PAULINA FORMA, ANNA KANABROCKA, KATARZYNA GOŁĘBIOWSKA

Streetworking – Support and Intervention Stage[1]

Streetworking – etap wsparcia i interwencji

Introduction

The support and intervention stage constitutes a significant phase in the work of a streetworker, determining the effectiveness of social assistance actions in the local community. Streetworking, as a form of social work, not only engages in diagnosing social problems but also in organizing specific supportive and interventionist actions aimed at assisting individuals and communities in coping with the challenges of everyday life. In this article, we will focus on the role, significance, and practices associated with the support and intervention stage in streetworker's work, analyzing both individual and group or community actions that are crucial for achieving social goals effectively. By understanding the essence of this stage and examining various aspects of its implementation, we will be able to better appreciate the role of streetworking in creating positive social changes and supporting individuals in need of assistance.

Streetworking – Essence and Mission

The essence of streetworking and its innovativeness compared to commonly used methods of social work are subjects of discussion among specialists. The mission of streetworking, as presented in numerous studies, is to create a bridge between homeless individuals and soci-

ety, allowing them to restore their ability to fulfill social roles and rebuild their mental, social, and material well-being by reaching out to homeless individuals in non-residential areas and working with them utilizing the resources and potential of the local community, aiming towards positive changes, understood as a willingness to change their way of life (Dominelli 2002, pp. 33–57).

Streetworkers use three traditional methods of social work in their daily work: individual case work, group work, and community organization. What constitutes a clear difference between street work and traditional social work in Polish reality is mainly the level of formalization and excessive bureaucracy, which burden social workers. The latter are often perceived by both clients and society as bureaucrats, which may affect the relationship between them and individuals in need of support (Payne 2014, pp. 89–103).

Additionally, an important aspect is that in Poland, legal regulations require the possession of appropriate vocational education for individuals wishing to work as social workers. In the case of streetworkers, the situation is different, as there is no requirement for specific vocational training according to legal regulations to perform their duties. During recruitment for the position of streetworker or when accepting volunteers, the key role is played primarily by the personality predispositions of the candidates and their psychosocial abilities (Banks 2012, pp. 112–135).

In this way, streetworking constitutes a flexible form of support, more tailored to the individual needs of the homeless and those in need. The tasks of streetworkers focus on identifying the needs of individuals where they are, building relationships with them, and proposing various forms of support. The key element in their work is the quality of the relationships built with individuals in need, rather than immediately achieving specific results. Apart from situations requiring immediate intervention, where the streetworker must act immediately to save the life or health of an individual, in regular contacts with beneficiaries, the priority is to build trust and gain knowledge about them so that over time they themselves want to share their experiences and needs (Healy 2014, pp. 57–76).

These actions are aimed at facilitating the establishment of deeper bonds and better understanding of the situations and needs of the supported individuals. In streetworker's work, it is essential not only to provide material support but also emotional engagement and building trust, which allows for more effective support of individuals in the long term. Streetworkers make an effort to understand the situation and needs of the individuals they work with, which requires time and patience (Fook 2002, pp. 91–114).

In addition to responding to sudden crisis situations, the streetworking team also seeks to develop lasting relationships with the local community, enabling a better understanding of the context of the lives of those in need of help and identifying potential sources of support. Thanks to this, streetworkers can adjust their actions to the specific situation and needs of individuals, increasing the effectiveness of their interventions and assistance. One of the important skills of a streetworker, analogous to that of a social worker, is the ability to actively listen and observe the person they are talking to, their behaviors, and their surroundings (Thompson 2009, pp. 45–67).

In the assistance actions carried out „on the street," particular emphasis is placed on respecting the dignity of the supported individual, their right to self-determination, and the choice of forms of assistance they wish to accept. This respect is maintained even if the person refuses to accept assistance in any form. In such situations, their decision should be respected (unless their life is in danger), and only assistance should be offered again. It is important for the streetworker, when interacting with individuals in need of support, to be able to focus on listening to their needs, observing their behaviors, and understanding the context in which they find themselves. The appropriate approach to these individuals also includes respect for their autonomy and freedom of choice, even if they do not agree to accept assistance at that moment. In such cases, it is crucial for the streetworker to respect their decisions while maintaining empathy and readiness to offer assistance again in the future (Adams, Dominelli, Payne 2009, pp. 77–93).

