



Strategies for carer support in Sweden

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Swedish model

- ” *The best form of support for carers is a well functioning health and social care system*” (National Audit Commission, 2014)
- History of a strong social democratic welfare system where the State takes care of its citizens from the cradle to the grave.....
- This policy focus remains, emphasising the voluntariness of informal caring and to avoid carers carrying out intensive amounts of caring
- There are currently at least 1.3 million carers in Sweden, majority of whom (900, 000) are of working age and on average they provide between 1-10 hours of caring per week.
- However, 28 % provide more than 10 hours per week.
- Carers’ contributions amount to at least 194 billion SEK (17 billion Euros).
 - If they were to ”down tools”, at least another 375,000 assistant nurses would be required

Legal recognition and support for carers

- Late 90's policy began to focus on informal carers due to growing cracks in the Swedish welfare model and a growing carers movement
- Social Services Act 1998, the municipal social committees **should** via support and respite care make it easier for those caring for a relative who is long term sick, older or has a disability/ies
- Strengthening of the Social Services Act in 2009, "municipalities **shall** offer support to carers".....
- Provision for children as next of kin in the Health Care Act, 2010
- Late 90s/early 2000s- development of role of municipal carer advocates to provide individual support to carers and a strategic role to develop carer support at municipality level.
- 2008- a national centre of excellence was established, Nka, to gather and disseminate existing knowledge and strengthen knowledge base regarding support for carers

1st National Carers Strategy

- Shift in thinking, towards a more comprehensive approach to recognising and supporting informal carers.....
- Viewing carers' situation as a public health issue, part of municipalities' and regions' health promotion and prevention responsibilities
- Recognition that carers' situation and support needs aren't simply a question for social services but for the whole society
- Overall aims of the strategy, "*to strengthen a carer perspective within health and social care and, based on the best available knowledge, to contribute to support for carers that is accessible, tailored to their needs and comparable across the country*"
- An underlying principle is that carers' contributions and participation shall always be voluntary, based on individual choice.

1st National Carers Strategy cont'd.

- Aims to a greater degree to meet the core needs of carers:
 - Acknowledges that carers are dependent on welfare services working for their relative
 - Recognises that many carers wish that welfare services are given with a carer perspective. That is, that the health and social care is carried out with consideration for carers - to be seen, involved as they wish, kept informed, that their caring activities and knowledge are recognised and carer's own needs for support are taken into account.
 - Stipulates that a carer perspective shall be reflected on all levels within health and social care services

Strengthening a Carer Perspective within health care and social services

....on a system and organisational level and in carrying out health and social care, including exercising of public authority

Recognises the following areas for improvement:

- Leadership and governance
- Knowledge and competence
- Collaboration and coordination

Commissioned work (I) to the National Board of Health and Welfare Sweden (NBHWS) to **strengthen a carer perspective within health care and social services** - report to the government by November 2023.

More individualised and equitable carer support

- Acknowledges that the quality and range of carer support services currently available vary considerably across the country
- Recognises the need for **more tailored supports** to meet the diverse situations of carers and for the **support** to be less of a "postcode lottery" and **more equally available** in municipalities and regions **across the country**

Commissioned work (II) to the NBHWS to **provide guidance to municipal needs assessors for how carers' needs can be made more visible within needs assessments** and can be a help in the design of individual supports targeted at carers. Report to the government by November 2023.

Emphasis on a gender dimension

- Recognises that the **impact of informal caring differs according to gender**, with women being more negatively affected by providing informal care compared to male carers.
- States the **need for knowledge support** among health and care professionals and decision makers for a **greater awareness and understanding of gender dimensions in informal caring**
- Comissioned work (III) to the NBHWS to examine how a continuous follow up of a carer perspective can be carried out. It states that indicators, measures and key figures shall make it possible for the follow up to include **gendered analyses with regards to accessibility, quality and tailoring of preferred support for carers**. Report to the government by October 2023.

Emphasis on the potential of welfare technology

- Includes ongoing government initiatives in the area of **e-health and welfare technology within care for older people**
- States that with the right use of welfare technology it can lead to increased security and autonomy for older people as well as carers and from a staff perspective lead to better ways of working that reduces the need for unnecessary visits, enabling them to use their competence for those services that cannot be carried out via a technology solution.
- Lists examples of tested welfare technology with good results: security alarm with gps function, medication robots, security or monitoring camera in the home.
- Acknowledges that an increased use of welfare technology can also be used to improve carer support. Gives the example of digital tools that make it feasible to give carer support at a distance.

Further points of interest....

- The commissioned work (I) to the National Board of Health and Welfare Sweden (NBHWS): "strengthening a carer perspective...", includes designing support that is targeted to (among others) **employers within health care and social services**
- The Strategy clearly states that within the three pieces of commissioned work to the NBHWS that the Board **shall make use of the competence that Nka has and that of the organisations that support carers - Carers Sweden.**

Concluding remarks

- Many carer advocates and local carers associations see the strategy as a major step forward as it provides them with a platform to work from.
- Strengths: focus on health care for the first time; broader public health perspective; gender dimension; employers included as a key target group
- Areas for further development: to include labour market and social insurance issues - broaden to other ministries



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