Socialstyrelsen
THE NATIONAL BOARD OF HEALTH AND WELFARE

2005-09-07 Dnr 72-7830/2005 1(3)

The Secretary
Standing Committee on Health and Disability
ACT Legislative Assembly
GPO Box 1020
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Trish Carling,

Re: Inquiry into Appropriate Housing for People living with Mental Illness

Your letter to Mr Morgan Johansson, minister for Public Health and Social Services, concerning the above mentioned theme, has been handed over to The National Board of Health and Society.

During the last two decades the shape of psychiatric services in Sweden has changed profoundly – changed along the same lines as other Scandinavian and Western European countries. Large mental hospitals with vast catchment areas have been almost completely closed down. Already in 1980 the municipalities were given greater responsibility for meeting the needs of the long-term mentally ill in various respects, for example housing and rehabilitation. The mandate upon municipal Social Services was once again stressed and clarified through the Mental Health Care Reform which went into effect on 1 January 1995.

Four important governing legislation acts regulates the responsibilities of social services and health services.

The *Social Services Act* from 1980 regulates the social services in the municipality.

The *Health Care Act* regulates the responsibilities of all health care regardless of who is care-giver.

Social services are obliged to plan their assistance programmes for people with disabilities in collaboration with the county council and other social bodies and organizations. The law also establishes the responsibility of the county councils and municipal social services for rehabilitation and habilitation.

The Municipal Financial Responsibility Act made it incumbent upon the municipalities to pay for the care of patients who have to stay inpatients due to lack of resources in the municipality.

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One of the aims of municipal financial responsibility is to stimulate the development of new forms of housing within the community for mentally disabled people who have been under long-term institutional care.

The Swedish Disability Act regulates the rights to those who are handicapped by their long-term illness. The purpose of law is to support and give service to people with comprehensive physical and mental disabilities/illness (together with the *Assistance Compensation Act)*, making it possible for them to live like everyone else. The Disability Act is complementary legislation and may not entail any curtailment of assistance to which the individual is entitled under other laws. Decisions can be appealed in the administrative courts.

The laws state a number of specific forms of assistance within important life spheres such as housing, daily occupation, work, recreation, rehabilitation, social fellowship, health care and social welfare. They also show that the responsibility for social welfare programmes for mentally disabled/ill persons are shared between social services and psychiatric care organizations for medical/psychiatric programmes.

As a consequence of the Psychiatric Care Reform, most of the municipalities have carried out inventories to identify the persons with mental illness/disabilities living in their communities, as well as their needs for social assistance. The compiles results show that the target group of the reform consists of between 43 – 46 000 people, appr. 0,65 per cent of the total adult population in Sweden.

About 80% of all people with mental disabilities live in their own homes. The rest live with relatives or in special municipal housing – group homes, sheltered homes. Another appropriate assistance scheme being developed in several areas involves special resources for housing assistance in the form of "mobile teams".

The Swedish government will the coming years support improving psychiatric and social services for people with mentally illness/disabilities - treatment, daily actitivities and housing - with appr. 100 million dollars, especially strengthening the work of cooperation between authorities involved.

For further knowledge about different types of housing for mentally ill, we refer to below mentioned references.

Arvidsson H (2001) Needs assessed by patients and staff in a Swedish sample of severely mentally ill subjects. Nordic Journal of Psychiatry 55:311-317.

Bengtsson-Tops A, Hansson L (1999) Clinical and social needs of schizophrenic outpatients living in the community: the relationship between needs and subjective quality of life. Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology 34: 513-518.

Brunt D (2002) Supported housing in the community for persons with severe mental illness. Psychosocial environment, needs, quality of life and social network. (Dissertation) Lund University, Lund.

Brunt D, Hansson L (2002) Characteristics of the social environment of small group homes for individuals with severe mental illness. Nordic Journal of Psychiatry, 56: 39-46.

Please, contact us if you need additional information!

Yours sincerely,

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