

Preventive measures and treatment for substance abuse among young people

The Municipality of Linköping is Sweden's fifth largest municipality with around 150,000 inhabitants. Linköping has a number of hi-tech companies in Linköping, a university hospital and a university with around 27,000 students. There are approximately 14,000 pupils at compulsory school (from 6 to 16) and around 5,700 upper secondary school students (from 16 to 19).

The model for provision of social support and treatment

One of the social services' greatest challenges is to reach people at a sufficiently early stage to prevent social problems. One important strategy is to offer measures that are simple and easily accessible for individuals as well as enabling them to choose among various forms of support and treatment. A number of these activities are run jointly by the municipality and the county council. Support and treatment offered in the form of out-patient care are free of charge.

The Social Services in Linköping make a clear distinction between the exercise of public authority and social support and treatment. Individuals can contact the activity that they wish to receive support from.

The current situation – the prevalence of alcohol and drugs among young people

In the most recent lifestyle survey, 95% of school pupils in year 8 (14 year olds) said that they had never tried cannabis. Among second-year upper secondary school students (17 year olds), 85% had never tried cannabis, 11% said that they had tried it, 3% said that they sometimes used it and 1% were regular users. As for alcohol habits among young people, 69% of year 8 pupils (14 years old) said that they had never drunk alcohol. 21% said that they drank once a month or less frequently and 10% that they drank alcohol two to four times a month or more often. Among the secondary school students, 19 per cent said that they had never drunk alcohol, 42% that they drank once a month or less frequently and 39% that they drank two to four times a month or more often. Alcohol consumption is the biggest problem in Sweden among both young people and adults.



Support for children and families

Preventive work

Numerous research reports show that general preventive work at an early stage reaches a broad group and prevents social problems arising or becoming worse. It is therefore very important to be able to offer different general measures. Targeted measures must also be available focused on children, young people and adults where there are risk factors and problems.

To strengthen parents in their parental role, the municipality offers parental support. There are family centres with child clinics and social workers in the local neighbourhoods. The parental programme is available from early childhood to the teenage years. Children and young people are taught at school about the risks of alcohol and drugs and information is provided to parents at parents meetings.

Teachers and other school staff for different years are offered various courses that provide knowledge and information about drug prevention.

A policy has been drawn up for schools on how they should act if they suspect that a pupil uses drugs. There is a special youth clinic for testing young people which families can consult if they suspect drug use.

Field workers perform outreach work locally in neighbourhoods and various youth environments. The municipality runs leisure centres with employed staff that offer alcohol and drug-free leisure activities.

There is a school pastoral team consisting of school nurses, welfare officer and psychologists at every school. The school nurses carry out health interviews with all pupils, which provide a good opportunity to detect pupils in need of support. The school pastoral team can provide support and also refer the family to other available support measures.

The accessibility of alcohol and drugs is closely related with the extent of both use and abuse. Alcohol licensing and inspection are therefore also very important in preventive work. It is self-evident for the municipality to work together with the police in this preventive work.

Support treatment for young people with substance abuse problems

Social problems can have a number of causes, which require different forms of support. For substance abuse problems, the municipality offers measures for children, young people and their families as well as to adults. It is important to include the child perspective in all activity. In Linköping, there is a special activity for children who have parents that abuse drugs or alcohol. Every year around 130 children participate in "*Secret Clubs*", a support measure in the form of group activities. Here these children are able to meet other children and talk with an adult about feelings and experiences relating to what it can be like when a parent abuses. Various kinds of outpatient measures within the social services reach over 4,000 people.

As regards support and treatment for young people with substance abuse problems or who risk having such problems, treatment is offered both at treatment homes and as an outpatient. Treatment at treatment homes has not always led to the desired results, a large proportion of care is prematurely terminated and

there is a risk of negative influence among young people. Despite this, care at treatment homes is sometimes necessary. In recent years, Linköping has had around 55 young people enrolled at treatment homes (24-hour care). Of these around 6-10 of the young people have been enrolled on a non-voluntary basis (under the Care of Young Persons Act.).



Support for young people

Brief Strategic Family Therapy (BSFT)

Linköping has worked actively to develop outpatient intervention both in the form of treatment and support.

However, it has been difficult to find effective methods for young people with substance abuse problems. During 2010, collaboration started with Miami University and an addiction centre for young people in Stockholm, Maria Ungdom. Miami University offers family treatment, Brief Strategic Family Therapy (BSFT). The method is evidence-based and has obtained good results in family treatment focusing on young people with substance abuse problems. Linköping has trained one treatment team for BSFT, the second team in Europe. Several European countries have expressed an interest in training in this method. BSFT is a brief family therapy with a duration of around four months. The treatment is delivered in 8-16 sessions, which aim to strengthen the whole family system and open up communication in the family. One of our challenges in the work with young people with substance abuse problems is to motivate the young person and his or her family to accept and complete the course of treatment. When a family has agreed to accept help, the BSFT team works actively to reach the family and does not give up in the face of resistance. The treatment has also shown positive results when it comes to reduced substance abuse and other social problems.

Every session is recorded on video, which then serves as the basis for counselling for the next meeting with the family. This is a new way for our social workers/treatment staff to work which increases both the competence of those providing treatment and ensures quality in the content of the treatment.

www.bsft.org

Other support for children and young people

In addition to what has been described above, the municipality offers various forms of family treatment measures and targeted measures focused on young people.

As regards young people (under the age of 15) who have committed crimes, the family is contacted within 48 hours to be offered support. The police initiate the contact with the social services. This activity also offers the victim and the per-

petrator mediation discussions and youth service for young people sentenced for crimes.

There is a network team in the municipality that offers families network meetings. The aim of these network meetings is for families to find support and ways of handling their situation together with their private and professional networks.

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