



CENTRO DE INVESTIGACIONES  
DE TRABAJO SOCIAL

ISSN 2244-808X  
DL pp 201002Z43506

# PERSPECTIVA ACCIÓN Y

Revista de Trabajo Social

**Vol. 15 No. 2**

**Abril - Junio**

**2025**

**Universidad del Zulia**

Facultad de Ciencias Jurídicas y Políticas  
Centro de Investigaciones en Trabajo Social

# Mecanismos de apoyo para trabajadores de servicios sociales: caminos hacia un cuidado sostenible para clientes que viven con demencia

Lukáš Stárek

AMBIS vysoká škola, a.s./ AMBIS University. Katedra pedagogiky/ Department of Pedagogy.  
Lindnerova 575/1, 180 00 Praha 8 – Libeň. Czech Republic.

E-mail: [lukas.starek@ambis.cz](mailto:lukas.starek@ambis.cz); ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6068-215X>

**Resumen.** El artículo presenta un análisis teórico exhaustivo sobre los problemas clave, desafíos y necesidades de los trabajadores de servicios sociales que atienden a personas que viven con demencia. El texto se centra en los cambios demográficos en Europa que están aumentando la proporción de personas mayores en la población y, por ende, el número de clientes que requieren cuidados exigentes. Los temas principales del texto incluyen la importancia de los mecanismos de apoyo, como la supervisión, el desarrollo profesional, las condiciones laborales y la prevención del agotamiento profesional. Asimismo, el artículo aborda temas como programas de formación, tecnologías modernas y una cultura organizacional que fomente el trabajo en equipo y la salud mental de los trabajadores. Se enfatiza la creación de medidas sistémicas para mejorar el entorno laboral, conduciendo a una atención de mayor calidad y a una mayor motivación de los empleados.

**Palabras clave:** servicios sociales, demencia, prevención del agotamiento, condiciones laborales, desarrollo profesional.

## Support mechanisms for social service workers: pathways to sustainable care for clients living with dementia

**Abstract.** The article provides a thorough theoretical analysis of the key issues, challenges and needs of social service workers caring for people living with dementia. The text focuses on demographic changes in Europe that are increasing the proportion of older people in the population and thus the number of clients requiring demanding care. The main themes of the text are the importance of support mechanisms such as supervision, professional development, working conditions and the prevention of burnout. The article also works with topics such as training programs, modern technology, and organizational culture promoting teamwork and mental health of workers. Emphasis is placed on creating systemic measures to improve the work environment, leading to higher quality care and employee motivation.

**Keywords:** social services, dementia, burnout prevention, working conditions, professional development.

### INTRODUCTION

The demographic structure of the elderly in Europe has been undergoing significant changes in recent decades, with far-reaching implications for the social, economic and health systems of individual countries. Population ageing is characterised by an increasing proportion of people aged 65 and over in the total population, due to a combination of low fertility, increasing life expectancy and other demographic factors. According to Eurostat's interactive publication *Demography of Europe - 2023 edition*, the proportion of people aged 65 and over in the European Union will increase from 16% in 2002 to 21% in 2022. This ageing trend is evident in most EU Member States, with some countries facing a more significant increase in the proportion of older people than others.

Italy and Portugal have the highest proportion of seniors in Europe, with 24% of the total population aged 65 and over in 2023. This high share can be partly attributed to low fertility, high life expectancy and limited migration of the younger population. Countries such as Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Finland followed with only slightly lower shares of the elderly. These countries also face similar challenges, including demographic ageing and increasing demands on pension and healthcare systems. The average share of the population aged 65 and over in the European Union was around 21.3% in 2023. This average masks significant differences between Member States. Countries with higher incomes and better health systems tend to have longer life expectancy, which increases the proportion of older people. At the other end of the spectrum (the lowest proportion of elderly), countries such as Iceland, Luxembourg and Turkey had a proportion of less than 15%. These countries have a younger demographic structure, which may be the result of higher fertility rates, lower life expectancy or higher rates of immigration of younger people. In the case of Turkey, the relatively young population plays an important role (Statista, 2023).



So not only is there an increase in the number of seniors every year, but also an increase in the number of people with dementia. Every year, the number of people diagnosed with dementia increases by 5.4% in the Czech Republic and in Europe in general. Every 20 or 25 years, this number doubles (Holmerová, Horecký, & Hanuš, 2016). This aspect has and will undoubtedly continue to have a major impact on society, not only in terms of economic but also social impact. Therefore, the social services system will be forced to implement fundamental changes, whether in the system of financing, legislation, quality of services, material and technical equipment or personnel standards.

In the Czech Republic, a total of 17 856 people, of whom 12 478 were women (i.e. 70%), 5 376 were men and 2 were children or young people under the age of 18, stayed in residential social services for people living with dementia in 2017. The number of clients in residential care homes is on an upward trend, but unfortunately this is also true of the number of unfulfilled applications. While in 2013, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic registered 15,488 unsatisfied applications, in 2017 the number of unsatisfied applications was already 22,348, and the number of unsatisfied applications thus significantly exceeded the number of clients placed in homes with special regime (Wija, Bareš, & Žofka, 2019). The increasing trend in the number of beds in homes with special regime is also evident in the Register of Social Service Providers of the Czech Republic (Register of Social Service Providers, online, citation 2024-12-20), which is managed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic, where there are more than 400 providers of registered social service homes with special regime with a total capacity of 23 674 beds.

