THE ROLE OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

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Abstract

Mental health support is fundamental to individuals' ability to cope with and recover from trauma, stress, and resolve everyday problems. Those who have good social support in their lives demonstrate greater resilience (Conway, 2016). For a wide range of social, psychological, and biological reasons, social workers are often uniquely qualified to provide such support (Boland et al., 2021). This importance is especially apparent in the healthcare setting where a social worker is often the first person an individual will turn to for assistance. Regardless of whether the issue is a common worry or a more serious form of disorder, mental health support is a critical facet of a health professional's role.

Keywords: social work; mental health; healthcare collaboration Mental health support, individual therapy, behavioral intervention, substance abuse treatment, group therapy, and play therapy.

1. Introduction to Mental Health Support

The need for mental health services is high in the United States, with nearly 50 million adults experiencing some form of mental illness (Conway, 2016). Social workers are essential mental health professionals and a large proportion of workers providing mental health services across different settings. A social worker's role is to prepare a client for appropriate change based on a plan made jointly between the social worker and the individual. Social work for mental health services will seek to address the needs of the client by modifying the environment, changing behavior patterns, or facilitating in emotional and social development to promote change (Boland et al., 2021). A social worker provides services with an emphasis on social functioning in the context of an individual and their environment. The goal is to help individuals, families, and groups to improve overall well-being. This focus on psychosocial aspects means that social work is key to mental health.

2. Understanding Mental Health

Mental health refers to emotional and psychological well-being (Conway, 2016). Individuals who enjoy good mental health tend to experience more positive emotions and fewer negative ones, cope well with the usual stresses of life, relate effectively with others, and maintain a healthy lifestyle. Poor mental health, in contrast, can interfere with daily functioning. Mental illness, a form of poor

mental health, disrupts individuals' thoughts, feelings, moods, and behaviours (Boland et al., 2021). Such disruption can also affect daily functioning.

2.1. Definition of Mental Health

Definitions of mental health vary widely and internationally; the World Health Organization defines it as a state of well-being, wherein every individual realizes their potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and fruitfully, and is able to contribute to their community. Mental health is usually understood as a level of psychological well-being that is necessary for effective functioning in daily activities. It can also be defined as a state of well-being, in which an individual is able to utilize his or her cognitive and emotional capabilities, function in society, and meet the ordinary demands of everyday life. Common mental health disorders include anxiety, depression, and substance abuse (Conway, 2016).

2.2. Common Mental Health Disorders

The World Health Organization describes mental health as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes their abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, works productively, and contributes to their community. Many mental disorders prevent this from happening. Disorders such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia interfere with everyday functioning and can profoundly affect someone's education, employment, and relationships. When someone experiences a mental health problem, it is difficult to live a normal, happy, and fulfilling life; a lack of treatment can make this worse, as symptoms are often difficult to manage alone.

The Mental Health Foundation define mental health as "our emotional, psychological and social wellbeing." Important in understanding mental health is the role that social workers hold. Social workers offer vital assistance to people experiencing a mental health problem. Early on in an individual's experience, social workers encourage strengthening social skills and a family network. Once a mental health problem has developed, assistance involves guiding the person through treatment and recovery, as well as managing any social difficulties that may exist.

In a healthcare setting, social work employs principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility, and respect for diversities. Focused and complementary to medicine, it engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing, acting as a link between people and health services. Social workers support emotional and social wellbeing in various contexts such as hospitals, clinics, and community organisations. They work collaboratively with healthcare professionals to provide person-centred care addressing psychosocial needs and assist individuals in finding or creating networks of support to enhance resilience (Conway, 2016).

2.3. Impact of Mental Health on Daily Life

Everyone must maintain mental health because it is so crucial to an individual's capacity to function and thrive in daily life. Not only do severe mental health disorders have the potential to impact an individual's ability to live a "normal" life, but even minor mental health issues or disorders can cause the same effect to some extent. In day-to-day life, it is quite evident to see that one's mental health is a crucial component of one's overall well-being, health, and happiness. An individual's level of mental health is reflective of how that individual can feel, think, and behave overall (Conway, 2016).

Everyone must maintain their mental health to the best of their ability as it greatly impacts daily life. Both severe mental health issues and less intense issues can prevent a person from living what would be considered a "normal" life. From day to day, the importance of mental health in overall well-being and happiness is clear. Everyone therefore needs to understand mental health and how to maintain it — and this is a vital role of social workers within the healthcare context.

