practice

Community-based housing services for people with learning disabilities in Sokolov

2. Organisation responsible for the practice

Dolmen z.ú¹., City of Liberec², Sokolov district, Czech Republic

3. Contact person(s)

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4. Summary of the practice

Dolmen, an NGO and social services provider, supports the transition of adults with learning disabilities from institutional residences to community based housing, through three interconnected types of housing.

The services are provided in Sokolov, one of the largest industrial cities in the Karlovy Vary Region in the Czech Republic. The services are interlinked and focus not only on supporting independent living but also providing other opportunities, such as employment. Across Sokolov, there are 21 of these apartments, accommodating one or two people per flat. The service has been running since 2014.

1. Sheltered housing

This service provides people with learning disabilities apartments (which are rented out by Dolmen) for independent living. Services are provided for those in sheltered housing including assistance with meals and other chores; educational and motivational activities; contacting services and people; asserting rights; advocating interests and looking after personal matters.

2. Supported housing

This service is designed mostly for people with learning disabilities who are more self-sufficient and can live with less support. They can access the same services as those provided for sheltered housing, but typically the assistance provided is less frequent and less intensive. The transition to this type of housing is usually one of the personal goals of the users from the sheltered housing service.

3. Sheltered employment

The service supports the creation and improvement of service users' work skills through sheltered employment at the restaurant 'Oasis'. This gives them the opportunity to experience work in a sheltered environment and they receive a salary for their work. The service accepts service users from both sheltered and supported housing and is available to other service users as well.

¹ 'z.ú' is the official denomination for NGOs.

² Liberec is the fifth-largest city in the Czech Republic.

5. National/regional/local context of the practice

Supporting the independence of people with learning disabilities in the community is part of a nationwide strategy. This strategy is the national agenda on the transformation of residential facilities to community-based services for social care³.

The practice is supported at regional level by the transformation project 'Sustainability and availability of regional social service networks in the Karlovy Vary Region'. Two residential homes for people with learning disabilities owned by the region are involved in this transformation process towards community-based services, which began in 2010.

Dolmen was chosen as a service provider by the regional authorities through a procurement process. Dolmen, z.ú. is an NGO who provides social services and is based in the city of Liberec. The service in Sokolov is provided by its local subdivision. The municipality of Sokolov provides support for the project and has extended this over time. The municipality provided additional properties to develop the supported housing, once it became clear that some service users in the sheltered housing were ready to progress to more independent living.

6. Staff involved

The practice is led by a district manager, a service coordinator and a quality manager. There are also social workers and 13 care assistants, divided into three teams, each led by a team leader who reports to the district manager. In addition, 3 training instructors work at the Oasis sheltered workplace.

7. Target group

Most service users are adults with learning disabilities who had originally been in the residential facilities. Some of them have additional difficulties, such as autism, challenging behaviour or sensory impairments. The service is not aimed at people who have a lack of mobility, those who require intensive nursing or medical care, nor at people with serious psychiatric illnesses.

8. Aims of the practice

The aim is for service users to achieve a quality of life that is comparable to that of their peers who do not use social services, and especially to:

- Maximise the independence of service users in caring for their household, shopping, managing finances and personal health and hygiene.
- Maximise the independence of service users outside of their households to access services such as public transport.
- Reduce the need for long-term social care and support.
- Support service users to find employment, either sheltered or on the open labour market

³ The agenda refers to two national documents: The Government's decision No. 127/2007

https://kormoran.odok.cz/usneseni/usneseni_webtest.nsf/usn/2007-127 and the concept of support for the transformation of residential social services <https://goo.gl/pcJ3B3>

