1 Title of the idea and proposing services

Comunidades que Cuidam (Caring Communities)

Promoting inclusion, recovery and community participation

Proposing service: Psychiatry Department. **Services involved:** Psychology Department; Primary Health Care Department.

2 Team

Rosa Quelhas, Graça Farelo, Carolina Bicho Santos, Liliana Rocha and Patrícia Tavares (Psychiatry Department); Mafalda Barral and Laura Meireles (Psychology Department); Primary Health Care Department (participation accepted, members to be designated).

3 2027 topics addressed

HORIZON-HLTH-2027-01-STAYHLTH-01: Addressing disabilities through the life course to support independent living and inclusion. **Expected outcomes addressed:** (1) strengthened autonomy, social participation and community inclusion of people with long-term psychosocial disability; (2) development and evaluation of an innovative model of inclusive psychosocial rehabilitation, aimed at removing barriers to independent living and strengthening community support services; (3) production and dissemination of evidence and good practice supporting health services, community organisations and decision-makers in implementing sustainable psychosocial rehabilitation and social inclusion responses.

4 Clinical problem or need

Mental health is a challenge of our time: societal demands expose vulnerabilities that affect biopsychosocial balance, and mental illness can bring persistent limitations in daily functioning, autonomy and social roles, compounded by stigma, discrimination, isolation and scarce opportunities for community participation. The response goes beyond the treatment of symptoms: it requires individualised interventions oriented towards personal recovery, skills development, self-determination and the mobilisation of social and community resources. Psychosocial rehabilitation is therefore an essential component of mental health care, making a meaningful life possible even when limitations persist.

Community-based approaches are relevant, but systematic evaluation of their functional, social and economic outcomes and the identification of viable models adaptable to other contexts need strengthening. The project addresses this need, starting from an experience already implemented locally, building evidence for community approaches that promote both general community mental health and the psychosocial rehabilitation of mental illness.

5 Idea

The project proposes to structure, implement and evaluate a model of inclusive psychosocial rehabilitation, building on the **Mais de Perto** programme, which runs community-based recreational and therapeutic groups in diverse areas of interest in a local neighbourhood setting, promoting the recovery of personal health, autonomy and socialisation of people with pre-existing psychosocial limitations.

The project will begin by characterising and systematising the existing intervention, involving participants, professionals and community partners in defining objectives and success indicators. An evaluation protocol will then study outcomes, feasibility, required resources and the conditions for transferring the model to other European contexts, through a multicentre approach.

For **participants**: stronger decision-making capacity, daily functioning, meaningful relationships and community participation, valuing their interests, skills and personal goals. For **professionals**: a structured intervention, practical guidance and assessment instruments supporting individualised goal-setting and outcome monitoring. For the **health and social support system**: evidence on the benefits, costs and sustainability of a response that links clinical services and community resources.

The expected result is a documented and scientifically evaluated model with potential for adaptation and replication; effectiveness and transferability will be the object of research, not assumed as demonstrated.

6 What already exists

ULSM runs the **Mais de Perto programme**, for mental health promotion and the psychosocial rehabilitation of mental illness, in operation since January 2019, currently with 302 participants in weekly activities run with community partners, including **parish councils (Juntas de Freguesia), Espaço T and other social partners**. Activities span body, expressive, social and learning domains (Tai Chi Chuan, Social Biodanza, Movement and Wellbeing, Theatre, Painting, Dance for the Community, the Friendship Group, the Reading Club and “Gigabyte de Ideias”). The joint participation of people with and without lived experience of mental illness is a defining feature of the inclusive approach and an opportunity to explore the role of community settings in reducing isolation and stigma.

Available data: all users are interviewed by the programme’s coordinating team, with referral source, follow-up in psychology and/or psychiatry consultations and diagnosis recorded in the electronic clinical record. Since September 2025, every user admitted is offered a self-completed questionnaire before activities begin, with sociodemographic data and validated scales for quality of life (WHO-5) and psychopathological symptoms (BSI-18). Attendance records document adherence and regularity of participation. Investment is needed in characterising the population served and in systematising data collection and analysis, to measure impact on mental health promotion and psychosocial rehabilitation.

Previous projects and publications: Mais de Perto is an established community intervention, but no scientific publications or formal research projects have yet been associated with it. This project will start that process: programme characterisation, outcome indicators and a structured research plan.

Equipment and resources: the main operational base is the programme’s structure and its network of community partners; facilities, equipment, human resources and data management capacity for research will be inventoried. The project will turn accumulated experience into a defined, measurable and evaluable intervention, strengthening partnerships and enabling the study of its feasibility and replication in other European contexts.