



“Everybody benefits from adequate health care”

The rights concerning health care for asylum seekers are regulated in an agreement between the Government and the County Councils responsible for the health sector in each County. All asylum-seeking children under 18 years of age have the same rights as any Swedish child. Maternity care, childcare and advice concerning contraception and abortion are also available to every asylum seeker.

In all other cases, a person can be treated only if a doctor judges the ailment to be an emergency or one for which treatment cannot be postponed. The legislation is difficult to understand and this results in asylum seekers being transferred from one part of the health care system to another. This is a weighty reason for developing a Migration Health Centre.

Working at Migration Health Care Centre Cosmos is a team comprising a general practitioner, nurses, a midwife and a psychiatrist. They have gained great knowledge in migration medicine by working with people in crisis.

Annika Ågren, team leader at Cosmos, says that their strong point is that they have great knowledge about this special group of patients and have developed efficient strategies for meeting their special needs. One example is the commonly held belief in the need to judge whether the background to the sickness is a crisis caused by flight or by traumatic experiences, and to distinguish psychological problems from psychiatric illness. It is of great importance to pay attention to the living situation of the whole family and especially that of the children.

Facts and results

Cosmos is financed by Uppsala Municipality, 24%, Uppsala County Council, 51% and the Equal Programme 25%.

By obtaining adequate health service and advice, asylum seekers and newly arrived migrants will be well enough to participate in the activities and tuition offered. This will shorten the way towards becoming self-supporting and will reduce the costs of the health care system and the Municipality regardless of the outcome of the asylum application.

Essentials:

- Work out common methods for the cooperating organisations.
- Allocate time to reflect on and think over.
- Create routines for health dialogues for every newly arrived migrant.
- Create robust routines for transferring records.
- Publicise the existence of the specialist health care centre.

Health dialogue

Every newly arrived asylum seeker or migrant is offered a dialogue with a nurse at Cosmos. It is optional but most people accept the opportunity. Some tests are made to prevent infectious diseases, but the most important part is the dialogue about the actual living conditions, earlier illnesses and other health related problems. If a family arrives together, the health dialogue usually involves all the family. An important part of the health dialogue is advising on health, how to lead a health-improving life under the new living conditions and how the Swedish health care system works – where to go for a consultation, self-care, how to make use of the advice service and how to make appointments.

Experience shows that many asylum seekers are high consumers of health care. That is why it is so important to meet with them as soon as possible after their arrival in Sweden. The aim is to promote health and well-being and to prevent illness.

Advising activities in cooperation

Migration Health Care Centre Cosmos, one of three projects within the Uppsala branch of RE-KOMP, cooperates with the two other projects. They have a health-promoting perspective in common. The staff at Cosmos regularly visits the young newly arrived migrants at an upper secondary school called Celsius where *We're Breaking the Code* is running. Newly arrived adult migrants with health-related problems participate in the *Health Track* project. Within the context of Swedish as a second language tuition and introduction courses, lessons are given about Swedish attitudes to sickness and health and about the way the health service works. An important issue to talk about is how to lead a health-promoting life in the new country—Topics covered include nourishing food, exercise, sleeping habits, tobacco, alcohol and other drugs, self-care is another important area covered.

The team at Cosmos also advises the staff at other primary health centres, school nurses, and social workers at reception offices. It is very important that these services are aware of the existence of Cosmos and make use of the special skills developed at this health care centre.

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“A new and important profession”

The health care system and the attitude to health and sickness differ from country to country. For newly arrived migrants in Sweden it can be difficult to find their way around the Swedish health and medical system.

The International Health Advisers are a resource both for the health care sector and the Municipality, as well as for newly arrived migrants. Questions that need to be answered could be:

- Why have I changed my lifestyle since I came to Sweden?
- Why is it that my family and I are more often ill here in Sweden?

In Malmö, a number of migrants trained in health and medical subjects have continued their education in order to become International Health Advisers (IHAs) a co-operative project of the Regional Board of Health in Skåne, the Social Insurance Office, the Public Employment Service and the City of Malmö that started in 2001. Within the framework of DP RE-KOMP since 2002, the task of these IHAs has been to counsel asylum seekers on health-related issues such as self-care, the Swedish health and medical system and how to treat common medical ailments. Information is provided by means of lectures and discussions in the mother tongues of the participants and in elementary Swedish at civic offices, education and health centres, migrant associations, etc.

