



Public contract - Grønn Omsorg i Storbyen, Oslo Church City Mission

Green care – an active and meaningful life on the farm

Summary

The Oslo Church City Mission runs an innovative daycare scheme for older people with dementia, which offers them the chance to work on a farm for three days a week. This means that they continue to have an active and meaningful life in the company of a group of friends, and gives their permanent carers some time off. The Grønn Omsorg i Storbyen ('Green Care in the City') scheme was launched in 2009 as a three-year pilot, and in 2013 was given a permanent budget by Oslo city council. It is funded under a contract which provides for a standard daily fee, and costs much the same as conventional daycare. Bridging finance during the tendering process was provided by a foundation.



The idea for 'Green Care' came about in 2007 when Anita Ellefsen of Oslo Church City Mission had a phone call from the wife of a dementia sufferer. He was in his 60s and had led a successful working life, and his wife wanted to find a way in which he could continue carrying out an active and meaningful activity. "He is used to acting to solve problems, not talking about them," she said. This set Ms Ellefsen thinking about what sort of setting could provide people with a cognitive impairment the opportunity to be active and lead a meaningful life. Norway has a centuries-old tradition of farms accepting visitors, mainly groups of children and people with psychological problems. So she wrote a project proposal and

approached the county governor, knowing that he had extensive networking contacts.

Ms Ellefsen then had to find a suitable farm. Tori and Jon Ivar Bakke run Skjerven Farm in Maridalen, 10 km north of Oslo city centre. The farmland runs down to the banks of Maridalsvannet, the lake that provides 90% of Oslo's drinking water, and so pollution is strictly controlled. Therefore the number of animals they can keep is limited and the farm could not be run profitably from farming alone. They wanted to sustain their life on the farm and so diversification was in order.

Ms Ellefsen worked out what the necessary budget would be, and contacted the leader of Oslo's city council. She was invited to give a half-hour presentation – and as there was no political opposition the council agreed to support a three-year pilot project. The city is conscious that its ageing population means that more and more of its residents will be suffering from dementia, and had been on the lookout for ways to improve the quality of the care they offer. The interests of both sides coincided neatly.

Varied part-time work

The *Grønn Omsorg i Storbyen* ('Green Care in the City') project offers daycare for three days a week for seven people aged between 55 and 75 suffering from dementia. Clients are assessed before being accepted, and they have to be fit enough to walk, care for themselves and work in the open air. They benefit from being in a community of friends and from undertaking a variety of activities, including tending to the sheep and horses, and walking in the countryside. Transport and meals are provided, and the cost is borne by the municipality.





The scheme allows clients to stay living at home with their families for much longer – and it gives their everyday carers a break. The innovation is not so much that people with cognitive impairments work on a farm, but that they are not excluded from society when they do it.

From pilot to mainstream funding

After the three-year pilot period, Oslo City Council mainstreamed the scheme. Ms Ellefsen thinks that one reason for this success was that the City Mission set up and carefully documented a systematic model. “One thing we did that no one else did was to use the pilot as an action learning process. We gave regular reports to the municipality which identified the problems we were facing,” she says. This learning has been institutionalised. Ms Ellefsen does not believe that such an innovation would have been possible had public procurement been the only method used.

In May 2013, the city issued a call for tenders. It allocated an annual budget of 1.4 million Norwegian kroner (€165,000) to pay for between six and ten places. Having learnt the importance of qualitative factors, when it assessed the tenders it weighted cost and quality equally. But in any case *Grønn Omsorg* is not an expensive scheme – it costs about the same as conventional daycare. It has a very simple financial model. The contract between the council and the Church City Mission provides for a fee to be paid for each day that a client spends on the farm, and this works out at about €70 per head per day.

The result of the tender was announced in September 2013, which meant that the transition from pilot to mainstream funding had involved an 18-month gap. This posed a financial problem for the City Mission, but the project was symbolically important to it, and it did not want to let the farmers down. It searched for bridging funding from private sources and struck lucky with the Kavli Trust.

Organic growth

The city’s population is around 600,000, and seven places does not go far when serving that size of population. Yet there are no plans to expand the scheme. “It is not an easy job – in fact it’s a double job, and you have to like people a lot. So we would need to find farmers who are suited to it,” Ms Ellefsen says. Therefore, despite the enormous latent demand locally, and the many people interested in it from other places in Norway and abroad, the initiative seems destined to remain quite small. “We don’t want to promote our scheme too much to avoid raising false hopes,” Ms Ellefsen says.

However the Church City Mission realises that peoples’ needs change as they age, so it needs to broaden its repertoire. It has a number of innovative ideas up its sleeve, such as “blue care” – daycare on boats. “After all, we have a lot of sea round here,” she says.

Further information:

Oslo Church City Mission: <http://www.bymisjon.no/Support/English-Site/The-Church-City-Mission-in-Norway-/The-Church-City-Mission-in-Oslo/>

Grønn Omsorg i Storbyen: <http://www.bymisjon.no/Prosjekter/Gronn-omsorg/>

BBC film on *Grønn Omsorg i Storbyen*: <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-25316599>

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