3. The Role of Social Workers in Healthcare

Social work is a profession committed to facilitating and enhancing the well-being of individuals, families, groups, and communities. Services are delivered directly to people or designed in collaboration with communities, organizations, and individuals. In mental health, social workers strive to promote mental well-being, prevent mental health problems, and aid recovery. Employed in a wide range of settings, many operate within multidisciplinary teams alongside other practitioners. Collaboration with psychiatrists, psychologists, mental health nurses, general practitioners, occupational therapists, and community psychiatric nurses is a feature of mental health social work practice, as is the provision of consultancy services to colleagues engaged in relevant areas of work or research. Social workers in healthcare environments play a vital role in supporting people with mental health problems (Conway, 2016) (Boland et al., 2021).

Social work is a process through which workers facilitate and enhance the well-being of individuals, families, groups, and communities. Services are delivered directly or designed in partnership with communities, organisations, and individuals. Mental health social workers seek to promote mental well-being, prevent mental health problems, and assist recovery. They are employed in a wide range of settings and often work within multidisciplinary teams. Collaboration with psychiatrists, psychologists, mental health nurses, general practitioners, occupational therapists, and community psychiatric nurses is a feature of mental health social work; consultancy to colleagues engaged in relevant work or research is another.

3.1. Overview of Social Work

Social work has been defined as a professional and academic discipline dedicated to promoting social change, development, cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of individuals and communities. Central to its methods are social theory, social research, human rights, community development, political education, empowerment, direct practice, and advocacy (Boland et al., 2021). Particularly within mental health, social workers support individuals affected by mental health problems and advocate on their behalf. Their practice recognizes early conceptualizations of social work as the social administration of medicine, and they are fundamentally committed to the principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility, and respect for human dignity. As representatives of society, social workers strive to bridge the gap between healthcare institutions and the public. While alternative concepts of social work have sometimes overshadowed the original medical model, the latter remains relevant and necessary, especially in mental health and well-being contexts (Conway, 2016). In public discussions, social workers are usually perceived primarily by their advocacy role on behalf of patients and service users. However, their professional functions are extensive, encompassing areas such as child protection, education, criminal justice, hospitals, and policing. Within mental health services, their

contribution is vital. Employing a medical and psychiatric terminology, they undertake psychosocial assessments, provide psycho-education to patients and relatives, and assist individuals in their emotional adjustment. When crises arise, social workers coordinate with mental health personnel and other resources to offer timely intervention, complementing the actions of psychiatrists and clinical psychologists. They contribute ideas for discharge planning, advocate for patients, deliver one-on-one therapy, conduct behavioural interventions, treat substance abuse, and lead group therapy sessions. Social workers often serve as integral members of multidisciplinary teams in hospital settings, offering perspectives on patients' social and emotional needs that may not be immediately apparent to other professionals, despite the stress of working with complex cases involving vulnerable populations. In educational environments, they attend to students' mental health concerns, frequently becoming aware of such challenges during the school day.

3.2. Social Workers in Mental Health Settings

Social workers play a critical role in mental health services in healthcare settings (Conway, 2016). The principle of social work is "to enable all people to develop their full potential, enrich their lives and prevent dysfunction." Social workers meet individuals where they are and assist them in actualizing their potential. The British Association of Social Workers (n.d.) highlights sensitivity to every individual's unique experience. Respect for individuals' feelings and needs is paramount; by making empathy the cornerstone of service delivery, social workers provide effective mental health interventions.

Social workers offer assistance in multiple formats in healthcare contexts and collaborate with psychiatrists, nurses, and psychologists to ensure that mental health services are patient-centered. Within mental health units and clinics, social workers conduct psychosocial assessments, engage in family education, perform crisis intervention, plan discharge, and undertake therapy. They operate as part of interdisciplinary teams to coordinate whole-person care and understand patients' social and emotional requirements during hospitalization. In schools, social workers analyze academic performance and behavior to identify students with mental health concerns and create support plans.

The emphasis in these healthcare-related roles lies firmly on practice at the interface between individual capacities and social opportunities (Boland et al., 2021). Service users in mental health social work emphasize the importance of being treated with respect, participating in care planning, and feeling heard—all fundamental social work skills. Social workers not only deliver direct interventions but also facilitate access to resources and fulfill statutory obligations that require specific expertise. Their comprehensive knowledge of local authority services—including social care, housing, policing, immigration, employment centres, and community groups—enables them to promote network development and provide a wide array of support. Through outreach to hospitals, incarceration facilities, and neighbourhoods, social workers collaborate with service users to develop long-term goals aligned with individuals' readiness for change. Proficiency in multidisciplinary teamwork further equips social workers to deliver integrated support aimed at

enhancing social and community functioning. The spectrum of interventions they implement underpins their capacity to sustain mental well-being.