In the context of statistical data in the context of social service workers themselves, we can publish data from Horecký (2020), who states that there are 11 million workers in the social services sector in the European Union, which represents 4.7% of all jobs in the European Union. It is also one of the most dynamically growing sectors. Over the last 10 years, 2 million new jobs have been created in social services on a European scale, and the Czech Republic has lagged somewhat behind in this significant growth. Even the overall data on the number of employees in social services in the Czech Republic varies. According to a 2019 analysis by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic, there are a total of 75,656 FTEs in social services in the Czech Republic. According to Eurostat, the total number of people working in social services in the Czech Republic is 105,100. Working in social services is the domain of women in all European countries. In terms of employees, women represent 81.56 % of the total workforce. In two countries (Portugal, Slovakia) the figure is even over 90%. The highest proportion of men working in social services can be found in Germany, 24.8%. The 50-64 age group represents one third of all workers in the social sector in the Czech Republic (Horecký, 2020).

The professional relationship and responsibility in providing quality care is closely related to the ethical behaviour and actions of the personal assistant. The organisation - the social service provider - delegates a specific relationship, the relationship of care with the user, to a specific professional worker, in our case the personal assistant. However, the responsibility of the institution/provider for quality care does not end here. The whole of the organisation should still support the work of the worker. The joint responsibility for team care implies a definition of the role of the worker and the institution. This can be directly operationalised in concrete measures that motivate the worker in his work: salary, job and administrative support. The institution is content-friendly, that is, it has ownership of the content commitment, and this is recognised in its policy. This implies not only ensuring quality care for the social service user, but also ensuring that the institution cares for the worker. Only in this connection can shared responsibility take its proper shape. Quality care

and support from the organisation, provide the worker with the background to carry out his direct work with the user (Laan van der, 1998).

Such support requires both time and quality - this means freeing up time for induction and job interviews, supervision, and the possibility of training and other types of professional development and further education. This offer cannot be 'non-committal' given that the institution as a moral actor has to bear its own share of responsibility for quality care. The institution shapes its own responsibility for quality care through the content of executive leadership. Increasingly, the starting point for the provision of quality care is the specified demand of the care seeker. This requires a different way of thinking for helpers and caregivers who both assess demand and try to match it to the care seeker. This means asking:

“What type of care seeker is contacting me and what is their real request?”

The development is also related to sufficient attention in dealing with psychological problems in all users and to the increased use of compensatory aids. Accepting the idea that work is satisfying, fulfilling and part of the meaning of life becomes a guide to identifying with work and accepting it as one's own. The nature of the work, together with the individual's personality and social factors, can positively influence identification with the occupation. Jurovsky (1980) and Laan van der (1998) agree that a worker identifies more easily with a job that is varied, with feedback and with the opportunity to participate in decision-making.

A frequently addressed topic in the context of clients and social service workers is social isolation. Social exclusion is discussed by Daněk, Klugerová (2023). Social exclusion is a major issue that modern society is attempting to address. It has negative impacts not only on a local level but also on a national, European, and even global scale. In today's interconnected society, it is important to recognize that social exclusion issues in other countries or on other continents will have an impact on us. Therefore, it is crucial to strive for the elimination, prevention, and combat of social exclusion through all possible means. Cooperative learning, which replaces traditional competitiveness, plays a crucial role in strengthening social bonds among students and developing their collaborative skills (Bačová, 2024).

In view of the above data, it is evident that it is essential to give maximum support and care to people who provide direct care to the elderly/people living with dementia. In the context of our professional text, these are social service workers, whose work is physically and mentally demanding, and it is therefore important that employers work with the idea of development, but above all with support mechanisms that will serve as a supportive apparatus of help and support for the performers of this difficult work.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Control-functional support mechanisms/tools for social work

Social service workers often have to deal with difficult situations that are physically and mentally demanding. They are often subjected to a high workload that is also emotionally exhausting. Many times, the workplace is not equipped with the necessary tools for the work and lacks, for example, the modern tools needed to handle clients appropriately. Clients living with dementia in the residential social service are in the facility because of their unfavourable social situation, their health

condition is gradually deteriorating and the assistance and care for these people is very demanding. During the course of their services, the workers are confronted with various situations that can be triggered by both the client and family members.

A social services worker meets clients in palliative care on a daily basis, takes on the role of a companion or provides support to a family member in difficult moments. The social services worker also routinely encounters non-standard client behaviour. This can range from restlessness to aggression, caused by different types of illness. Thus, it can be said that the risk factor is undoubtedly the workplace environment and the type of clients the worker cares for. High workloads and the demands of the work can lead to isolation from one's own environment. This isolation can result in a negative impact on their social and emotional support. High demands are placed on social service workers and it is essential that they are equipped not only with practical skills but also with the ability to deal with situations that are emotionally challenging. If they are not adequately trained, it is possible that they may have problems when dealing with difficult situations and may also be exposed to high levels of stress (Kopecká, 2011).

In addition to the risk factors already mentioned, there are a number of other factors that increase the risk of burnout and psychological difficulties in social service workers. These include low motivation and job satisfaction, limited opportunities for development and professional growth, conflict and tension in the work environment, lack of self-care and low levels of personal rapport, unclear job requirements and job insecurity. It is extremely important for employers, managers and social service workers to recognize these risk factors and try to prevent and minimize them in order to prevent burnout syndrome and psychological difficulties in workers (Maroon, 2012).