Organizing Supportive Actions

Organizing supportive actions by streetworkers is a key element of their work, aiming to effectively support individuals in need and improve the social situation in the local community. This part of the work includes both individual actions, which are directly targeted at specific individuals, and group or community actions that involve a broader group of beneficiaries. Streetworkers conduct needs and situation analysis for specific individuals in order to offer them personalized support. These actions include problem identification, goal setting, and action planning tailored to the specific situation (Coulshed, Orme 2012, pp. 41–63).

Streetworkers provide a safe and confidential space for beneficiaries where they can openly discuss their difficulties and concerns. Through individual

meetings and therapy, streetworkers support individuals in coping with stress, emotional issues, or life difficulties. They provide practical assistance in planning personal and professional lives of beneficiaries. They assist in developing development strategies, identifying educational or training opportunities, as well as supporting in job search and developing skills needed in the job market (Healy 2014, pp. 89–104).

Streetworkers organize group meetings, workshops, and trainings aimed at a wider group of beneficiaries. These actions aim to promote cooperation, exchange of experiences, and building support among participants. They engage in organizing social initiatives aimed at improving living conditions in the local community. These may include educational campaigns, charity events, or integration projects involving the local community in solving specific social problems. Through a diverse approach to organizing supportive actions, streetworkers become an integral part of the local community, providing support where it is most needed and mobilizing the community to act for the common good (Fook 2002, pp. 117–140).

Individual Support

Individual support is a key element of streetworker's work, enabling targeted and personalized support for individuals in need of assistance in the local environment. This form of support includes a wide range of activities aimed at improving the life, emotional, and social situation of specific individuals. Streetworkers conduct individual meetings with individuals in need of support, during which they can freely express their concerns, problems, and life goals. Therapeutic sessions allow for a deeper understanding of the beneficiary's situation and the development of personalized support strategies (Payne 2014, pp. 115–137).

Streetworkers provide counseling on personal and professional development, supporting individuals in planning their life paths, identifying goals, and taking steps towards achieving them. Vocational counseling also includes assistance in job search, CV writing, or preparing for job interviews. They engage in actively solving current problems and difficulties faced by beneficiaries. These may include housing, health, financial, or interpersonal relationship problems. Through cooperation and setting specific goals, streetworkers help individuals find effective solutions and overcome obstacles on the path to independence and better social functioning (Banks 2012, pp. 144–168).

Group Actions

Group actions are a key element of streetworker's work, enabling support for a wider group of people and promoting social integration and mutual solidarity in the local community. Within these activities, streetworkers organize various meetings and activities aimed at supporting personal development, building relationships, and promoting healthy social behaviors. They organize workshops where participants can develop practical skills necessary for everyday life. These may include workshops on financial management, healthy lifestyle, interpersonal communication, or coping with crisis situations. They create support groups that allow beneficiaries to share their experiences, mutual support, and gain new social skills. Such groups may be aimed at people struggling with similar issues, such as addictions, domestic violence, or health problems (Dominelli 2002, pp. 143–167).

Streetworkers organize trainings aimed at developing interpersonal and communication skills of participants. These may include workshops on building relationships, dealing with conflicts, assertiveness, or empathy. Such trainings support personal development and improve the quality of interpersonal relationships. Group actions conducted by streetworkers are essential for building a local community based on mutual support and solidarity. By organizing various group activities, streetworkers create space for personal development and social integration, contributing to improving the quality of life and reducing social exclusion (Healy 2014, pp. 105–129).

Community Interventions

Community interventions are a crucial element of streetworker's work aimed at mobilizing the local community and promoting social changes on a broader scale. By organizing various social initiatives, streetworkers engage the local community in actions aimed at improving living conditions, raising social awareness, and supporting individuals in need. They organize educational campaigns aimed at increasing social awareness about specific social or health issues. These may include campaigns addressing domestic violence prevention, addiction prevention, promotion of healthy lifestyles, or sexual education. Through organizing lectures, meetings, or distributing educational materials, streetworkers support the process of informing the local community and promoting positive behaviors (Thompson 2009, pp. 77–98).

Streetworkers engage the local community in organizing charity events aimed at raising funds or donations for individuals in need. These may include food drives, clothing drives, or providing essential items for the homeless, families in financial difficulty, or children growing up in challenging conditions. By mobilizing the community to help and support those in need, streetworkers create a space for building social bonds and active involvement in helping others. They also work on building social engagement by mobilizing the local community to actively participate in social life and take initiatives for the common good. These may include various social projects, meetings, or activities aimed at building interpersonal relationships and strengthening community bonds. Through cooperation with local organizations, institutions, and residents, streetworkers create conditions for the development of the local community and its potential for self-organization and addressing social issues (Adams, Dominelli, Payne 2009, pp. 157–183).