Purpose

IHAs are focused on increasing equality in health in Malmö and on increasing public knowledge within the field of self-care, sexual health, tobacco, alcohol and drugs, etc. The project's purpose is to empower asylum seekers and to increase their ability to manage their lives in their new surroundings. The project makes use of the IHAs' skills and increases their status by establishing them on the regular Swedish labour market. Before starting their work as IHAs, they participate in a basic training programme for about six weeks. Several organisations are involved in the programme such as the Regional Board of Health in Skåne, the University Hospital MAS in Malmö, the Social Medical Unit, the Social Insurance Office, the University of Malmö and the Red Cross. The IHAs' further education runs in parallel to their work.

Opportunities

The work done in the project can be described as a process in which the IHAs develop new methods to prevent poor health and illness within the selected language groups seen within the larger context of public health work. Lessons and information are given in the following languages, Albanian, Arabic, Bosnian, Serbian, Dari, Pashtu, Persian, Somali, Kurdish and Swedish. The IHAs have a unique competence that complements the Swedish health care system - language skills, cross-cultural knowledge and understanding combined with medical knowledge. This makes them very important link-workers between their language and cultural groups and the Swedish health care system.



Results

The health advisers have encouraged altered behaviour concerning health and about 700 asylum seekers per year have so far been advised by the IHAs. The outcome is that a lot of different actors involved in asylum seekers' health situation have been cooperating to promote and work towards the same goal, namely, a better health situation for the asylum seeker. The impact has been to give asylum seekers a chance to improve their health situations and to receive information in order to make adequate decisions about their own lives and this is empowering for the individual.

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Essentials

- Recruitment – put high demands on the IHAs' competence and personal suitability.
- Education – provide good induction, high-quality training and continuous further on-the-job training
- Information – it is important that cooperating organisations have knowledge about the IHAs and their work.
- Continue an open dialogue about the staff's different roles, commissions and areas of responsibility.

Facts and results

International Health Advisers are financed by:
City of Malmö, 34%, Regional Board of Health in Skåne, 41% and the Equal Programme, 25%.

The IHAs' work can, in the long run, result in cost-savings for the whole of society. Health-promoting efforts increase the opportunities for the new Swedish population to become self-supporting.

The National Thematic Network Asylum, within the Equal Programme in Sweden, has recommended that the national government should create a new profession of International Health Advisers in the health sector. This competence can be employed by municipalities, county councils and other enterprises working in the health sector.



“To make the situation comprehensible”

Celsiuskolan in Uppsala is a non-compulsory upper secondary school for pupils aged 16-20. One of the programmes offered here, IVIK, is a programme for newly arrived young migrants: asylum seekers or young people with a permanent residence permit to stay. There are about 150 pupils (January 2005).

In this programme, the students learn Swedish as a second language and at least maths and English. They also have the opportunity to study science, geography, history, religion and basic computer knowledge.

Some arrived in Sweden on their own without their families; some live in big families. Some hardly ever went to school; some completed almost 10-12 years of school. Some carry traumatic experiences and are in bad shape. These wide variations in background mean that the tuition has to satisfy all kinds of need. Everyone is aiming for the same target, namely, completing the courses and obtaining the certificate that will entitle them to apply to any non-compulsory school.

Why this project?

Every day, people act in a certain way for every new moment that passes. We do it without thinking. These pupils did the same in their native countries. But here they cannot act in the same way, which was the right one at home, but is not always

right here in the new surroundings. Every day, the youngsters are put in a new situation that requires new ways of responding. New rules appear all of a sudden. These rules, from how to act at the bus stop to the rights concerning finance, marriage or the right to say no to such a demand, are important pieces in the jigsaw puzzle that they are now trying to fit together.

What are we doing, and how?

When the curriculum for this project was being planned, former pupils were asked about what kind of information they would have wanted to receive during their early days in their new location. By putting the answers together, a quite clear picture appeared. A curriculum containing the five themes of *the School System, Private Finance, Health and Health Care, the Family, Law and Order*, was agreed.

The information is given, one hour once a week, in the pupils' native languages and a dialogue to explore the consequences for and the effects on every person takes place. By these means, everybody has the opportunity to understand and appreciate the content regardless of their ability in the new country's language.

“Here we can ask and express exactly what we mean, and understand the answer.”, says one of the pupils.

From the teachers' point of view, it is a way of telling the pupils that we all count on them, now and in the times ahead, to participate in our society at all different levels.

What has happened so far?

Within this project it has been possible to improve the tutoring methods; the Swedish language teachers and the native language teachers have tried out new and better ways of working together and helping the pupils in the best way.

It has been possible to try other things within the project, for example, bringing in a physiotherapist to help pupils who are suffering from physical pains caused by anxiety, depression, trauma or just a complicated living situation.