3.3. Collaboration with Healthcare Professionals

A large clinical literature documents the importance of social support for mental health (see Section 3.6 on Interventions by Social Workers) (Boland et al., 2021). Social workers in the hospital have a key role in facilitating such support by working closely with health-care professionals, such as nurses and occupational therapists (Kirschbaum, 2017) (Stonehouse, 2018). They fulfil a range of functions: providing information about the organisation of health-care services; identifying patients' need for social support and practical assistance, and providing it; offering ongoing support to people with enduring psychological difficulties and their families; and helping to ensure the continuity of support services at the point of discharge.

4. Importance of Social Support in Mental Health

Social support is an indispensable aspect of mental health and is an element in which social workers significantly contribute. The enactment of social support enables individuals to restore their sense of self and regain stability in their life trajectory. The involvement of social workers within healthcare therefore introduces a number of potential benefits. Social support can be broadly defined as the provision of psychological and material resources intended to alleviate the degree of stress experienced by an individual (A. Busch, 2015). The primary functions of social support include enhancing an individual's perception of self-worth and assisting with the management of stressful events within daily life. A lack of this social resource places an individual under an increased risk of multiple physical and mental health issues. Well-established mechanisms linking social support to health encompass improved health-related behaviours, an augmented immune system, and the moderation of harmful neuroendocrine effects associated with stress. Additional advantages arise from a sustaining effect on psychological processes, particularly concerning the regulation of self-esteem, power, and control. The presence of a sustainable social network around the client therefore raises the efficacy with which social workers can execute their interventions and support, offering greater pathways to recovery and social reintegration.

4.1. Social Support Systems

Social workers allocate social support to clients with SMI across a continuum of professional perspectives, ranging from generic everyday support to specialist SMI support. One vantage point emphasizes social workers' objective knowledge about clients' needs, exploring whose support may be appropriate; another perceives social networks as a fluctuating resource, highlighting time-limited friendships and group affiliations, with social workers offering assistance until clients can sustain support independently; an interventionist approach prioritizes interpersonal action, focusing on how social support can facilitate positive change in symptoms, treatment response, and recovery. Clients value stable, non-judgmental, long-term, friendship-like qualities in professional support but reject passionless, under-apologetic support that encourages reliance and passive dependency. Those experiencing SMI prefer social support that fosters autonomy and self-actualization, assisting in living well with mental health problems. Professional support is sought

mainly during crisis points and for specific problems and is rarely desired once the situation has been resolved.

Although social support improves outcomes for 92% of clients, support provision creates additional vulnerability for social workers, compounded by scarce organizational well-being resources. (A. Busch, 2015)

4.2. Benefits of Social Support

Social support can broadly be defined as any interpersonal interaction that provides an individual with actual assistance or that embeds that person within a web of relationships perceived to be loving, caring, and readily available in times of need (A. Busch, 2015). Individuals who perceive or receive high levels of social support tend to enjoy enhanced well-being, better overall physical health, and optimal mental health. Accordingly, social support systems represent one of the most effective and widely used methods to promote positive mental health outcomes. Social support buffers negative effects of severe personal, economic, or health circumstances. In relation to individuals who suffer from mental illness, such support plays an even more critical mitigating role. Mental-health social workers assess, treat, and seek to prevent psychological and social problems affecting individuals by systematically using a combination of psychological, social, and pragmatic elements to achieve a meaningful outcome (Conway, 2016).

5. Interventions by Social Workers

Mental health social workers employ a range of assessment and intervention strategies to assist people experiencing mental health difficulties. Psychosocial assessments are conducted to understand an individual's needs and to develop appropriate support plans (Conway, 2016). In times of heightened distress, social workers may provide crisis intervention to manage immediate risks and facilitate access to emergency care (Boland et al., 2021). Therapeutic techniques such as supportive counselling offer emotional support and help individuals develop coping mechanisms. These approaches are typically integrated within a multidisciplinary framework to ensure comprehensive care.

Social workers frequently collaborate with psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses, occupational therapists, and other professionals to coordinate services that address the complex needs arising from mental health challenges. Coordination is often necessary due to the high demand for health and community services, which can lead to long waiting lists; social workers guide individuals in prioritising needs and accessing alternatives where appropriate. The common belief that the current system is broken underscores the necessity of enhancing social workers' well-being to facilitate wider improvements in mental health provision.