We will not focus here on specific factors that can negatively affect social service workers in their work - the performance of care for social service users living with dementia, where we can include, for example, psychological stress, stress or burnout syndrome. The aim is to highlight support mechanisms that can help to cope with the above mentioned factors.

**Supervision** is undeniably important not only in the professional but also in the personal life of social service workers as well as other actors in the helping professions. It does not matter whether we perceive it as an individual or group tool for support and assistance. The question still remains the introduction of supervision processes into everyday professional reflection, not only in social work, and the realization of managers that it is an adequate tool that can ensure the quality of social services and the professionalism of workers, which is always mentioned.

Mahdalová (2018) defines the most important ideas of supervision:

- increasing the value of social work for clients and increasing the professionalisation of care processes;
- professional support for staff using supervision with regard to their competence development;
- supervision is to help increase one's own possibilities and abilities;
- The supervisor should provide the basic conditions of supervision: warmth, respect, genuineness, empathy and understanding;
- every professional needs supervision;
- if the client's well-being is at stake, other tasks fall by the wayside.

Úlehla (2005) views supervision in the context of social work as an asset that is not only beneficial to organizations but also to the workers themselves, not only social workers but also social service workers and other managerial actors. It also helps to clarify the mission of the workplace and the organization, to prevent overwork, to prevent burnout syndrome, and to help effectively manage feelings of powerlessness and guilt. It then also improves the services offered to clients and the reputation of the organisation.

The view of the importance of supervision and its perception or necessary place in the environment of helping professions in particular, but also specifically in social services can be supported by appropriate research.

**In Social Services** - Webb, Wilkins, & Martin (2022) aimed to explore how decisions are made during supervision of work with children and families, within a child welfare agency in England. The main aim of the study was to identify the various factors that contribute to decision making in this context, including the role of supervision, the influence of organisational culture and the impact of individual factors. Secondary aims of the study included exploring the decision-making process, identifying factors that influence decision-making and exploring the implications of these findings for practice. The authors conducted a qualitative study using semi-structured interviews with social workers and supervisors working in the field of child and family work. Data were analysed using thematic analysis, which involved identifying and interpreting patterns in the data. Specific research outcomes include describing the decision-making process in supervising work with children and families, identifying factors that influence decision-making, and exploring the implications of these findings for practice. The study found that decision-making in supervision of work with children and families is influenced by a variety of factors, including the nature of the case, the expertise of the social worker, and organizational culture. The authors conclude that understanding these factors is key to effective decision-making in this context.

Williams (2022) focuses on exploring the role of attachment theory in the emotional and psychosocial context of social work supervision. The main aim of the study was to explore how attachment theory can inform social work supervision practice, particularly with regard to the emotional and psychological well-being of social workers. The sub-objectives of the study explored applications of attachment theory in social work supervision, identifying ways in which attachment theory can inform supervision practice, and examining the implications of these findings for social work practice. The author used a literature review methodology to explore the role of attachment theory in social work supervision. A wide range of literature, including theoretical and empirical studies, was reviewed to identify key themes and concepts related to attachment theory and social work supervision. Specific outcomes of the research include exploring the relevance of attachment theory in social work supervision, identifying ways in which attachment theory can be applied to inform practice and exploring the implications of these findings for social work practice. The study found that attachment theory provides a useful framework for understanding the emotional and psychosocial needs of social workers in supervision and can inform the development of more supportive and effective supervision practices. The author concludes that understanding attachment theory is essential for social work supervisors to create a safe environment for social workers in supervision, promote their emotional well-being, and enable them to provide better quality care to clients.

In health care - Kilminster and Jolly (2000) focused their scholarly research on clinical supervision, which plays a vital role in postgraduate and, to some extent, undergraduate medical education. However, it is probably the least researched, discussed and developed aspect of clinical education.

The main aim of the study was to identify the various factors that contribute to effective supervision in the clinical setting. The sub-objectives of the study were to identify the different models of supervision used, to evaluate the effectiveness of supervision and to identify the characteristics of effective supervision. The authors conducted a systematic review of the literature related to supervision in clinical settings. The study found that effective supervision is characterized by clear goals, feedback, support, and a focus on learning and development. The authors concluded that effective supervision is essential for developing clinical competence and providing quality care. Feedback is essential and must be clear. It is important that the trainee/worker has some control over and input into the supervision process. Finding sufficient time for reflection can be a challenge. Trainee/worker behaviours and attitudes towards supervision need more investigation; some behaviours are detrimental to patient care and learning. Current supervision practice in medicine has very little empirical or theoretical basis.

Working not only in social services, but also in health care or education brings many challenging or unexpected events. In order not to perceive these professions in a negative way, it is evident that helping professions undoubtedly bring joy, a sense of happiness, success and other positive emotions, but in the context of the focus of this thesis it is necessary to describe and highlight the risks of these professions. Emotional distress is therefore an integral part of the helping professions as is the appeal to the professionalism and erudition of workers. Equally important, then, is the mental balance that helps us to cope with everyday moments with a certain detachment and professional outlook that has a human touch and warmth. However, for this we need diverse sources of support and assistance, whether in the private or professional sphere (Venglářová, 2013).

Mahdalová (2018) highlights the importance of relationships. The relationship between the supervisor and supervisee should be based on trust and openness to achieve good supervision, so that there is an open space for sharing/submitting information, establishing a good contract, working consciously with ethical issues and creating a safe place of support and acceptance.

