

Mapping of Peer Support in Denmark – 2025

2025

Country name: Denmark

Organization name: The Peer-Partnership

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1. Introduction

Peer support is considered one of the most crucial individual factors in giving people hope and personal agency to build a meaningful everyday life. It is one of the few practices backed by evidence in supporting personal recovery (Egemose et.al. 2023, Fuhr et.al. 2014, Lloyd-Evans et.al. 2014, Chien et.al. 2019, Lyons & Lloyd-Evans 2021).

In Denmark, targeted efforts have been made since 2014 to educate and employ peer support workers within public welfare systems. In addition, voluntary peer support initiatives have become more widespread both within public systems and in civil society. The following article provides an overview of current training opportunities and employment conditions for peer support workers in Denmark.

2. Organization of peer support workers in Denmark

No systematic mapping has been done since 2014 (Socialstyrelsen 2014). The latest informal survey in 2021 estimated slightly over 200 employed peer workers in Denmark, around ¾ of whom were regionally employed (Peer-Netværket 2021).

In November 2024, The Peer-Partnership asked their partners to report how many peer support workers they have employed. They reported back that there are at least 181 regionally employed peer workers. The municipal number is unknown, but it is estimated that 210–260 paid peer workers are currently employed in Denmark. The number of volunteer peer support workers is also unknown.

In the 2021 survey, nearly two-thirds of peer workers were employed in inpatient psychiatric treatment and psychiatric outpatient clinics (e.g., FACT, local psychiatry, or district psychiatry). 13.1% were employed in social psychiatry (e.g., residential or activity centers) (Peer-Netværket 2021).

2.1 Terms of employment for peer support workers in Denmark

Peer workers are typically employed under standard conditions, but some work under flexible or subsidized job schemes. Most work between 11 and 30 hours weekly.

Many positions are part-time, which can be a challenge for those not eligible for flexible jobs, requiring them to supplement income with another job.

The educational and training requirements for employment vary from organization to organization.

2.2 Interventions in Denmark that use peer support workers

Several current or emerging interventions in Denmark include peer support as a standard part of the model:

- FACT – Flexible Assertive Community Treatment
- The Danish Social and Housing Authority's concept for the strategic development and transformation of social psychiatry
- Open Dialogue
- Recovery Colleges
- Safewards (*reducing coercion in inpatient psychiatric wards*)

3. Status of education and/or training for Peer Support Workers in Denmark

There is currently no formal peer training program in Denmark. Training opportunities are offered locally by regional, municipal, or civil society organizations that train peers to carry out tasks within their own organization.

The biggest informal programs include ~80 hours of training with internships or concurrent work experience.

3.1 Qualifications for peer support workers

Most peer workers have, in addition to experiential knowledge and possibly peer training, other educational backgrounds.

54% have a bachelor's or master's degree. 24.1% have vocational education. 21.8% are unskilled (half have secondary education, half only primary). 36.5% have a social or healthcare qualification.

3.2 The Peer-Partnership and training of peer support workers

The Peer-Partnership developed the training used in Zealand Region and Capital Region and delivers competence development to municipalities in collaboration with University College Copenhagen, under the initiative 'Dissemination of Peers' initiated by the Danish Social and Housing Authority.

The training in Zealand Region and Capital Region is an 80-hour course with approximately 10 students in a class.

Furthermore, The Peer-Partnership offers in-house volunteer peer education as part of the evidence-based initiative 'The Paths to Everyday Life'¹. The in-house peer education consists of a two-day course with approximately 5-15 participants.

¹ Link for article about RCT: <https://bmcpsy psychiatry.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12888-024-05992-w>

4. Perception of peer support workers in Denmark

Peer support workers constitute a minority within public welfare organizations. Although the concept of peer support has become more widespread, many people—both outside and within the psychiatric systems—are still unfamiliar with what peer support is, how to organize peer support and what kind of change peer support workers can bring about. At the management level, however, peer support is described as a necessary component of working with recovery and as a potential method for addressing the growing demand for labor in psychiatry.

5. Future for peer support in Denmark

By May 2025 the Danish government agreed on how to implement the second half of a 10-year plan for the Danish psychiatric system, in which peer support is mentioned as one of the solutions to the challenges the plan aims to address. How this decision will impact the education and hiring of peer support workers in the psychiatric systems is not yet completely clear.

6. Conclusion

Peer support is still a relatively new practice in Denmark and is therefore still in the process of finding its footing both within the psychiatric system and in civil society. Currently, peer support workers are trained locally and are often employed in part-time and/or temporary positions. With the adoption of the second half of the 10-year plan, opportunities are opening to take the next steps in implementing peer support in Denmark.

Literature

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