

## A good place to grow older

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### Introduction

The Danish system for Long-Term Care (LTC) services to elderly persons and people with disability, including home-help services, is a universal system. There is equal access to the services for anyone who needs them. Personal and practical assistance is also free of charge.

The Consolidation Act on Social Services § 81 specifies that the municipal council shall offer special initiatives for adults with impaired physical or mental function or with special social problems. The purpose of such initiatives is to prevent a deterioration of the problems facing the individual;

- to improve the individual's social and personal functions and development potential;
- to improve the individual's potential for self-expression through contact, social and other activities, treatment, care and attendance; and
- to provide all-round services addressing the particular needs of the individual in his/her own home, including accommodation facilities under the Act on General Housing etc., or in accommodation facilities under this Act.

This means that the Danish Parliament determines the overall principles applying to LTC in Denmark, but the local authorities have the daily responsibility for the social service. There is no described minimum level of service. The local authority makes the concrete formulation of the LTC policy and decides how many resources that should be spent on the LTC service (financed by local tax and block grants).

Home-help services to elderly or disabled citizens in Denmark are granted on the basis of a needs assessment and not on the basis of age, gender, ethnicity, financial capability, etc. The local authority must, cf. the Act on Social Services, offer personal care and practical assistance in the home to persons who are unable to carry out the said activities due to temporary or permanent impairment of physical or mental function or particular social problems. In this connection, the local authority must decide how the assistance is to be allocated on the basis of a specific, individual assessment. This means that the local authority must specifically consider the person's needs.

The Consolidation Act on Social Services is the primary legal framework for services for elderly persons and people with disability in Denmark. The act specifies that a citizen can get personal and practical assistance if he or she is an adult, is resident in Denmark and cannot perform the personal and practical tasks him- or herself. The term personal assistance and care covers assistance with, for example, personal hygiene, getting into or out of bed, or getting dressed. Practical assistance in the home may be assistance with cleaning, laundering or shopping.

The local authority is the body obliged to offer personal and practical assistance. The local authority also determines the level for home-help services in the local authority (the service level). Finally, the local authority makes the decision as to who is entitled to receive home-help services.

On the other hand, the local authority is not necessarily responsible for providing the personal and practical assistance. Since 2003 (through the establishment of the so-called 'free choice reform'), local authorities have been obliged to establish the framework for enabling private providers to enter the market for personal and practical assistance. They may do so through an invitation to tender or through the approval model where prices are determined on the basis of the local authority provider's average long-term costs. The local authority must always impose quality requirements and, if the approval model is applied, also price requirements.

It is a fundamental principle of Danish legislation that personal and practical assistance is provided as 'help to recipients to help themselves'. Recipients of personal and practical assistance must to the widest extent possible participate actively in performing the tasks. This means that assistance must be planned in close cooperation with recipients, and that the main object of the assistance is to enable recipients to manage on their own and to perform as many tasks as possible alone. In practice, this may, for example, mean that the home-help recipient and the home-help work together to perform the various tasks.

As regards housing for elderly persons, the local authority must with effect from 1 January 2009, cf. the care-home guarantee, offer a dwelling in social housing for the elderly/person with disability or a care home place to elderly or disabled persons in need of such dwelling or place, two months after the need has been established. An offer means that the older person is offered a specified dwelling in social housing for the elderly/disabled or care home place that can be occupied at the latest two weeks after the expiry of the two-month time limit.

#### **Fact box Denmark**

Denmark has a population of 5.6 million people.

In 2009 there were approx. four 18-64 year olds for every 65+ years old. In 2019 this figure will be reduced to approx. three 18-64 year olds for every 65+ years old. And in 2044 the figure will be further reduced to only approx. two 18-64 year olds for every 65 + years old.

The expenditure for municipalities as a whole on social services (day care, vulnerable children, elderly and disabled + disadvantaged adults) was 15.4 billion euro in 2009 (in 2011-prices), with about 5 billion euro spent on elderly care. The total municipal service expenditure was 31.5 billion euro in 2009.

1. What are the priorities in respect to ageing and demographic change in your country? (What is your experience of integrating successful pilot projects into the policy framework? What are the related challenges?)

### Demographic changes

There have been several analysis carried through on the consequences of the coming demographic changes In Danish society, where it is seen necessary to find new ideas and solutions to answer the current demographic challenges. In the foreseeable future the number of elders while grow, the number of employees fall, and the resources for social services in general are not expected to increase. The different initiatives listed in this section are some of the answers to this challenge. And it is worth mentioning, that there is a continuous work on developing new policies in regards to meeting this highly complicated challenge.

### Quality reform

The Danish government in 2007 submitted a proposal for a quality reform to ensure continued renewal and development of the quality in the old age/LT care sector. The quality reform will contribute across the board to improving circumstances for elderly or disabled persons and employees in the old age care sector.