This project has been an important opportunity for trying out new ways to reach the goal, by giving the pupils information, improving their knowledge and enhancing their self-esteem which all together hopefully lead to *empowerment*.

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Facts and results

We're Breaking the Code is financed by Uppsala Municipality, 75%, and the Equal Programme, 25%.

The Municipality can in the long run benefit from the project by having decreasing costs for the social welfare service, health care and the police.

Making use of the mother tongue teachers' special cross-cultural knowledge and awareness helps to reduce discrimination in the labour market.

Equality and diversity are placed high on the agenda for the tuition of young people.

Essentials

- Be sensitive to pupils' needs and desires.
- Be innovative and creative throughout the programme.
- Devote time to cooperative planning for mother tongue teachers, second language teachers, teachers of other subjects and people from other professions who are important for the pupils' progress.
- Make 'We're Breaking the Code' an essential part of the whole curriculum to influence all the tuition.
- Organise joint in-service training for all staff working with the same group of pupils.



“The body is always with you”

The Health Track is a special way of organising *Swedish for Immigrants* (SFI), that provides knowledge of the Swedish language and about Swedish society. Municipalities have an obligation to offer SFI to newly arrived adult migrants. The Health Track recognises that some migrants are not well enough to participate in a full-time programme. In spite of this, they are entitled to receive tuition to introduce them to Swedish society and the labour market and to learn the Swedish language.

This special group needs rehabilitation and health-promoting activities. In parallel, they learn Swedish and how they themselves, as well as their families, can lead qualitative lives. The starting point was that social services staff with special responsibility for children found that some children were not well and that the main cause was that their mothers suffered from very poor health.

The idea behind the Health Track is that a person has to feel healthy to learn all the new skills required to enter and live in a new society. Another idea is that there is something healthy in every person that can be built upon and strengthened to compensate for different kinds of ill health.

The tuition is organised to meet the needs of the participants. This means that the groups are fairly small, the number of hours few and the environment safe. A team, consisting of Swedish as a second language teachers, physiotherapists, assistants and social workers, works out an individual programme together with each participant.

The tuition uses the participants' needs and conditions as a starting point and they get the opportunity to look after their health problems. This makes participants' attendance very high.

Swedish for migrants, physical exercises and other physical activities, computer training and conversation is mixed in a varied programme. The health theme is consistently present. It is about improving eating habits, increasing physical activity and understanding the body's reactions to stress and worries. The participants are offered counselling in groups under the guidance of a professional counsellor, translators are used to facilitate the quality of the counselling.

Safety and confidence

– The teachers report that the participants attend the lessons although they are very ill. They feel that it is acceptable to take a rest, or go out if necessary to reduce their stress or to be able to concentrate again.

– It requires great flexibility to teach these people. They suffer from memory and concentration problems. These must be addressed by very short items, a lot of repetition and slow progress.



To rehabilitate the participants, other professions are important in their education. A dietician, midwife, nurse and dental hygienist come on a regular basis to the school to advise about health-promoting activities and how to lead a healthy life. The content of these advisory sessions and the physiotherapist's lessons is elaborated on by the language teachers. All this together creates a mini-course on the health theme. It can be about a visit to a health care centre, about digestion or what causes high blood pressure and diabetes.

When the participants feel better, they aim for much more than they ever believed would be possible for them. They seize control of their lives.

The participants are becoming conscious about their own responsibility for their own wellbeing. At the point when they realise that they can influence their situation, the rehabilitation has been successful. It is not about curing the participants' ailments but instead giving them tools to handle the severe living situation and to go on with their lives.

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Essentials

- Have clear objectives
- Explain areas of responsibility
- Dedicate time for cooperation
- Organise guidance for the team
- Document health improvements.

Facts and effects

The Health Track is financed by Uppsala Municipality, 74%, Swedish Migration Board, 6%, and the Equal Programme, 20%. In future, the County Council will finance the physiotherapist to ensure that the methods that proved effective will survive.

The Health Track eases the pressure on the health care system when people become able to cope with their ailments themselves.

Knowledge about a balanced diet and health has an effect on the whole family.

Participation in the Swedish language tuition increases the opportunities for becoming self-supporting.



“Make use of skills”

The participation of asylum seekers in the introduction programme for newly arrived migrants and refugees means that they can use their time awaiting the decision more effectively. The idea behind the project is to acknowledge and make use of the individual's educational and vocational experiences from as early as the asylum period.