Community interventions conducted by streetworkers are essential for building a civil society based on solidarity, mutual support, and active social participation. By organizing various social initiatives, streetworkers support the process of building a local community based on the values of cooperation, understanding, and mutual assistance (Coulshed, Orme 2012, pp. 124–145).

Collaboration with Local Institutions

Collaboration with local institutions is a key element of streetworker's work, enabling effective resolution of social issues and providing support to individuals in need. This form of cooperation allows for the utilization of resources and expertise of various institutions to achieve better results and promotes the building of partnership networks in the local environment. Streetworkers collaborate with local social assistance facilities such as social assistance centers, shelters, or homeless shelters. This collaboration allows for the exchange of information about individuals in need of support and coordinated efforts to provide them with comprehensive assistance (Fook 2002, pp. 141–160).

They also engage in cooperation with local government bodies such as city councils, police, or courts. This collaboration enables streetworkers to access specialized services and resources that may be helpful in addressing specific social issues. Moreover, by collaborating with public administration bodies, streetworkers can influence decision-making and shaping social policy for the benefit of those in need. They collaborate with local non-governmental orga-

nizations (NGOs) such as foundations, associations, or volunteer groups. This collaboration allows for the utilization of various competencies and resources of NGOs to support individuals in need and implement joint social projects. Additionally, integration with local NGOs enables streetworkers to access specialized knowledge and experience and promotes the building of partnerships for social development (Dominelli 2002, pp. 198–218).

Collaboration with local institutions is a key element of effective streetworker's work, enabling the efficient use of resources and competencies of various entities for the common social good. By building partnerships and collaborating with local institutions, streetworkers can more effectively respond to the needs of individuals in need and promote positive social changes in the local environment (Adams, Dominelli, Payne 2009, pp. 184–202).

Tools and Techniques of Intervention

Interpersonal communication is the foundation of effective streetworker's work, enabling the building of trust, establishing relationships, and providing support to individuals in need. Active listening is the skill of focusing attention on the speaker, understanding their emotions and needs, and expressing empathy. Streetworkers actively listen, responding to what the speaker says by validating their experiences and feelings. This technique allows for the building of trust and a deeper understanding of the beneficiary's situation (Banks 2012, pp. 177–198).

Empathetic support involves expressing understanding, acceptance, and support for the experiences and feelings of the speaker. Streetworkers show empathy by identifying with the emotions and experiences of the beneficiary, fostering bonds and a sense of understanding. The use of interpersonal communication techniques enables streetworkers to effectively build relationships and provide support to individuals in need. Through active listening, empathetic support, and setting boundaries, streetworkers create a space for mutual understanding and collaboration, fostering social and personal development for beneficiaries (Healy 2014, pp. 144–162).

Setting boundaries is a significant intervention technique used by streetworkers in their work with individuals in need of support. It involves clearly expressing one's needs, views, and boundaries in a way that respects the other person. Setting boundaries is important for both the streetworker and the beneficiary, as it allows for maintaining healthy relationships and ensuring

the safety and comfort of both parties. Streetworkers set boundaries in the following areas: defining the time that a streetworker can dedicate to meetings and support for the beneficiary allows for effective planning of actions and avoiding excessive burden. Protection of one's own mental health: Streetworkers take care of their mental and emotional health by setting boundaries regarding situations that may lead to excessive stress or exhaustion. Proper self-care is crucial for maintaining the ability to provide support (Thompson 2009, pp. 155–173).

Respecting the beneficiary's privacy and maintaining confidentiality of information are fundamental principles of streetworker's work. Setting boundaries against crossing privacy boundaries allows for maintaining trust and respect in the relationship. Streetworkers define the scope of assistance provided, adjusting it to their capabilities and competencies. Clearly defining boundaries helps to avoid conflicts and confusion in the relationship with the beneficiary. Setting boundaries requires streetworkers to have skills in assertive communication and awareness of their own needs and boundaries. It is an important tool for maintaining healthy relationships with the beneficiary and ensuring effective work and one's own well-being. Through consistent and clear expression of boundaries, streetworkers can build relationships based on respect, trust, and mutual cooperation, facilitating effective support for individuals in need (Coulshed, Orme 2012, pp. 178–197).