The reform means that the provision of old age/LT care must be even more flexible than today and focus more strongly on the individual needs of the person in need of care. Elderly persons or people with disability must be put first, and the institutions must help develop quality. One way to achieve this is to spread positive experience more quickly to other institutions and invest in a better physical framework and new technology in the old age care sector. Examples of specific old age/LT care initiatives in the reform are:

#### *Permanent contact person:*

Since 1 January 2009 recipients of home-help services are entitled to one permanent contact person who must be close to the citizen.

#### *Better learning among local authorities and sectors*

Experiments should be made with the development and test of a system where care staff, residents and relatives can report errors and unintended incidents in the care sector to create better learning possibilities across local authorities and sectors.

#### *Development and implementation of Welfare technology through the ABT Foundation*

The ABT Foundation was created in connection with the 2008 Budget in regards to the quality reform. The ABT Foundation supports labour saving projects that provide measurable efficiency gains in the public sector by either making specific work processes unnecessary or easier to solve.

It was specifically agreed to reserve 3 billion kr. to co-finance investment in new labour-saving technology and new ways of organising workflows in the period 2009-2015. Funding is available to public institutions from all sectors.

The ABT Foundation supports two types of projects:

- Demonstration projects where new labour-saving technology and new work and organisational forms are tested.
- Implementation Projects where a well-proven and mature technology implemented nationally.

### **Strategy on dementia**

This autumn a new dementia strategy with 14 specific recommendations to strengthen and improve performance for people with dementia was unveiled. Some of the key points in the strategy are:

- Better efforts towards demented people with severe behavioural disorders.
- Developing new and better respite services for carers.
- Continuation of the National Centre for Dementia.
- Development of clinical guidelines for assessment and treatment of dementia.
- Specific programmes of dementia in all regions.
- National information campaign on dementia.

### **Civil society strategy**

The Government has this autumn published a new national civil society strategy. As part of its civil society strategy, the Government will promote active citizenship and systematic involvement of civil society and voluntary organisations working with socially vulnerable people and families.

## **2. What characterises 'a good place to grow older' in your country?**

As already specified, the Danish system towards care of the elderly is a decentralised system where the local authority is the body obliged to offer personal and practical assistance, which is free of charge. The local authority also determines the level for home-help services in the local authority (the service level). Finally, the local authority makes the decision as to who is entitled to receive home-help services.

There are also specific national policies on elderly care that have been established to ensure an environment for elderly care that secures a continuous level of care that is as high as possible. The policies generally focus on the possibility for elderly to live as long as possible in their own homes with as high quality of life as possible. The Services Act i.e. requires municipalities to offer preventive home visits at least one time a year for everyone over 75 years.

Many municipalities now work with organising the elderly care so it also ensures that older people exploit their own resources and maintain an active life as long as possible. There are already many good initiatives under way in different municipalities where the current experiences show, that this focus both delivers economic gains in the form of released resources and benefits for individuals who are more self-reliant and can achieve a better quality of life.

### 3. How can communities be supported to become good places to grow older?

#### **National framework of mechanisms to monitor quality in the care for elderly**

As part of ensuring a high standard for elderly there is currently being developed a national framework of mechanisms to monitor quality in the care for elderly.

The goal is to ensure that services for the elderly are designed from knowledge of the results of prior actions. The aim of the project is to ensure professional quality of information designed to offer a catalogue of tools that employees and managers may use to measure and compare the professional quality in elderly care.

The knowledge drawn out of the indicators can be used by politicians, government and citizens. Information on the technical quality may be used for municipal priorities and follow up on quality and his people when choosing among multiple offers.

#### **Involvement of volunteers**

The Danish system for services to elderly persons or people with disabilities, including home-help services (LTC) is a universal system, and is the responsibility of the local authority. There is equal access to the services for anyone who needs them and it is free of charge. Therefore informal caregivers represent a minor part of the caring-system.

However, informal care may be provided by relatives. A person, who is entitled to receive personal or practical assistance or support (LTC), may for example elect to designate a person to carry out the duties. Such designation shall be subject to approval by the local authority, which is then to contract with the designated person as to the scope and content of his/her duties, reliability of delivery, payment, etc.

Generally, the supply of services from voluntary associations etc., is widespread in Denmark, but they usually do not perform tasks in the care sector (instead they arrange social activities etc). About one third of the Danish population carries out voluntary work. With the current civil society strategy the government wishes to increase this to 50 pct. of the population.

### 4. What is the attitude towards taking into account and making use of local diversity in your country?

As mentioned earlier, it is in Denmark the responsibility of the local authority to provide and organise the framework for elderly care in Denmark. There is thus a substantial amount of liberty for municipalities to pursue local variety.

### 5. Do you use indicators for evaluating policy measures? What is your country's approach to the (early) participation of researchers in the evaluation process?

Currently there has not been developed general compulsory guidelines as use of researchers in the evaluation process. There is however currently a lot of focus on promoting use of the best current knowledge in policy processes at the Ministry of Social Affairs. The aim is to uncover the effects of our social services through a specific strategy on this.