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Module Code: LCHS4001

Module: Academic and Employability Skills

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Submitted on:

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1: Written Report

1.1 Introduction

A Youth Support Worker is a key figure in the health and social care industry, as the worker helps young people develop personally, socially, emotionally, and educationally. Youth Support Workers help youths overcome difficulties, build confidence, and make positive decisions about their lives and future; they help promote well-being as well as protect from any potential threats (National Careers Service, n.d.). The purpose of this report is to investigate the job of a Youth Support Worker to show its importance for helping vulnerable young people succeed and receive proper assistance. The report will identify the role of a Youth Support Worker and describe three important skills needed for performing the job effectively and ways to develop them.

1.2 Description of, and background to, Youth Support Worker in healthcare

The Youth Support Worker refers to an expert who helps adolescents and young people within the age of 11-25 to develop skills and confidence for making good decisions in life. This specialist works in various settings such as educational settings, youth centres, charities, councils, community organisations and healthcare services. The purpose of this job is to improve the wellbeing of young people, promote their development, and address various issues such as problems within families, poor mental well-being, substance abuse, loneliness, or poor school attendance (National Careers Service, n.d.).

The Youth Support Workers perform a wide range of duties and responsibilities. These include building good relations with young people, offering them emotional support, organising educational and entertaining activities, fostering independence, protecting young people from any harm, and cooperation with families, schools, and other specialists for providing proper help (Prospects, n.d.). Safeguarding is among the core duties because Youth Support Workers need to identify cases of possible abuse, neglect or exploitation of young people and to inform relevant authorities about it (National Youth Agency, n.d.).

It is necessary to have certain professional competences to perform these duties effectively. Communication, empathy, and awareness of the issues related to safeguarding are among the key competences.

1.2 Evaluation of the skills needed for Youth Support Worker in healthcare

A variety of professional competencies are essential for Youth Support Workers to provide safety, effectiveness, and person-centeredness of the work done. Among such competencies, there are three key skills that include communication, empathy, and safeguarding awareness. It helps workers to build up a good relationship with young people, to know their needs and to respond to different situations related to wellbeing of those people.

Firstly, it is worth saying about communication as it is a very important competence for Youth Support Workers since they must inform young people, families, and other professionals.

Communication includes listening carefully to young people, asking necessary questions and using suitable language considering age of young people, their understanding and personal needs. Competent communication increases trust between workers and young people that results in better communication and help that is needed by young people (National Careers Service, n.d.). For example, if a young person faces bullying at school, he/she may talk about this problem only when he/she feels that Youth Support Worker will listen to him/her attentively. Bad communication may cause misunderstandings, lack of trust and inability to help young people.

Secondly, empathy is an important competence because it allows understanding feelings of young people without judging them. Showing empathy creates safe and comfortable environment in which young people will be treated with respect and dignity. This may contribute to building up positive relationship and increase confidence, wellbeing and engagement into support (Prospects, n.d.). For example, if young people experience anxiety and cannot come to school regularly, a Youth Support Worker will listen to them, will show understanding of difficulties and will look for solutions together instead of blaming them. Lacking empathy may result in misunderstanding, young people may not ask for help and will not engage into support.

Thirdly, safeguarding awareness is necessary because of the necessity to protect children and young people from all kinds of abuse, neglect, exploitation, and other harms. Workers must recognize signs of danger, to use safeguarding policies and to inform appropriate professionals about problems without any delays (National Youth Agency, n.d.). For example, if a young person has some kind of injuries, change in behaviour and signs of neglect, Youth Support Worker must follow organizational safeguarding policies and to make referrals to appropriate people.

To sum up, communication, empathy and safeguarding awareness are important competencies of Youth Support Workers that allow providing effective help, creating trust and protecting young people.

1.4 Strategies to improve the skills for Youth Support Worker

The acquisition of professional competencies is crucial for Youth Support Workers to provide efficient and safe support. Professional development promotes the increase in workers' expertise, confidence and ability to deal with changing requirements of young people. Professional training and CPD, practical experience gained through volunteering and supervised work, and reflective practice combined with feedback are three approaches to the improvement of communication, empathy, and safeguarding awareness that are based on evidence.

Professional training and continuing professional development (CPD) are one of the approaches. It gives Youth Support Workers the opportunity to develop their communication skills, become more knowledgeable about the legislative aspects of safeguarding and know how to deal with various challenges. Safeguarding training is crucial for the staff to be able to stay informed about new policies and procedures concerning protection of children and young people (National Youth Agency, n.d.). For example, the attendance of a safeguarding course may be useful for a Youth Support Worker to learn about different symptoms of abuse and neglect and to understand how to report it. Furthermore, CPD allows

professionals to update their qualifications during their whole careers and thus to improve the quality of support.

Another approach includes gaining practical experience through volunteering, work placement or supervised employment. Practical experience provides an opportunity for Youth Support Workers to apply theory in practice under the supervision of experienced colleagues. Direct contact with young people allows to develop communication and empathy by establishing relationship with people of various background and with different needs. For example, volunteers can get experience in active listening, organizing group work and become confident in helping young people dealing with various problems. As stated by the National Careers Service (n.d.), practical experience is helpful for acquiring relevant skills of youth work.

Reflection and feedback are the components of the third approach. Reflection means analysing the experience, identifying its strong points and weaknesses. Feedback from supervisor, colleagues and young people can contribute to the improvement of the communication, decision making and practice of Youth Support Workers. For example, after helping a young person through a challenging situation, a supervisor can suggest using some other communication skills to engage the person during future support sessions. The reflection promotes the learning from experience and the improvement of quality of the care provided (Skills England, n.d.).

In summary, the discussed approaches help to promote the development of communication, empathy and safeguarding awareness of Youth Support Workers. The development of these competencies contributes to provision of the high quality of support and establishment of positive relationships with young people.

1.3 Conclusion

The Youth Support Workers play an essential role in nurturing personal, social and emotional development of youth individuals while ensuring that they lead a healthy life. In this report, the duties that a Youth Support Worker performs are highlighted, and the significance of three essential competences of communication, empathy and safeguarding awareness are mentioned. The knowledge of such competences allows for creating a trustful relationship, assessing needs of youth individuals and providing a secure support for them. Moreover, there are three efficient ways to develop these competences: professional development, experience and reflective practice. Development of such competences can be linked with enhancement of care and creation of better outcomes for youth individuals. Thus, skilled and professionally trained Youth Support Workers play an important role in assisting youth individuals in achieving all their potentials and having healthy and positive life.

1.4 Reference List

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