Emotional and psychosocial support is a key element of streetworker's work, enabling the building of trust, developing coping skills, and promoting mental health. Building trust is a process in which streetworkers gradually build a relationship based on mutual trust and respect. Through consistent and honest actions, streetworkers strengthen the trust of beneficiaries, allowing for open sharing of problems and needs. Streetworkers employ creative problem-solving approaches that enable beneficiaries to look at their situations from a new perspective and find innovative solutions. Through collaboration with beneficiaries, streetworkers assist in identifying alternative strategies and actions that can contribute to problem resolution (Payne 2014, pp. 194–217).

Creating a safe space involves creating conditions conducive to open communication, acceptance, and emotional support. Streetworkers strive to create an atmosphere free from judgment and criticism, where beneficiaries can feel comfortable and safe sharing their experiences and feelings. Utilizing tools and techniques of intervention in the area of emotional and psychosocial support enables streetworkers to effectively support individuals in need and promote their mental and social well-being. Through building trust, employing creative

problem-solving approaches, and creating a safe space, streetworkers create conditions for personal and social development of beneficiaries, supporting them in the process of adaptation and coping with life difficulties (Banks 2012, pp. 207–226).

Case Studies

Life Skills Workshops for Young Unemployed Individuals: In organizing life skills workshops for young unemployed individuals, the streetworker focuses on supporting them in acquiring essential skills for effective functioning in their professional and social lives. Through interactive sessions, streetworkers assist participants in identifying their strengths, interests, and career goals. The workshops cover practical aspects such as CV preparation, job interviews, and financial management, allowing participants to expand their knowledge and skills. At the same time, streetworkers provide psychosocial support, helping participants cope with stress, motivation, and building self-confidence (Coulshed, Orme 2012, pp. 197–210).

Social Action for the Homeless: In organizing a social action for the homeless, the streetworker directs their efforts towards raising social awareness and gathering resources to aid those in need. They engage the local community in organizing charitable events such as fundraising, food drives, or clothing donations for the homeless. Additionally, they establish contacts with local businesses, non-governmental organizations, and media outlets to increase the reach of the action and mobilize more people to get involved in helping those in need. Through this social action, streetworkers promote empathy and solidarity within the local community and mobilize action for those most in need (Thompson 2009, pp. 193–210).

Social Reintegration Program for Former Prisoners: In leading a social reintegration program for former prisoners, the streetworker focuses on supporting them in the process of adapting to life after leaving prison. Through individual counseling sessions and group meetings, streetworkers help former prisoners identify barriers and challenges related to reintegration into society. They support them in finding housing, employment, and establishing healthy social relationships. At the same time, streetworkers provide emotional support, helping former prisoners cope with emotional and psychological difficulties associated with the process of rehabilitation (Dominelli 2002, pp. 218–240).

Domestic Violence Prevention Program: In leading a domestic violence prevention program, the streetworker focuses on educating the local community and supporting victims of violence in their healing and recovery process. Through educational workshops, group meetings, and individual sessions, streetworkers promote awareness of domestic violence risks and provide information about available support resources. At the same time, they provide a safe space where victims can openly share their experiences and receive emotional support and practical safety advice (Banks 2012, pp. 226–245).

Senior Citizen Activation Program: In leading a senior citizen activation program, the streetworker focuses on promoting social activity and supporting elderly individuals in maintaining their quality of life. Through organizing cultural and sports activities, as well as thematic meetings, streetworkers encourage seniors to actively participate in social life. At the same time, they provide psychosocial support, helping seniors cope with social isolation, loneliness, and age-related health problems. Through this program, streetworkers promote the health and well-being of seniors, facilitating social integration and improving quality of life in old age (Fook 2002, pp. 240–263).

Conclusions

The support and intervention stage in streetworker's work play a crucial role in providing assistance to those in need and building lasting positive changes in the local community. Through organizing aid activities, individual support, and community interventions, streetworkers actively engage in community life, respond to specific social problems, and provide support to individuals in difficult and demanding situations. The perspectives of streetworking development include continuing research on the effectiveness of various intervention methods, developing new communication and intervention tools, and integrating with technology. Implementing these perspectives can contribute to improving the quality and effectiveness of streetworkers' work, better adaptation to changing social needs, and more comprehensive support for those in need. At the same time, continuing research and development in this field are necessary for further improving streetworking practices and effectively addressing social challenges (Payne 2014, pp. 233–257).