9. Issues for social services					
Service Integration/ Cooperation across services	x	Service Planning		Contracting	
Technology		Skills development /workforce	x	Quality of services	x
Others: _____					
ANALYSIS OF THE PRACTICE					
10. Status					
Pilot project (ongoing)		Project (ongoing)	X	Implemented practice (restricted areas)	
Pilot project (terminated)		Project (terminated)		Widely spread practice/rolled out	
11. Scope of the practice					
<i>Describe the setting of the practice: micro, meso or macro-level.</i>					
Meso level: the service forms part of a regional project to develop community-based services and follows the national agenda on the transformation of residential social care.					
12. Leadership and management of the practice					
<i>Description of the leadership of the practice, considering the following criteria:</i>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Collaborative management:</i> shared between large partnerships, often of central, regional and local representation • <i>Organisational management:</i> by one organisation • <i>Professional management:</i> managed by a single person • <i>Shared management:</i> shared with no defined leadership 					
This service was started by the Karlovy Vary region in cooperation with the municipality of Sokolov, and carried out by Dolmen, z.ú.					
13. Engaging stakeholders in the practice					
<i>Description of the engagement of stakeholders.</i>					
The main stakeholders are:					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Department of Social Affairs of Karlovy Vary region, which implements the strategy of the transformation project, evaluates the project objectives, coordinates further actions, strives for quality and improvement of practices and provides training for staff. • Social Affairs Department of Sokolov municipality, which organises local services, cooperates with other departments, and shares information with the public. • Parents of service users and the court-appointed trustee of clients (in most cases the same persons) are involved in the planning of services, evaluating if individual goals have been met, and also cooperate with the personal assistants on other issues for the service users such as finance, employment, and health. 					

14. Involvement of service users and their families

Description of the involvement of service users. (Were they part of the professionals' team? Consulted? Directly involved in their care?)

The users and their families are involved in putting together the service user's individual support plan, including setting outcomes and making preparations for employment. Furthermore, service users are involved in the evaluation of the services.

15. Costs and resources needed for implementation

Description of how the practice is financed, considering the following criteria:

- *Within existing resources:* staff time and other resources are provided 'in-house'
- *Staffing costs:* costs for staff investment
- *Joint/Pooled budgets:* two or more agencies pool budgets to fund services
- *Funded project:* external investment

In 2010-2014, the regional project 'Sustainability availability of region social service networks in the Karlovy Vary Region' received EU funding for its implementation⁴. Financial support from the EU for the project ended in 2014, but the project continues with funding from national government and the region of Karlovy Vary.

The practice provided by Dolmen forms part of this regional project, and therefore benefits from the funding of the national and regional government. Furthermore, the municipality of Sokolov and service user contributions (who contribute a proportion of their income, according to the level of their benefits and salary) support the financing of the practice. These funding sources are sufficient to cover the costs of the practice.

The total annual costs for the community-based housing in Sokolov is approximately €340,000 (equivalent to CZK 9,226,000) for 24 service users in sheltered housing and seven in supported housing.

16. Evaluation approaches

Description of the evaluation method of the practice: Was there an evaluation of this practice/programme? Was it qualitative? Quantitative? Through an audit? Through informal carers/users' feedback? If no evaluation has been carried out, is one planned?

Every year, regular evaluations are carried out in cooperation with staff and service users:

Service users

Service users can use different formats for assessing the service according to their communication ability such as a questionnaire, video, picture, or letter. The assessment covers areas such as their opinions on the housing, personal wishes and needs, whether they have met personal goals, their leisure time, and relationships with neighbours, family, friends and loved ones.

Personal assistants

Together with the user, the personal assistants also evaluate if the service users' needs and desires have been fulfilled. They also evaluate the level of assistance provided, the degree of independence of service users, analyse difficult situations or those where there is a risk.

⁴ See more here: http://www.kr-karlovarsky.cz/krajsky-urad/cinnosti/Documents/Udrzitelnost_clanek.pdf

The personal assistants complete this evaluation as a team, and collaborate with a team leader to prepare an evaluation report.

In addition, personal assistants log the activities they have carried out with the service user on a computer program. The data on this program can then be analysed as part of evaluation.

Team leaders

Together with the social worker and coordinator, the team leaders evaluate the quality of the services provided by the personal assistants. They also assess the type of support provided to the user, in terms of support which encourages independence versus that of a more caring type.

Furthermore, they evaluate the level of team cooperation, if there are any issues in the support provided, assess the training needs of staff, and verify employee satisfaction.

Subdivision manager

The manager assesses the fulfilment of the objectives of the service, level of teamwork, and identifies any strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities for the service.

