

Ole Petter Askheim: Personal assistance service in Norway

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Høgskolen
i Lillehammer

Lillehammer University College • hil.no

History

- 1990: Project initiated by the National association of persons with physical disabilities
- 1994: Personal assistance launched as an area of priority in the Government's plan of action for the disabled 1994-1997
- 2000: Personal assistance included in the Social Services Act

Personal assistance in the Social Services Act

- Described as an "alternative organisation of practical and personal help for people with comprehensive disabilities with a need of assistance in their daily life, both inside and outside their homes" (i.e. seen as an alternative to the ordinary services)
- It is emphasised that personal assistance should be seen in connection with other services
- Former services that are replaced are mainly home help, personal support and to some extent home-based nursing services
- An increasing number has personal assistance as their only service (33% - 2002)

Personal assistance in the Social Services Act (continued)

- Not limited to certain categories of disabled people
- The decisive criterion to get personal assistance is the ability to act as manager for one's assistants. (The official term is "user-controlled personal assistance")

Personal assistance in the Social Services Act (continued)

- The authorisation in the act gives the municipalities an obligation to include personal assistance in their repertoire of services BUT: does not imply an individual right to get the service.

How is personal assistance financed?

- The social services, included personal assistance, is exclusively a municipal responsibility
- To stimulate the municipalities to implement the arrangement, the national authorities offer support for a periode of three years to cover additional costs for the municipalities when the arrangement is introduced to a new person (About 12 500 euro the first year, the half the next two years)
- Most people (90%) who have had other services before personal assistance get an increasing number of hours; (on average 20 hours more each week)

Who are the employers?

- The municipality: About 65%
- User-led cooperative (ULOBA):
About 25%
- The user: About 9%

Who are the users?

- 2005: About 1700 persons
- Mainly persons with physical impairments, about 1 of 10 with sensory impairments and/or brain damages. Very few (4%) with intellectual impairments



Why do people want personal assistance?

- The ordinary services give limited opportunities to have influence over one's own life
- Lack flexibility
- Are unpredictable
- The user has to adapt to the systems and routines of the service apparatus
- You never know who the person is who comes to assist you

The extent of personal assistance

- The average user: 36 hours each week
- 43 % between 16 – 38 hours each week,
26 % less than 16 hours – 28% more
than 38 hours.

The assistants

- Women (85%)
- About 50% with education at upper secondary level (increasing)
- Part time work
 - Average 16,5 hours each week
 - 43% less than 14 hours each week
 - 42% between 14-29 hours each week
 - 14% more than 29 hours each week



The assistants (continued)

- 2 out of 3 combine personal assistance with paid or unpaid work or studies
- About 53% permanently employed
- 23% temporarily employed
- The rest answers "do not know" or has not answered the question
- What does permanently employment mean
 - Municipality: Either connected to the actual person (most of the assistants) or permanently employed in the municipality
 - ULOBA – permanently employment in ULOBA, but connected to the actual person

The assistants – what are they doing? (often or very often)

- House work: 80%
- Personal care: 80%
- Daily errands: 56%
- Outdoor work (20%)
- Leisure time activities: 33%
- Transportation: 42%

How satisfied are the users with their personal assistance? (very or fairly satisfied)

- The opportunity to select one's own assistants: 90%
- The possibility to have fewer persons as helpers: 86%
- The possibility to have a close and safe relation to the assistants: 80%
- The flexibility regarding what tasks the assistants can do: 88%
- The flexibility regarding at what times you can get assistance: 82%
- The possibilities for real user control: 89%
- The possibility to live an active life: 85%
- More independence from family and friends: 83%
- Better opportunities for equality with other citizens in society: 76%
- Better opportunities for increased quality of life: 88%



How do the assistants evaluate their work?

- 4 out of 5 are content or very content with their work situation
- 3 out of 4 are satisfied or very satisfied with their the extent of their job, their working hours and the safety of their employment
- 15% are not satisfied with the extent of their job (want more hours)
- 20% are not satisfied with their employment safety (mainly temporarily employed assistants)
- 1 out of 3 are not satisfied with their payment



Recent changes in the Norwegian arrangement

- December 2005: Personal assistance extended to persons who are not able to act as managers for the arrangement (Important groups: adults with intellectual impairments and families with children with impairments)
- 2007: White Paper proposes that personal assistance should be authorised as an individual right for persons in need of extensive services (extending 20 hours each week). The proposal will be treated as a part of proposed new common act for the health and social services, autumn -08)
- The White Paper also proposes that the users should have the right to choose employer

Consequences of the changes?

- The extension of personal assistance:
 - More people will get personal assistance
 - More users – less hours?
 - Less hours – less user control?
 - More pragmatic solutions?
- The extension of rights:
 - Stronger rights for persons with extensive needs
 - Weaker rights for persons with less extensive needs?
 - A need of 20 hours each week as a condition to get personal assistance?