Acute Training Solutions
Key Worker Skills – Keyworking in Social Care

What is Keyworking?

Keyworking is a system for providing individualised social care through named persons. A keyworker is the person who has responsibility and accountability for the care of the service user and for decisions relating to their situation.

Keyworking involves:

- Mutual trust and respect
- The social, physical, intellectual, cultural, emotional and spiritual aspects of the service user's development and well-being
- Creating a sense of purpose and change
- Partnership between the keyworker, other service providers and those who are users of their services
- Planning (utilising the abilities of individuals and groups in the arena of problem solving)
- The changing of social environments (including for example, the challenging of racist, sexist and ageist attitudes and behaviours)

What does Keyworking mean?

- Keyworking as a means of creating a clear basis for decision making when different parts of an organisation are involved. An example is the link between a children's home and a field work office
- Keyworking in child abuse investigations, where the use of a named individual gives focus in terms of responsibility and planning and clarity in accountability for action that takes place in the investigation
- Keyworking in multidisciplinary teams where the use of a primary worker from the team gives a 'single door' to call on for the delivery of the services. An example is
- Keyworking in a community mental handicap team
- Keyworking as a means of meeting individual needs in a group care setting thus enabling a personalised service in a residential or day care establishment

Who can be a keyworker and what do they do?

- A keyworker will be an individual named worker that a particular service user may relate to in daily living on a personal basis. Service users may expect their keyworker to plan to meet their individual needs and to find ways of meeting those needs.
- Keyworkers are likely to be involved in activities such as physical care, supporting daily living, assessment, acting as advocate, counselling, admissions, recording, arranging activities, shopping, and liaison with relatives.

Benefits of keyworking to service users

- A personalised service based upon an agreed care plan
- Continuity of care
- Improved recording
- Regular review
- A nominated individual for services and support

Benefits for Keyworkers

- A better understanding of service users' needs
- Better communication networks
- A recognition of personal achievement
- Enhanced job satisfaction
- Improved development opportunities
- The clarity of purpose and objectives implied by the necessary teamwork with early identification renders keyworking a very cost effective mode of service delivery.

The main principles of keyworking

1.   **Individualised care**

- To enable the exercise of personal choice by service users in all decision making and in all aspects of daily living
- To undertake personalised care planning for each service user that recognises their uniqueness as an individual and the individual nature of their needs
- To enable service users to take the highest degree of responsibility for their affairs that is possible
- To promote openness between keyworkers and service users throughout all the process of social caring
- To inform all service users of their rights and promote open discussion of the responsibilities that rights bring
- To enable service users to develop skills in problem solving, decision making and assertiveness
- To strive to maximise the service user's independence
- To encourage actively service users to make their own choices from a range of options based upon informed risk taking
- To use good, clear, concise and adequate working records
- To promote honesty and reciprocal responsibility between keyworkers and service users based upon trust

2.   **The system for managing care**

Managers (with their staff) should:

- Clearly define roles in conjunction with keyworkers to avoid role conflict and conflicting expectations
- Enable good communication
- Focus factors such as rotas, cover and referral systems to avoid constraining the quality of services
- Enable effective team and individual development
- Give supervision, support and training
- Delegate authority to keyworkers in a way which is clear and is given in a context of support
- Appraise performance and opportunities for personal development
- Clearly define the links between keyworkers and the person holding case accountability; including roles responsibilities, communication processes and individual accountability
- Closely monitor and review the system's effectiveness and its efficient operation

3.   **Care planning**

Care planning should be carried out on an individual basis and across the establishment as a whole. Personal needs can be defined by clients in conjunction with keyworkers and ways of meeting them identified and coordinated. Overall philosophies of care should involve all personnel directly involved. Care planning must thus be made with a clarity of purpose. It should reflect the following principles:

- Individual needs based upon the exercise of client choice
- Shared decision making and agreement between the client, family and staff
- Clearly stated benefits to the client
- The keyworker and the agency working in close co-operation with the network of all those involved in the client's welfare (for example, individuals and institutions in the locality)
- Purposeful intervention on the client's behalf
- Clear statement of long term goals and short term objectives
- The methods required to achieve these objectives should be clearly stated
- A statement of outcomes should be made to demonstrate when goals have been achieved
- The detailing of any constraints which may be imposed and affect the achievement of goals and how these are to be worked through
- Review, monitoring and evaluation should be built into the plan and into the process of implementation

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Some questions on setting up a keyworker system

- What are the roles that keyworkers will undertake?
- What training will keyworkers need to fulfil their new roles?
- How many service users will be allocated to each keyworker?
- How are keyworkers and service users to be matched?
- How are the cultural needs of service users to be met?
- How is the tension between individual care and group living to be resolved?
- Will keyworkers work together in pairs (co-keyworking) to provide cover and mutual support?
- How are keyworkers to be supervised? What methods will be used?
- Who is to be case accountable (keyworker or supervisor)?
- How are keyworkers to be supported within the team?
- How is the keyworker system to be monitored and review

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