An important idea is highlighted by Ivzhenko (2020) when he describes a supervisor as a professional in the helping professions who has several years/long term professional experience in direct interaction with people and with team leadership. Thus, the main task is to help workers in their work and also in its reflection. This role of a supervisor is not to be confused with that of a manager.

In view of the above, the most important thing is the ability of the supervisor to have an overview of the given/particular problem and to have an optic of complexity.

### **Professional and personal development**

Vocational education can be defined as „a planned process of modifying attitudes, knowledge and skills through learning to achieve effective performance in a particular activity or set of activities. It aims, from a work perspective, to develop an individual’s capabilities and to meet the present and future workforce needs of the organization“ (Armstrong, 2007, p. 531).

Armstrong (2007) further states the objectives of vocational education, which are mainly to develop the competencies (skills and abilities) of workers. Through this process, their job performance should be improved. It also offered an opportunity to the employees that when human resources are needed in the organization, the existing employees should be primarily approached and thus selection from internal sources should take place. The necessity of saving time and financial costs that are required in adapting and training a new employee. However, it is evident from these specific objec-



tives that only the aspect of benefit to the organisation was used in defining them, which is not an appropriate strategy in the field of social services, as the needs of employees are also expected to be taken into account and preferred. However, the objectives of vocational training are much broader. Therefore, Armstrong (2007) goes on to point out that it is not just about meeting the needs of the organisation, but there is also a meeting of needs at the level of the workers themselves who must be participants in professional learning and development.

Hronik (2007) views the issue of employee development and training as a kind of assessment of the state of harmony and disharmony. It is all based on the identification of learning needs that are implemented in four core areas of the worker, specifically the areas of what the worker CAN - KNOWS - CAN - WANTS. The identification of learning needs thus implemented is to be built on the partnership principle of superior and subordinate, with the aim of finding a common solution.

According to Bednar (2012), all employees in an organisation represent its wealth. It is essential to work with employees, motivate them to develop and encourage them to gain further professional experience, which constitutes their professionalism. Furthermore, Bednar (2012) points out that the training and development of employees in an organization has a great influence, or even dependence, on the quality of the social service offered and provided. Employees are the actors that create the quality of social service. Even the Social Service Quality Standards themselves highlight and work with this idea to define the staffing of a social service, this is specifically standard number 9. a 10.

Quality standard for social services number 9 - *“Personnel and organizational provision of social services”* - The so-called personnel quality standards, or people management systems and processes, are areas that every employer must have thought through, regardless of whether or not they provide social services at all or how many. In the social sector, this issue is all the more challenging because it also takes into account the qualifications of the people who provide the social service. This is highlighted by Sections 109 and 110 of the Social Services Act, which define the activities and qualifications of a social worker, and Sections 115 and 116, which, among other things, define other workers who may perform social services, in particular the position of social services worker. However, other persons, mostly volunteers and trainees, may also cooperate in the provision of social services and their activities are subject to the obligations of the social service provider ... (Act No. 108/2006 Coll., on social services, as amended). In order to ensure the fulfilment of the personal goals of social service clients, it is necessary to have an adequate number of competent staff. Within each job position it is necessary to have a job profile, a list of requirements of the abilities and skills (competences) of the worker who is in this position. The aim is not just to have a defined job description, but expectations in the form of outputs and outcomes with requirements for knowledge, behaviour ... necessary to meet the requirements and expectations of the employer/social service provider.

Quality standard for social services number 10 - *“Professional development of employees”* - another of the so-called personnel standards and concerns the professional development of employees of the service. It instructs the social service provider to deal with the issues of wage/salary valuation of employees, but also the issue of non-financial motivation. It addresses information exchange rules as well as independent expert support. This can be not only a supervisor, but also, for example, a lawyer, a doctor or a clergyman, if the service needs such an expert for its support for various reasons (Veškrnová, Sladká-Ševčíková, 2013). Although social service workers in the context of social worker have different nature of their work, as well as the actual job description, or legislative requirements for the exercise of their profession, they have similar educational obligation in the course of their profession. We can thus speak of professional development.

The aim is to support the idea of professional development, which is based on the mutual cooperation of the employer and the social services worker/employee, where both parties want to work on the development and, for example, specialization for the given target group within the framework of improving the quality of the provided social service. With regard to the focus of our thesis, it is precisely the target group of seniors with dementia, where specialist courses are offered that have a diverse overlap from communication to therapeutic techniques in the context of the target group.

The above idea is described in general terms by Bednář (2012), who describes a variety of options in the field of education, which can be self-directed learning, distance learning, project work, on-the-job training, development of skills and competences that improve the work performed and expand professional competence. Personally, we would also add a process of sharing experiences under the guidance of experts or managers, where sharing „good and bad“ practices is a convenient development technique that does not place demands on the participants of the sessions.

The Professional Union of Social Workers in Social Services conducted a social survey in 2016-2017 (140 respondents), where social workers and social service workers were interviewed on the development and support of lifelong learning. In moha cases, the system of accredited courses or long-term training programmes is successful. This model of lifelong learning provides an extensive range of areas of social work, and in these it is possible to expand one's professional knowledge and skills in a committed way. On the positive side, these courses, seminars and training programmes reflect the current demands of social work development and have the capacity to adapt in terms of content and availability. As a result, staff are able to respond to the demands of the professional and lay public, while being able to respond equally to the demands of the client or their worsening social situation. A properly configured system of lifelong learning can support the client in feeling his or her own professional values and professional self-esteem. At the same time, it can also be said that with the growth and development of social work in the Czech Republic, the continuing education of social workers has successfully managed to configure these systems, even in the context of the requirements of current events and needs (Tajanovská, 2018).