The team who conducts the evaluation shares their findings during meetings, where good practice and case reports are presented. The result of this is that good practice or changes to practice can be implemented in the project, meaning that the evaluation process often leads to changes in how the service is delivered.

17. Measurable effects of the practice and what it has achieved for...

Service users	The service allows 24 people with learning disabilities to live in sheltered housing, seven in supported housing, and 12 users have been involved in sheltered work at the dedicated facility 'Oasis'. These services allow service users to live more independently and in the community.
Formal care givers	Dolmen has supported the educational needs of the staff. Over six years, the team members have received training in a number of areas, such as fostering the perception and communication of people with learning disabilities, managing relationship boundaries, and dealing with challenging behaviour. They have also learnt to better communicate with the service users and gain greater insights into their needs wants.
Informal carers	n.a.
Organisations	<p>The practice has successfully implemented an interconnected system of community based services which can support the independence of people with learning disabilities, contributing to national and regional projects to develop more community-based and individualised social services.</p> <p>The project has also reduced the costs of service provision by supporting the self-sufficiency of service users. The cost per user per month in the sheltered housing is approximately €785 (22,000 CZK) compared to €1,600 (45,000 CZK) for a user in residential institutions.</p>

Other	Relations with the public have been improved, with fewer neighbourhood complaints. Dolmen has organised a number of public events to support this, such as workshops and open-door days where the public can meet service users and the organisation.
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18. Anticipated or 'aspirational' effects of the practice and what it has achieved for...

This category can include outcomes which are not documented, quantified or properly evaluated. They can include such elements as improved knowledge, quality, workforce, etc.

Service users	<p>The practice has improved the independence of service users so they can participate more in society and manage their own personal affairs, thereby improving their quality of life. This has also reduced the range of social services which they must access.</p> <p>The well-being, in particular the mental state of service users has improved, which has in most cases resulted in a reduction of medication provided for mental health issues. Many users have taken up hobbies such as sport and music in addition to cultivating their relationships with friends and family.</p>
Formal care givers	A team of 13 personal assistants work with the service users. They are given independence to work creatively, encouraged to undertake self-reflection, and take on further training. They have a high level of job satisfaction as a result, and also express satisfaction from seeing the development of service users' skill and life quality.
Informal carers	n.a.
Organisations	Dolmen, the service provider, has demonstrated that they can successfully deliver community-based housing for people with learning disabilities, and has managed to nurture a culture of supporting users and their independence, rather than simply caring for them.
Other	n.a.

19. How the practice has changed the way the service is provided (lessons learned)

To begin with, the service began by providing sheltered housing in 12 apartments. Since it started, the number of apartments has increased to 20 and supported housing has also been developed to enable some of the service users to live more independently, recognising their increased level of competence.

The nature of how the service is delivered has also changed. Direct assistance has decreased, such as that provided for the general running of a household. The increased independence of service users has enabled more time for indirect support and the joint planning of services.

20. Sustainability of the practice

Description of whether the practice is sustainable, considering the following criteria:

- *Potential for sustainability:* practice was newly started or is on-going/not yet mainstreamed. How could the practice be sustained (in terms of resources)?
- *Organic sustainability:* service users have been empowered to take the practice forward
- *Established:* the project has been operational for several years

The service has been running for two years (2014-2016) and has shown that the costs per user are smaller than in residential care. The cost per user per month in the sheltered housing is approximately €785 (22,000 CZK) compared to €1,600 (45,000 CZK) for a user in residential institutions.

This indicates the viability of greater deinstitutionalisation in the Czech Republic and elsewhere, and its potential to actually save costs, as well as improve outcomes for service users.

21. Transferability of the practice

Description of whether the practice has been transferred, considering the following criteria:

- *Transferred:* transfer to other regions, countries, service user groups, etc.
- *Potential for transferability:* there is interest from the outside; elements of the practice have been taken up and used elsewhere; material for transferability (for ex. training material) has been developed

The service has the potential to be transferred elsewhere, given that it is financially sustainable and has been able to support people with learning disabilities to live successfully in the community.