5.1. Assessment and Evaluation

Assessment and evaluation form a cornerstone of the social worker's role in mental health support within healthcare institutions (Conway, 2016). Social workers conduct comprehensive psycho-social evaluations that employ a variety of instruments designed to yield detailed information on the patient's current functioning. These assessments address the individual's social, emotional, environmental, and mental state and thus ascertain the extent and type of care required. Social workers implement discrete interventions and counselling aimed at alleviating distress and helping

individuals manage their day-to-day lives post-evaluation. Active monitoring ensures that identified referrals remain appropriate. Effective assessment in the acute setting necessitates a swift, structured yet humanistic approach that can be applied within a relatively short timeframe while engaging with the patient, their condition, and their circumstances.

5.2. Crisis Intervention

Social work principles provide a foundation for the everyday work of social workers in mental health settings. The need for mental health support is assessed not only through clinical symptoms but also by considering the resulting dysfunctions in a person's family, social, or occupational duties. When mental health issues threaten an individual's basic functions and responsibilities, particularly when suicide or self-destruction is imminent, a need for crisis intervention and support is recognized.

Crisis intervention in mental health is a support system designed for individuals unable to manage a critical situation through their own efforts. Defining a mental health crisis as a situation where the individual feels helpless and incapable of exercising willpower, social workers assisting in such scenarios may employ various supporting forces that enable the individual's own coping strategies. The approach taken by social workers hinges entirely on locating and employing the resources that act as catalysts for the patient's ability to resist or overcome self-destructive thoughts.

5.3. Therapeutic Techniques

In therapeutic interventions, social workers use various techniques including Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, art, music and occupational therapies (Conway, 2016). Social workers may also offer breastfeeding support to mothers with post-natal depression.

6. Challenges Faced by Social Workers

Social workers' well-being emerges as a key component in the overarching call for substantive system reforms. They deliver mental health services across diverse environments (e.g. hospitals, schools, military services), responding with psychosocial assessments, emotional adjustment support, crisis intervention, discharge planning, and patient advocacy. Their participation on interdisciplinary teams contributes a nuanced perspective on the social and emotional needs of high-risk populations, indicating the necessity of effective support strategies. Recipients emphasize the values of respect, involvement in care planning, and attentive listening, with social workers facilitating independence and meaningful participation in lieu of dependence. Their contribution blends resource knowledge, direct interventions, and specialized statutory obligations—framing individuals beyond the confines of clinical resources. Local authority services, social care, and housing emerge frequently within their purview alongside greater familiarity with employment support than other mental health professionals. Engagement with police, offender services, immigration authorities, job centres, welfare bodies, and community groups extends further the breadth of their liaison role. Outreach activities carry social workers into hospitals, correctional facilities, and neighbourhoods with a view to formulating long-term, personalized objectives. Adaptability to multidisciplinary environments and the provision of

integrated services underpin their capacity to enhance social and communal functioning (Conway, 2016) (Boland et al., 2021).

6.1. Resource Limitations

Availability of resources influences the extent to which social workers can provide support to those with mental disorders (Boland et al., 2021). Economic hardship is often linked to elevated levels of mental distress. Conversely, limited resources hinder social workers' ability to secure financial and other forms of assistance. Consequently, individuals with fewer resources are at increased risk of experiencing mental disorders. Additionally, the availability of social resources significantly affects the capacity to obtain informal support. An irregular daily schedule, for instance, restricts opportunities for social interaction and diminishes social support. Beyond these factors, the potential to enlist various types of support, such as informational or appraisal assistance, plays a critical role in mitigating the progression of mental disorders.

6.2. Stigma Surrounding Mental Health

Stigma related to mental illness originates from attitudes and beliefs that lead to prejudice and discrimination against people with mental health challenges (M Zamansky, 2013). Stigma signifies the degree to which an individual is considered socially unacceptable. Stigma poses a considerable challenge for social workers delivering mental health services within a healthcare context (Nordlund, 2016).

6.3. Workplace Stress and Burnout

Social work is a profession committed to social change, problem solving in human relationships, and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. It aims to facilitate the development of people, their communities, and their environments in the pursuit of greater social justice (Robinson, 2012).