Thanks to the systematic process of professional training and development of social service workers, it is also possible to find incentives for this process not only from the employees themselves, but also from the clients themselves. The training process, with regard to practicality and real applicability, should be built on a degree of interactivity and practicality. As in other areas, the motivation of social service workers plays a major aspect.

According to Rezlerová (2008, p. 49), an essential fact that affects the whole process of professional education and development is the awareness of social service workers that without further education it is impossible to keep in touch with technical development, but also with social development. “Everyone should take responsibility for their own professional growth. Without it, its added value and at the same time its “price” on the labour market will decrease.”

Without professional training not only of social service workers, it would not be possible to develop them, to increase their quality and, last but not least, to increase the social recognition of social service workers. Further training can help to develop the above-mentioned personal prerequisites for the profession. It also contributes to finding a certain personal balance and defining boundaries - in relation to clients and in relation to the employer (Stárek, Klugerová, & Víšek, 2023).

A social worker should have a wide range of competencies and qualities that enable them to perform their work effectively and successfully. Patience and empathy are indispensable character

qualities. Patience and empathy is a key tool in being able to empathise with a person suffering from Alzheimer's disease or other types of dementia, as these clients are more difficult to express their needs and requirements. The social worker must be able to listen to these clients in order to provide adequate support and assistance (Holmerová, Jarolímová, & Suchá, 2009).

Another indispensable competence is knowledge of communication techniques. Clients who suffer from one of the types of dementia experience gradual changes in their ability to use verbal expressions. Along with this, these clients also lose the ability to understand the meaning and sense of partial words and in the last stage they stop communicating altogether. It is therefore essential for the social worker to be able to read what the client is trying to communicate, whether verbally, through facial expressions or body movements (Koběřská, 2003).

The concept of education aims to improve the quality of services provided. The acquired knowledge can then be implemented in everyday practice. Direct care workers who care for clients with Alzheimer's disease or other types of dementia can take training courses in the context of the target group. Courses can focus on understanding the progression of Alzheimer's disease, communication in the different stages of the disease or non-verbal techniques, for example.

Organisational culture is one of the key components influencing the functioning of any organisation, including those operating in the field of social work. This concept encompasses the set of values, normative beliefs, traditions and practices that determine the way an organisation functions and how its members work together. Organizational culture provides the foundation upon which other processes are built and determines what will be done and how it will be done in a given organization (Schein, 2010).

A strong organizational culture is the foundation for the development of a "learning organization" that supports individuals in their ability to learn and adapt to change. The concept of a learning organisation, as described by Senge (2006), involves processes whereby employees actively take responsibility for their own learning and development. This approach enables individuals to not only learn new skills and knowledge, but also to critically reflect on their practice and seek new solutions. It is therefore essential to focus attention on the learning processes in an organisation that take place on a day-to-day basis and have the potential to significantly impact on work effectiveness.

The culture of an organisation significantly influences the collective identity of employees. Castells (2011) defines collective identity as a group of individuals who share a common goal and declare their self-definition based on what they do and what they want to be. Similarly, Frost (2007) describes collective identity as shared hopes and dreams shaped by shared experiences and history. This shared identity involves not only reflection on the self but also a desire to create values that contribute to the development of the organization. In the context of social work, Musil et al. (2019) highlight that social workers often share common ideas and values that are either internally accepted or acknowledged as a tool to achieve organizational goals. This process creates a framework for coordinating and motivating employee behaviour.

Leading the constitution of an organizational culture is primarily the responsibility of management. Top managers have a key role in promoting and reinforcing the values that form the basis of organizational culture. Their role involves the clear communication of these values, their emphasis and application in daily practice (Kotter, 1996). Leadership by example and regular communication with employees are essential to creating a supportive work environment that fosters both personal and professional development.

Creating a learning organisation culture in social work can contribute to fostering trust and openness among staff, which has a direct impact on the quality of services provided. At the same time, it should be taken into account that informal learning, which takes place during the daily interaction between team members, plays an important role. It is this form of learning that can promote the sharing of knowledge and skills that would otherwise go unused.

In conclusion, organizational culture and learning organization culture are inextricably linked to the effectiveness and quality of social work services. A key factor for success is the active involvement of all organizational participants in the learning process and the sharing of values that support long-term development. It is essential that the leadership of the organisation pays attention not only to formal learning but also to creating an environment that encourages open dialogue, collaboration and reflection.

### **Recommendations for practice**

Based on the content of the above text, we recommend the following practical measures to complement the text to make it useful for both academic and practitioner audiences:

**1. Introduction of regular supervision:** is a key measure to support social workers who are faced with emotionally and physically demanding situations on a daily basis. Supervision is not only a tool for reflecting on work experiences, but also a space for sharing problems, finding new solutions and strengthening collegiality among staff. Individual supervision allows workers to focus on specific cases they encounter during their practice and to reflect on their actions and attitudes. In this process, the supervisor acts as a support, providing feedback, suggesting possible solutions and motivating further professional growth. Group supervision then creates a platform for sharing experiences between team members, fostering mutual trust and providing reassurance that they are not alone in their problems. The supervision process should be led by a qualified supervisor who has expertise and skills in supervision and counselling. It is also important to create a safe environment where workers can talk openly about their problems while finding effective ways to manage emotional stress. The organisation should regularly evaluate the effectiveness of supervision and ensure its continuity in order to make a long-term contribution to improving the quality of service delivery. Incorporating supervision processes into routine practice can significantly reduce the risk of burn-out and increase staff motivation. It strengthens their ability to cope with challenging situations and at the same time supports their professional self-reflection. Therefore, the introduction of regular supervision is not only a prevention of psychological exhaustion, but also a tool for improving the overall atmosphere in the workplace.