Adult asylum seekers who are motivated to participate in introduction training full-time and are not expected to be refused entry in the near future are recruited to the introduction programmes. After discussions between the Swedish Migration Board, the City of Malmö, the Public Employment Service and the asylum seeker, a decision is taken and a contract signed. Asylum seekers are educated together with migrants and refugees who already have a residence permit.

Purpose

An important purpose is to reduce or prevent illness that is caused or aggravated by the insecurity and alienation that can be brought on during the time that the asylum seeker is awaiting a ruling.

Facts and results

The Asylum Seekers in Introduction Programme is financed by City of Malmö, 25%, The Swedish Migration Board, 50%, the Equal Programme, 25%.

The project Asylum Seekers in Introduction has resulted in cost savings and time gains.

New forms of cooperation have been established in line with agreements at national and local levels. The good results that are starting to become apparent are:

- Improvement in the self-esteem and health of the individual
- Accelerated entry into the Swedish labour market
- Increased opportunities for becoming self-supporting
- Contact with the individual's vocation pending decision
- Several persons having received SFI (Swedish For Immigrants) certificates while still asylum seekers.

Essentials

- Agreement about the goals of the programme
- Clarity about the fact that participation in the programme does not affect the application for asylum
- Awareness of the structural obstacles for asylum seekers
- Informing the staff at the school and at the vocational training place that the participant is awaiting a decision on an asylum application
- Willingness to change and to try new ways



The project is made possible by the cooperation between representatives from the City of Malmö, the Public Employment Service, the Swedish Migration Board and Lernia, a local education company. Through this cooperation, the different organisations can develop opportunities for a coherent perspective on the asylum seeker, the decision process and how the asylum seeker's life can be while he or she is awaiting a ruling.

Opportunities

Those asylum seekers who have received a residence permit have been given a real head start and progressed considerably in their introduction already during their asylum period, and this will have considerably shortened the path to becoming self-supporting through employment or regular studies.

Experiences

The experiences of the asylum seekers on the introduction programme, and those of instructors, work experience supervisors and asylum seekers themselves have thus far been very positive. Teaching asylum seekers and persons with residence permits in the same group has worked well.

Those persons who have been refused entry have been positive about having begun introduction training pending their decision. They consider that they have been provided the opportunity to do something meaningful during the waiting period, which has made them feel better psychologically, and that they have even been provided the chance to learn new things within their occupational field.

An important gain is that the individual's resources are utilised and acknowledged at a very early stage, which improves the person's self-esteem, motivation, psychological and, over the long term, physical health. As a result of the introduction being vocationally orientated, the risk that the individual's vocational skills become out of date is reduced.

The project is innovative both in process and method:

- Persons with a residence permit and persons awaiting a ruling attend the same activity
- Cooperation between the different organisations and authorities involved, in mapping the asylum seeker
- Funding of the project
- Coherent approach towards language training and orientation towards the labour market in Sweden as well as the home country.

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“It feels like I’ve got new colleagues”

Personnel from different organisations meet asylum seekers or newly arrived migrants or refugees in their daily work. They can be personnel from the Swedish Migration Board, the municipality, teachers, doctors or nurses, the Public Employment Service and so on. Despite the fact that they all are working with the same target group, their overall view of the system is often missing.

Personnel who provide assistance to newly arrived migrants and refugees need:

- a common ground of knowledge and understanding in the areas of mapping, different organisational structures and target group knowledge
- a common approach for receiving migrants, refugees and asylum seekers who are waiting for or have already been granted asylum in order to utilise resources both at the individual and the organisational level

Therefore a programme aimed at increasing staff competency across organisational boundaries is created. The programme is planned and implemented locally. Lectures and seminars give staff in the participating organisations an opportunity to share experiences from working with migrants. The programme is created by a team of staff from the City of Malmö, the Swedish Migration Board, Public Employment Service, the Regional Board of Health in Skåne and the Red Cross.

Background

Staff in different units in the Malmö municipality stressed the need to improve cooperation between the organisations that work with newly arrived migrants.

Another important reason for creating the programme was the agreement that had been signed by five national authorities on improving the introduction for asylum seekers and newly arrived migrants and refugees. This agreement was followed by an agreement at the local level. The Swedish Migration Board and the City of Malmö signed an agreement stating that cooperation between the organisations should have high priority.

Methods

In the Malmö branch of RE-KOMP, the work started by mapping needs, interest and motivation among staff for various competence-developing activities. The mapping started with a huge seminar in 2003, in which 100 participants from six different organisations from NGOs, local authority and governmental organisations took part. The purpose was to create collaboration around different attitudes and terms and to develop new methods for cooperation. Following areas were defined and prioritised:

- Knowledge about the participating organisations
- Knowledge about the target group
- Techniques for skills-auditing of migrants, regarding educational and professional background

- Areas for cooperation between the organisations
- Health and empowerment in the target group.