Social workers in mental health aid individuals in coping with chronic and acute conditions, including serious mental illness (Conway, 2016). Their role encompasses providing one-on-one counseling, leading support groups, consulting with families, and offering rapid assessments that shape treatment plans (Lynn Schaal, 2018). They support patients and families throughout the recovery process and collaborate with healthcare professionals to ensure comprehensive care.

Social workers face significant challenges, especially in healthcare settings, where burnout is a particular concern. The accompanying section examines the sources and consequences of workplace stress and burnout among social workers engaged in mental health support.

7. Case Studies

One example of successful intervention in the healthcare setting came from a study of social workers in a psychiatric hospital (Boland et al., 2021). Patients were satisfied with the help received from mental health social workers; they valued the ability to speak with someone who would listen and give support, as well as the sensitive handling of confidential information. Another case involved a social worker in a community mental health setting who was able to prevent a young man with bipolar disorder from losing his housing. The man had fallen behind on his rent because of his illness, and the social worker negotiated a payment plan that allowed him to keep his home in the short term while he searched for a more affordable alternative.

An example of an unsuccessful intervention was described by a hospital social worker during a stressful period. The social worker tried several approaches to help a psychiatric patient who was in emotional distress. Unfortunately, the efforts were not effective, and the case worker was not optimistic about the outcome.

7.1. Successful Interventions

Social workers play a vital role in supporting individuals living with mental illness in healthcare settings. Their interventions—ranging from crisis support and advocacy to therapeutic techniques—require continual refinement to better meet clients' needs.

Mental health, according to the World Health Organization, is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes their abilities, copes with stresses of life, works productively, and contributes to their community. Mental illnesses are conditions defined by alterations in thinking, mood, or behavior that cause distress and impair functioning. Common disorders such as anxiety, depression, and schizophrenia can severely limit daily activities. These illnesses often disrupt individuals' ability to work and maintain social relationships.

Social work originated as a commitment to aid individuals in need and has evolved into a profession dedicated to improving human well-being and helping people meet basic needs. Social workers intervene directly with individuals, families, and groups, seeking lasting solutions through counseling, community organization, and social policy influence. In healthcare settings, particularly seminal during the early 20th century, social workers practiced extensively within institutions such as hospitals, clinics, mental health centers, and home health agencies (Conway, 2016). When collaborating on mental illness support, professionals idealize social workers for their theoretical knowledge of the illness and dedication to the client's well-being (A. Busch, 2015). Yet despite their skills and commitment, social workers have few established guidelines to assess whether their support enhances the development of healthy functioning. A fuller understanding of social work's collaborative function would assist social workers in implementing the most helpful interventions and provide criteria for evaluating their impact.

7.2. Lessons Learned from Failures

Social workers navigate a range of difficulties in delivering mental health assistance. Funding is inadequate, policies fail to align properly with existing client demands, and stigma impedes progress; these inadequacies exacerbate the challenges (Conway, 2016). Stigmatization emerges as a very significant stressor and strongly complicates the job role. Staff members report that the time spent pushing back against stereotyping and social discrimination represents an appreciable obstacle to helping clients manage their conditions. The situation is demoralizing as well as psychologically draining. Policy exacerbates these difficulties since existing regulations appear unconnected to—and ultimately unsupportive of—client needs. Aside from failing to facilitate care, the policies engender disrespect for patients and promote dismissive attitudes. Moreover, social workers confront another set of difficulties focused upon professional experiences rather than client circumstances. Organizational support plays a key role in reducing burnout and vicarious trauma, but assistance remains uneven (I. Howard, 2015). Awareness techniques constitute the first major category. Supervisory backing forms an additional category strongly tied

to job satisfaction and continued retention. Support from co-workers also matters significantly. Training opportunities represent a fourth main factor. Fifth, the culture fostered by the organization directs the overall approach. Finally, the accumulated coping stress and general lack of resources reverberate in the quality of service ultimately afforded to individual clients.

8. Policy and Advocacy

Social advocacy is an inherent component of the ethical principles guiding psychologists, underscoring the imperative to protect clients' civil rights, facilitate access to services, and enhance their social, economic, and political status. Advocacy initiatives encompass demonstrations, public education, legislative lobbying, legal representation, and strategic utilization of media to disseminate pertinent information. Essential competencies in this domain include leadership acumen, environmental and direct intervention capabilities, public information dissemination, and active influence on public policy. The scholarly consensus identifies social advocacy as a mechanism to challenge systemic impediments that limit resource accessibility and disproportionately disadvantage vulnerable and marginalized populations. Numerous theoreticians and practitioners advocate for sustained engagement of mental health clinicians in social advocacy, emphasizing the profession's intrinsic social responsibilities and the critical role of legislative influence in addressing pervasive social issues.