**2. Tailor-made training programmes:** are an essential element for strengthening the expertise of social service workers and ensuring the quality of care provided. These programmes should be designed to meet the specific needs of staff and clients. One of the key areas of training is stress management techniques, which help workers to reduce psychological stress and improve their ability to respond effectively to crisis situations. Courses focusing on communication with clients with dementia provide practical tools to improve verbal and non-verbal interaction, especially during the difficult stages of their illness. Workshops on crisis intervention are also an important part of the course, teaching how to manage unexpected situations and provide adequate support to clients and their families. Training programmes should be interactive and include practical scenarios that allow staff to apply the knowledge they have gained in real-life situations. It is also important to create an environment for sharing good practice where staff can share their experiences with each other



and seek inspiration to improve their practice. The organisation should regularly assess the needs of its workforce and adapt training activities to current challenges. Involving subject matter experts, including psychologists, therapists and specialist trainers, can contribute to the quality of training courses. The availability of these programmes is also an important aspect, so that as many employees as possible can participate in training without overburdening their working time. Regular participation in training programmes not only increases the professional competence of staff, but also their confidence and motivation. This approach promotes professional development and contributes to building a culture of continuous learning within the organisation. The end result is not only a happier workforce, but also a higher quality of care provided to clients.

**3. Supporting the mental health of:** social service workers is key to ensuring their long-term work capability and overall satisfaction. Employers should create a system that allows employees easy access to professional counselling, psychologists or therapists. This system should include not only regularly available services but also crisis support for situations where workers face acute stress or emotional exhaustion. The psychological strain of working with clients on a daily basis often leads to burnout syndrome, which can negatively affect both the health of workers and the quality of care provided. The availability of professional help is particularly crucial in settings where workers face challenging interactions with clients with dementia or other complex diagnoses. In addition to individual therapy sessions, it is advisable to introduce group sessions aimed at sharing experiences and mutual support. These meetings can foster collegiality and create a space for open discussion about challenging situations that staff face. Mental health promotion should be integrated into the organisational culture so that employees see mental health care as a natural part of their work. In addition to professional support, it is important to organise workshops on stress management techniques and mindfulness to help workers cope better with everyday challenges. Investing in the mental health of employees will translate into higher productivity, lower absenteeism rates and higher employee satisfaction in the long term.

**4. Flexible working conditions:** are a necessary step towards creating a healthy working environment that meets the individual needs of social service workers. Shorter shifts can significantly reduce the physical and mental strain on workers, which is particularly crucial in demanding professions such as dementia care. Shorter working hours allow staff to better balance work and personal life, which contributes to their overall satisfaction and motivation. Another element of flexibility is the possibility of individual shift planning. This means that employees can better adapt their working hours to their personal needs, such as caring for their family or studying. These measures not only improve work morale but also reduce the risk of absenteeism and turnover. Ensuring sufficient staffing is also a key aspect of flexible working arrangements. Adequate staffing allows the workload to be spread out and ensures that each employee has sufficient time and energy to perform their tasks. This is particularly important in environments where staff face high stress and challenging client situations. Introducing flexible working arrangements requires changes in organisational management, including rethinking existing processes for shift planning and communication with staff. However, investing in these changes will pay off in the long run as they contribute to greater efficiency, employee satisfaction and quality of service.

**5. Technological support:** the introduction of modern aids and technologies into the social services environment is a key step in ensuring more effective and safer care for clients, especially those with limited mobility or specific needs. Working in social services is often physically demanding and can have a long-term negative impact on workers' health, which modern technology can

significantly minimise. One of the most important areas of technological support is the introduction of aids for handling clients. Height-adjustable electric beds, ceiling lifting systems and mobile hoists greatly facilitate the movement of clients and minimise the risk of injury to workers. These aids not only improve the physical safety of staff but also increase the comfort of clients, who can be moved with greater dignity and care. Another example is the use of anti-kneeling mattresses, which help prevent health complications for clients with limited mobility. However, technology is not limited to physical care. Modern communication systems enable more effective team coordination and rapid response to crisis situations. For example, the use of electronic shift scheduling and care recording systems simplifies administrative tasks and allows staff to focus more on the actual care of clients. In addition, mobile apps can be deployed to monitor clients' health status or smart bracelets that monitor vital signs, improving the prevention of health complications. Investing in technological support also has a significant impact on the long-term sustainability of the social services workforce. Less physically demanding work contributes to lower staff turnover and makes the sector more attractive to new workers. Organisations should therefore seek to regularly upgrade their equipment and train staff in its use. Technological support not only improves working conditions, but also contributes to higher quality and efficiency of service delivery, which is key to ensuring decent care for clients.