Two working-groups were formed with the objective of developing a common methodology for mapping and information. This resulted in two training programmes:

1. A programme developing techniques for skills-auditing of migrants, regarding educational and professional background and
2. A course on Traumatized Refugees and PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder).

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Facts and result

The Local Programme for Raising the Level of Competence is financed by: City of Malmö, 75%, the Equal Programme, 25%.

Staff in participating organisations, benefits from increased knowledge about and confidence in each others' organisations, responsibilities and skills. With achieved knowledge comes better cooperation, which improves the work and makes the work done in all organisations more efficient.

When the methods of mapping and information are developed, migrants will get better services for entering the labour market and becoming self-supporting.

The information and advice given by different organisations is more consistent and will empower the migrant to make decisions about his/her life.

Essentials

- The process of gaining approval from the different organisations has to take time
- The management in the organisations must give their support
- The representatives in the working groups need to have a mandate
- Focus on assets and areas of improvement
- Formulate and agree on common and fundamental values



A development partnership

RE-KOMP is a developing partnership (DP) within the European Equal Programme that forms part of the framework of the European Social Fund. The overall objective of Equal Sweden is to promote working life free from discrimination and inequality and the programme is characterised by diversity.

The nine organisations, mentioned below, target newly arrived migrants who include asylum seekers as well as anyone holding a residence permit.

RE-KOMP has undertaken the development of methods for improving the reception of migrants by running six projects. New solutions are required in second-language tuition and in providing information about society and the labour market. Activities must target migrants, service-providers and the public at large.

Health perspective

Experience shows that poor health and living conditions comprise the greatest obstacle to integrating into society, entering the labour market and becoming self-supporting. Therefore health and health-promoting activities are the focus of all six projects run by RE-KOMP. Poor health must be diagnosed. The provision of proper care and health-promoting activities is essential. Advice on caring for oneself, nutrition and exercise is important in helping people to keep healthy and to improve their health. Health and well-being are prerequisites for learning and developing the new skills required for coping with the new way of life in a new country.

Empowerment

Empowerment is a key word in the Equal Programme. This means focusing on every single person's opportunities for

taking responsibility for their own life and influencing and changing their own life situation. By becoming aware of the codes of conduct in operation in the new location, by learning the language of the majority living there, by learning about and understanding the society and how the labour market operates, newly arrived migrants will be able to make decisions to influence their living situation in a positive way.

Making use of abilities and skills

All activities run by RE-KOMP aim at making use of people's skills and abilities. Society should provide the necessary means for being self-reliant without becoming dependent on social welfare benefits. This perspective will promote and ensure equality and fair treatment on the labour market and in society.

Dissemination and influence

Dissemination and influence are fundamental within the Equal Programme which will be run at local, regional and national levels. Models and methods developed in the projects will be presented as good practice at conferences and workshops. The findings aim at influencing policies and politics in the areas concerned.

The experiences will be disseminated at European level by the activities run by ASPIRE!, the transnational cooperation partnership of which RE-KOMP is a part. ASPIRE! aims at influencing practice in politics and the economy, developing attitudes and actions on the labour market and within society in all the European nations.

"Cooperation creates success"

DP RE-KOMP is a joint venture by nine organisations in Uppsala, in central Sweden, and Malmö, in the far south. The cooperating organisations represent governmental institutions, the Swedish Migration Board, county council districts with responsibility for primary health care, municipal statutory units such as education and social welfare and NGOs. New ways of cooperation have developed – resources have been shared, common attitudes on the specific tasks being addressed have emerged and cross-organisational working methods have generated ongoing progress.

Cooperation between organisations in both cities has proved fruitful. RE-KOMP is a forum that invigorates and inspires discussions on policy and practical tasks. The habit of organisations acting only in isolation is vanishing and uniform points of view based on a common understanding of the problems being addressed are developing.

The projects run in cooperation have generated a learning process – the most important idea in the Equal Programme – that will influence routine activities.

Technical and practical information

Project period: 15/11/2001 - 30/6/2005.

Dissemination continues until 30/10/2005.

Budget: Total approx. € 3.9 million. The European Social Fund contributes €1.07 million. The financing model supports the transition from project to routine activities.

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Migrationsverket Uppsala
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SECA Project Management KB

City of Malmö
South West Skåne Health care District
The Red Cross
Swedish Migration Board in Uppsala
and Malmö