8.1. Role of Social Workers in Policy Making

Social workers complement the work of a wide range of professionals by helping give voice to those who deal with powerlessness and discrimination. Taking a structured systems perspective, they analyze the links between individual distress and the wider social and economic environment and formulate methods for intervention. Their work ranges from individual and community direct practice to policy formulation (Boland et al., 2021). They contribute to all stages of the policy-making process, helping to pinpoint the needs with greater precision and qualification, and keeping those needs before the attention of policy makers. The involvement of social workers in the process becomes a vital force in shaping both policy and practice (Conway, 2016).

8.2. Advocacy for Mental Health Resources

Social workers undertake advocacy roles in securing mental health services, by coordinating care and offering information and guidance to government systems and community resources. The goal is to intervene during crises and equip individuals with coping strategies for the future. They advise patients of their rights and the advantages of using available resources and, when necessary, pursue grievance filings on their behalf.

Social workers, acting as liaison persons, support access to resources and coordinate links to them. Some social workers advocate on behalf of families when health or social agencies threaten separation or institutionalization. Moreover, they engage in social and political advocacy to improve the well-being of the population at large, such as promoting initiatives to reduce stigma surrounding mental illness. Social work owes a robust social justice impetus to the profession for services provided to vulnerable groups, which are often the subject of systematic discrimination and need advocacy (Conway, 2016).

9. Future Directions in Mental Health Support

Tele-mental health services have emerged as pivotal for social work staff engaging with service users. The integration of digital communication technologies improves service users' access and supports effective sharing of information with interdisciplinary colleagues, enabling timely response to concerns and efficient resource allocation. Yet, digital working also presents potential barriers to communication and information-sharing (Boland et al., 2021). Moving forward, implementation of tele-mental health services should occur alongside the development of parallel strategies to allow social work practices and interventions to be conducted remotely.

The role of mental health social workers within healthcare settings remains highly important. Future developments likely will include delineation of social workers' professional roles in more detail and modernization of relevant legislation pertinent to everyday practice. Several other developments have potential to shape social work practices. Social workers should staff mental health services commissioned directly by Primary Care Networks at the eight nearest GP surgeries to their place of work, and designated as a 'cluster staff member', with the option to add places after three years. Rise in popularity of Agency Duty social work may prompt further research into this provision as a valid social work offer. Similarly, a Department for Education-commissioned report into school social work anticipates additional services nationwide impacting directly on the role of mental health social work across all ages. Emerging progress on developing a Social Work Academy, allowing continuous professional development, should provide a new continuous learning offer with potential links between statutory, voluntary and private sectors. A growing evidential case bases a range of social work stresses on the national picture instead of local issues, with finances and workloads as the main additional contributors of stress (Conway, 2016). There is continued need to evaluate innovative ideas such as Discharge to Assess and Home First schemes to establish how Social Workers interact and influence connected health and social care, given the benefit of less time in inpatient services reviewing alternatives at the patient's home.

9.1. Emerging Trends in Social Work

Social workers are motivated by principles of social justice, respect for human dignity, and the importance of human relationships, which inherently lend themselves to mental health support (Boland et al., 2021). Mental health social workers conduct psychosocial assessments, provide education, assist with emotional adjustment, offer crisis intervention, facilitate discharge planning, advocate for patients, deliver individual therapy, implement behavioral interventions, treat substance abuse, and lead group therapy (Conway, 2016). They often function as part of an interdisciplinary team to offer coordinated care and provide insight into patients' social and emotional needs. Technological advances have increased the potential for earlier intervention in mental health problems; social workers are naturally positioned to benefit from these developments.

9.2. Integration of Technology in Mental Health

The integration of technology in mental health has of recent years opened up a wide range of possibilities for social work practice (Hurley, 2016). In the United States alone there are some 400,000 social workers in health care settings, including hospitals, rehab centers, community

health centers and surgical centers. Technology can add effective new dimensions to what social workers already offer individuals with mental health needs.

10. Conclusion

The critical contribution of social workers to mental health support within healthcare settings has been underscored throughout (Boland et al., 2021). The multifaceted expertise and sustained commitment of social workers to assisting those with mental health needs alongside healthcare professionals remain indispensable. The contemporary emphasis on social workers' collaboration only heightens the need to further support their discerning practice in this field.

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