**6. Promoting teamwork:** is one of the most effective tools for improving the working environment in social services. Working in this sector is often emotionally and physically demanding, which highlights the need for a strong and cohesive team that can face daily challenges together. Regular team meetings play a key role in this respect, providing a platform for open communication, sharing of experiences and mutual support. Team meetings allow staff to discuss the challenging situations they face and to find common solutions. These meetings can be structured to include both a reflective part aimed at evaluating current practice and a creative part where employees can suggest innovations and improvements to working conditions. Sharing best practices that can inspire other team members is also an important element. The promotion of teamwork should be systematic and include regular training sessions aimed at developing soft skills such as effective communication, conflict resolution and trust building. These skills are key to creating a harmonious working environment and preventing potential misunderstandings or disputes. It is also advisable to introduce team-building activities that strengthen relationships between team members and contribute to a better atmosphere in the workplace. Transparent communication from the organisation's management is also an important part of promoting teamwork. Managers should regularly inform employees about strategic goals, planned changes and other key issues that affect their work. Open dialogue between management and employees builds trust and motivation. Fostering teamwork has a direct impact on the quality of service delivery. A cohesive team is better able to respond to clients' needs, coordinate activities and deliver care at a higher level. Therefore, investing in building team spirit pays off in the long run not only for staff, but especially for clients who benefit from higher quality and more efficient care.

**Rewarding staff:** creating a system of recognition and rewards for a job well done is key to the motivation and long-term satisfaction of staff in social services. Working in this sector is often physically and mentally demanding, so it is important that employers actively recognise the commitment and contribution of individual workers. Recognition is not just a financial reward, but includes a wide range of measures that can improve the overall quality of working life. Financial benefits, such as special bonuses, pay increases or the provision of training allowances, are an effective way of

motivating employees and showing them that their work is valued. Educational allowances can be used for professional development, such as training courses or certifications, which also improves the quality of service provided. Another example is the possibility of using financial rewards to cover personal expenses such as health care or transport to work. Non-financial benefits play an equally important role. These include recognition in the form of public praise, awards or the possibility of extra time off. Such actions promote a positive atmosphere in the workplace and increase employee loyalty. Employers can also introduce programmes aimed at promoting work-life balance, such as flexible working arrangements or support for sports and leisure activities. The reward system should be transparent and fair so that employees are aware of the criteria by which they are rewarded. It should also be flexible enough to respond to individual needs and preferences. Regular communication about staff achievements and contributions creates an environment where staff feel valued and motivated to develop. Recognition of employees is not only a tool for motivation, but also a way to increase their professional self-esteem and overall satisfaction.

**Establish a workload monitoring system:** the establishment of a physical and mental workload monitoring system is essential for the early identification of problems and their effective resolution. Working in social services involves high demands on the physical fitness and mental resilience of workers. Without regular workload assessments, there is a risk of overwork, burnout or even serious health complications. The monitoring system should include regular questionnaires and assessments focusing on physical health, mental well-being and working conditions. These tools provide a comprehensive overview of the workplace situation and identify areas that need immediate attention. The system should also include regular discussions between employees and their supervisors where problems can be openly discussed. Technology solutions such as digital applications or online platforms can facilitate this process. For example, health monitoring apps can offer workers recommendations based on their current condition and highlight the need for rest or consultation with a specialist. This data can be further used to optimise work schedules and shifts to avoid overworking employees. Follow-up intervention based on the findings is also an important aspect. If the assessment shows that employees are facing excessive workload, the organisation should immediately take measures such as adjusting working hours, strengthening the team or offering professional support. Regular training and workshops on stress management techniques can be another effective tool for reducing psychological strain. Implementing a stress monitoring system contributes to the long-term sustainability of the working environment and increases employee satisfaction. A transparent approach to stress assessment also builds trust between employees and management. This system is not only a prevention tool, but also a means of improving the efficiency and quality of service delivery, which is key to the long-term success of the organisation.

## CONCLUSION

The issue of work stress and excessive workload of social service workers is a major challenge for maintaining the quality of care for clients with dementia. Demographic changes and the growing number of seniors with cognitive impairments are placing increasing demands on social workers, which requires the implementation of systemic measures to support their mental and physical health. Organisations have a key role to play, as they are responsible not only for the quality of client care but also for creating a supportive working environment.

Regular supervision, tailored training programmes and access to professional counselling are effective tools for managing the burden. The introduction of modern technology and tools can reduce the physical demands of work, while flexible working conditions can contribute to a better work-life balance. Strengthening collegiality and teamwork is also key, creating space for sharing experiences and mutual support.

In conclusion, it is clear that without targeted support for staff, it is not possible to provide long-term sustainable care for clients. It is imperative that organisations approach problems systematically and with an emphasis on burnout prevention and professional skills development. Improving working conditions will not only improve the quality of services provided, but also promote staff satisfaction and motivation, which is a key factor in the success of social services.

### BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Act No. 108/2006 Coll., on social services, as amended. *In: Sbírka zákonů ČR.*
- Armstrong, M. (2007). Řízení lidských zdrojů: nejnovější trendy a postupy/Human resource management: latest trends and practices. Praha: Grada Publishing a.s..
- Bačová, V. (2024). Developing a safe learning environment in primary-level innovative schools in the Czech Republic. *Education 3-13 International Journal of Primary, Elementary and Early Years Education*, 1–11. doi: [10.1080/03004279.2024.2410482](https://doi.org/10.1080/03004279.2024.2410482)
- Bednář, M. (2012). *Kvalita v sociálních službách/Quality in social services*. Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci.
- Castells, M. (2011). *The Power of Identity*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Daněk, A., & Klugerová, J. (2023). Inclusive education as an instrument for preventing social exclusion. *AD ALTA: Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, 13(02), 142-144. doi: 10.33543/1302
- Eurostat. (2023). *Demography of Europe – 2023 edition*. Available from: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/interactive-publications/demography-2023>
- Frost, P. J. (2007). *Reflections on Organizational Culture and Collective Identity*. Sage Publications.
- Holmerová, I., Horecký, J., & Hanuš, P. (2016). *Specifika systému poskytování péče o osoby s demencí a jinými specifickými potřebami v České republice a ve Švýcarsku/Specifics of the care provision system for persons with dementia and other specific needs in the Czech Republic and Switzerland..* Tábor: Asociace poskytovatelů sociálních služeb České republiky.
- Holmerová, I., Jarolímová, E., & Suchá, J. (2009). *Péče o pacienty s kognitivní poruchou/Care of patients with cognitive impairment*. Praha: Česká alzheimerovská společnost.
- Horecký, J. (2020). Kolik lidí pracuje v sociálních službách? *Sociální služby*, XXII/2020, 25. ISSN 1803-7348.
- Hroník, F. (2007). *Rozvoj a vzdělávání pracovníků/Development and training of workers*. Praha: Grada Publishing a.s..
- Ivzhenko, I. (2020). Supervision as a tool for preventing emotional burnout of social workers. *Zeszyty Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Technicznej w Katowicach*, 12, 91-98. ISSN 2082-7016.
- Jurovský, A. (1980). *Osobnost člověka při práci*. Bratislava: Práca.
- Kilminster, S. M., Jolly B. C. (2000). Effective supervision in clinical practice settings: a literature review. *Med Educ.*, 34(10),827-840. doi: [10.1046/j.1365-2923.2000.00758.x](https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2923.2000.00758.x)



- Koběřská, P. et al. (2003). *Společnou cestou: jak mohou pečovatelé komunikovat s lidmi trpícími demencí/ A shared journey: how carers can communicate with people with dementia*. Praha: Portál.
- Kopecká, I. (2011). *Psychologie: učebnice pro obor sociální činnost/ Psychology: a textbook for the field of social work*. Praha: Grada Publishing a.s..
- Kotter, J. P. (1996). *Leading Change*. Harvard Business Review Press.
- Laan van der, G. (1998). *Otázky legitimity sociální práce*. Ostrava: nakladatelství Albert Boskovic.
- Mahdalová, J. (2018). *Supervize v sociální práci/ Supervision in social work*. Bakalářská práce. Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci.
- Maroon, I. (2012). *Syndrom vyhoření u sociálních pracovníků: teorie, praxe, kazuistiky/ Burnout syndrome among social workers: theory, practice, case studies*. Praha: Portál.
- Musil, L., et al. (2019). *Sociální práce a kolektivní představy*. Portál.
- Registr poskytovatelů sociálních služeb. *Registr poskytovatelů sociálních služeb – osobní asistence*. Available from: [http://iregistr.mpsv.cz/socreg/hledani\\_sluzby.do?sd=domovy+se+zvl%C3%A1%C5%A1tn%C3%ADm+re%C5%BEimem&zak=&zaok=&SUBSESSION\\_ID=1674393807643\\_1](http://iregistr.mpsv.cz/socreg/hledani_sluzby.do?sd=domovy+se+zvl%C3%A1%C5%A1tn%C3%ADm+re%C5%BEimem&zak=&zaok=&SUBSESSION_ID=1674393807643_1)
- Rezlerová, J. (2008). Učíme se jeden od druhého. *Moderní řízení*, 2, 49. ISSN 0026-87.
- Senge, P. M. (2006). *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. Doubleday.
- Schein, E. H. (2010). *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Stárek, L., Klugerová, J., & Víšek, J. (2023). The influence of work placement in the context of pregraduate preparation of students from the department of special-needs pedagogy. *Conhecimento & Diversidade* 15 (37), s. 93-117. doi: [10.18316/rcd.v15i37.10934](https://doi.org/10.18316/rcd.v15i37.10934)
- Statista. (2023). *Share of elderly population in Europe by country*. Available from: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1105835/share-of-elderly-population-in-europe-by-country/>
- Tajanovská, A. (2018). Rozvoj a podpora celoživotního vzdělávání sociálních pracovníků optikou profesního svazu sociálních pracovníků v sociálních službách. *Fórum sociální práce*, 1, 63-70. ISSN 2336-6664.
- Úlehla, I. (2005). *Umění pomáhat: učebnice metod sociální praxe*. Praha: Slon (Sociologické nakladatelství).
- Venglářová, M. (2013). *Supervize v ošetrovatelské praxi*. Praha: Grada Publishing a.s..
- Veškrnová, B., & Sladká-Ševčíková, J. (2013) *Příručka dobré praxe v oblasti standardů kvality sociálních služeb/ Handbook of good practice in the area of social service quality standards*. Brno: Jihomoravský kraj.
- Webb, J., Wilkins, D., & Martin, R. (2022). (How) are decisions made in child and family social work supervisions? *Qualitative Social Work*, 21(6), 1252–1273. doi: [10.1177/14733250221124209](https://doi.org/10.1177/14733250221124209)
- Wija, P., Bareš, P., & Žofka, J. (2019). *Analýza sociálních a zdravotních služeb dlouhodobé péče v České republice/ Analysis of long-term care social and health services in the Czech Republic*. Praha: Institut pro sociální politiku a výzkum.
- Williams, J. (2022). Supervision as a secure base: the role of attachment theory within the emotional and psycho-social landscape of social work supervision. *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 15(1). doi: [10.1080/02650533.2022.2089639](https://doi.org/10.1080/02650533.2022.2089639)