One of the main challenges in organizing interventions within streetworking is the lack of sufficient financial resources. Limited financial means can hinder providing adequate support to those in need and conducting intervention

activities on a sufficiently large scale. It is necessary to search for alternative sources of funding and effectively manage available resources to maximize their effectiveness (Adams, Dominelli, Payne 2009, pp. 202–225).

Integration with local institutions poses another challenge for streetworkers. They may encounter resistance from institutions, difficulties in establishing co-operation, or a lack of understanding for the specifics of their activities. There-fore, it is crucial to build partnerships and relationships with local institutions through dialogue, cooperation, and education about the role of streetworking and the benefits of effective collaboration (Coulshed, Orme 2012, pp. 210–233).

Streetworkers often face uncertainty about the effectiveness of their inter-vention activities. Despite efforts and dedication, it is not always possible to measure specific effects or immediately see the results of their work. In such situations, it is crucial to maintain motivation and trust in the intervention pro-cess, continuously monitor progress, and reflect on their actions to improve and adjust work strategies (Thompson 2009, pp. 210–229).

In the face of these challenges, streetworkers must be flexible, creative, and determined in pursuing their goals. At the same time, there are also prospects for development that can contribute to improving the effectiveness of inter-ventions and increasing their impact on the local community. There is a need to continue research on the effectiveness of various intervention methods used in streetworking. These studies should include assessing the effects of actions conducted on various social and individual levels, such as improving the liv-ing conditions of those in need, reducing risky behaviors, or increasing social awareness of specific social issues (Dominelli 2002, pp. 240–263).

With the development of society and changing needs of local communities, there is a need for continuous improvement of communication and interven-tion tools used by streetworkers. Developing new intervention methods, better suited to the changing social reality, can contribute to more effective support for those in need and increased efficiency of streetworkers' actions. The introduc-tion of modern communication and monitoring technologies can significant-ly improve the work of streetworkers. Utilizing mobile applications, internet platforms, or monitoring systems can facilitate data collection, coordination of activities, and communication with beneficiaries. Integration with technology can also enable more efficient use of resources and financial means and increase the reach and impact of streetworkers' actions on the local community (Healy 2014, pp. 162–183).

Implementing the above development perspectives and further research can contribute to improving the quality and effectiveness of streetworkers' work

and providing more comprehensive support to those in need. At the same time, continuing research and development in this field are essential for further improving streetworking practices and effectively responding to social challenges (Banks 2012, pp. 245–265).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adams R., Dominelli L., Payne M. (2009), *Social Work: Themes, Issues, and Critical Debates*, Palgrave Macmillan.

Banks S. (2012), *Ethics and Values in Social Work*, Palgrave Macmillan.

Coulshed V., Orme, J. (2012), *Social Work Practice: An Introduction*, Palgrave Macmillan.

Dominelli L. (2002), *Anti-Oppressive Social Work Theory and Practice*, Palgrave Macmillan.

Fook J. (2002), *Social Work: Critical Theory and Practice*, SAGE Publications.

Healy K. (2014), *Social Work Theories in Context: Creating Frameworks for Practice*, Palgrave Macmillan.

Payne M. (2014), *Modern Social Work Theory*, Palgrave Macmillan.

Thompson N. (2009), *Understanding Social Work: Preparing for Practice*, Palgrave Macmillan.

SUMMARY

The support and intervention stage in streetworking is crucial for the effectiveness of social actions in local communities. Streetworkers diagnose social problems and organize supportive and intervention activities. The article analyzes individual, group, and community methods, emphasizing the importance of trust-building, institutional cooperation, and the use of modern technologies to improve the quality of life for those in need.

KEYWORDS: streetworking, social support, intervention, trust-building, community cooperation

STRESZCZENIE

Etap wsparcia i interwencji w pracy streetworkera jest kluczowy dla skuteczności działań społecznych w lokalnych społecznościach. Streetworkerzy diagnozują problemy społeczne oraz organizują działania wspierające i interwencyjne. Artykuł analizuje

metody indywidualne, grupowe i społecznościowe, podkreślając znaczenie budowania zaufania, współpracy z instytucjami oraz wykorzystania nowoczesnych technologii w celu poprawy jakości życia osób potrzebujących.

PAULINA FORMA – Uniwersytet Jana Kochanowskiego w Kielcach
ANNA KANABROCKA – Uniwersytet Jana Kochanowskiego w Kielcach
KATARZYNA GOŁĘBIOWSKA – Uniwersytet Jana Kochanowskiego w Kielcach