

## Status for Peer Support Workers (PSW) in Norway

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Country name: Norway

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## Introduction

Ellen Walnum became in 2006 the first Norwegian Peer Support Worker (under that name) (Frahm-Jensen & Johansen, 2024, p. 42). She was employed at the hospital Sørlandet sykehus. A lot have happened since then. Norway has given more rights to the user involvement and the employing of Peer Support Workers have surged.

In 2025, the options for education, training and employment are on the rise. This article will hopefully help with understanding the core status for Peer Supporters in Norway.

### How is the status of education and/or training for PSW in Norway?

In Norway, there exists both a one-year higher education program and different shorter training programs (Frahm-Jensen & Johansen, 2024, pp. 363-364). The education program is available for persons living all over Norway, while the training programs are shorter (months) and often only available for those living in the specific part in Norway. In other words, if you live in Oslo, you can choose Erfaringsskolen or if you live in Bergen and are unemployed you can choose the MB-program. However, if you live outside of those cities, KBT Vocational collage might be the only option.

KBT Vocational College is the biggest contender in Norway overall and the only option which gives you university credits (Frahm-Jensen & Johansen, 2024, p. 33. KBT Vocational College started in 2020 an education for Peer Support Workers (PSW). This education is split into 50% theoretical teaching and 50% practical experience through different practice periods (2X270 hours). This education has expanded from around 20-30 students in autumn 2020 to over 100 students in autumn 2024. The number is closer to 200 in the autumn 2025.

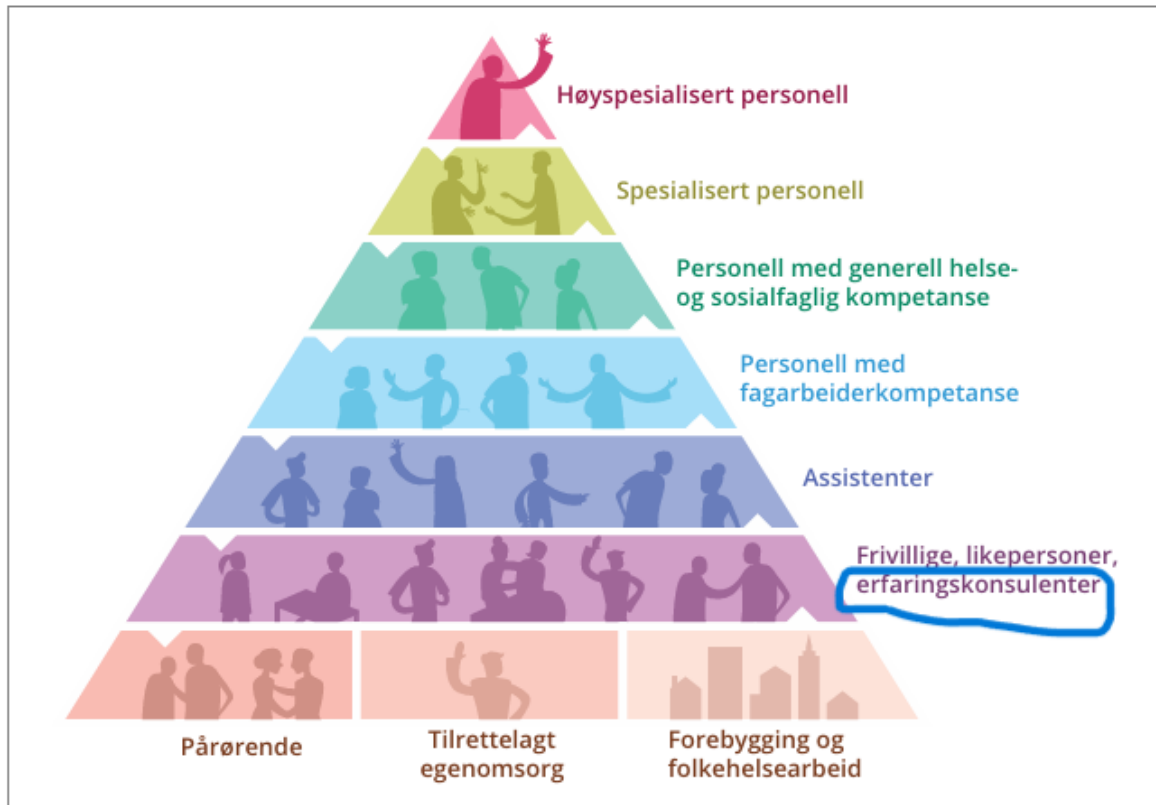
## How are PSW viewed in Norway?

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Meld. St. 9

2023–2024

Nasjonal helse- og samhandlingsplan 2024–2027



Figur 5.3 Skjematisk framstilling av oppgavedeling, bygd nedenfra

Kilde: NOU 2023: 4 Tid for handling. Personellet i en bærekraftig helse- og omsorgstjeneste

In the national plan for health for Norway 2024–2027, PSW were sidelined with volunteer workers. On the bright side, it is a first that PSW is mentioned in these kinds of plans. However, not all were happy with the placement of the pyramid.

*“Erfaringskonsulentenes rolle vil fortsatt være viktig”* (SINTEF, 2023, p. 30)

*“Peer Support Workers role will continue to be imperative”* (Translation).

Due to changes in the law about user-rights, the increased awareness of the Recovery-perspective in the health services in Norway, the need for PSW have also changed (NAPHA, 2025). In 202, SINTEF gathered data on the usage of PSW in the municipalities (Erfaringssentrum, 2025). The numbers were that 38 % of the municipalities had employed at least one PSW.

In Norway, a PSW can work both in the public sector or the private sector. The spectrum for work for a PSW is from working at activity centres, getting people back to the workforce, to helping people where they live. There are too many options to mention all options, however I will try to mention the most important ones:

- In the public sector one can work in an interdisciplinary team on different levels, FACT, FACT UNG (for a younger target group), and project-based local programs.
- In the private sector we find private companies that are taking on work from the public sector. An example is a Recovery College, which is a place to get a network and learn about Recovery and much more.

There is no exact number for active PSW that is available at this point in time (Erfaringssentrum, 2025). If one would speculate it would be reasonable to guess at around the hundreds of PSW employed in Norway. Hopefully, SINTEF will map this data on PSW in Norway in the future.

Regarding salary for a PSW in Norway, it depends on location, type of work and other relevant competence and experience. Erfaringssentrum (2025) has mapped the salary on the spectrum between 290 000 to 600 000 kr (before tax). In other words, there is no set salary in Norway at this point in time.

## Conclusion

In Norway, education and training for Peer Support Workers (PSW) include both a one-year higher education program and shorter regional training courses. The most prominent institution is KBT Vocational College, offering a program with a 50/50 split between theory and practical placements. Since its launch in 2020, enrolment has grown significantly, with nearly 200 students expected in autumn 2025.

PSWs are gradually gaining recognition in national health plans, though their formal status is still debated. As of 2021, 38% of Norwegian municipalities employed at least one PSW. PSWs work across public and private sectors, including roles in

interdisciplinary teams (like FACT/FACT UNG), Recovery Colleges, and local community support.

The number of PSWs employed nationally is unknown, but estimates suggest several hundred. Salaries vary widely depending on role, location, and experience, ranging from 290,000 to 600,000 NOK annually.

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It is now 19 years since Ellen Walnum was employed as a PSW. How will the next 19 years look for the PSW in Norway? In a time when war in Ukraine is the new normal, uncertainties with the US, and financial struggles, Stortinget (the Norwegian Parliament) may look for reduction in the budget for the mental health sector in the near future. PSW will also be affected by this debate.

**ChatGPT was used for making the summary of this text.**

## Literature

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