



Housing and Services



Vintage housing TOOL BOX

SUBPROJECT: Housing and Services

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**Northern
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Innovatively investing
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Background

An aging population and fewer in production is a problem concerning all countries in Europe, but more so in the Northern Periphery. The sparsely populated area in the Northern Periphery represents a problematic environment; to provide elderly service in this area is both difficult and expensive.

“Our Life as Elderly” (OLE, 2004-2006) was a transnational collaborative project between the City of Luleå in Sweden, the Municipality of Bodø in Norway, the Faroese Association of Municipalities, the Centre for Rural Health in Scotland and the Municipality of Lieksa in Finland as well as other organisations.

OLE was actively focusing on developing elderly care based on the citizen’s needs, demands and wishes. This was done through active citizen’s dialogue targeting people that will be in need of care in 10 to 15 years. The dialogue with citizens through interviews, questionnaires and focus groups showed both similarities and difference between the participants. An overall conclusion and confirmed wish was clearly to stay in one’s home as long as possible. To facilitate this demand a number of development areas needed strong attention. For instance more flexible housing to allow disable tenants, establish various providers for home service and minor health treatment. Findings from OLE has been transferred to the Social Services Department’s EU project OLE2, which focuses primarily on implementation and a presentation of products that were the result of the project OLE.

Current situation

Home help personal provides social service and minor health treatment to pensioners. Sometimes it’s difficult to establish a safe work environment for home help personal, bathrooms and other spaces can be cramped in old houses and apartments. Travels between customers/pensioners take up a great part of the working hours.

For pensioners and disabled persons it is often difficult to live in old houses and apartments, stairs, small rooms, small bathrooms and poor communications are often a hindrance. In Sweden it’s possible to get government subsidies if you need to conform your residential building or your apartment.

When a pensioner needs social service or minor health treatment he makes an application to the municipality. Assistance official takes the application, investigates and determines the needs and makes a decision on behalf of a delegation of the Social Welfare Board’s politicians. Assistance can be in the form of a nursing or service nature.

There are three various living models for elderly in Luleå. The elderly can stay in their own house, apartment, senior dwelling house or pensioner residence with home help. If a relative provides your help and the relative needs some time off, the municipality can provide at stay at a relive unit for a two weeks period. Thirdly the



elderly can be offered a place in a nursing home if the need for care and health treatment can't be provided by the home help service.

Vintage Housing / Årgångshus

As a result of the Housing subproject in OLE and the Lulebo housing agency's joint survey, the idea of "Årgångshus" was born. Responses showed a clear desire for rented housing for senior citizens. The name årgångshus/vintage house was a result from a competition arranged by OLE and Lulebo. The winning entrance suggested the name "årgångshus". Since then LuleBo has registered the name as a trademark, so LuleBo now owns the name. Till now Lulebo has built three vintage houses and soon the fourth one is ready to move into Today the apartments at the "Årgångshus" are divided according to a waiting list, the same system is used for ordinary apartments.

The project's (OLE) proposals for future Vintage Housing are as follows; centrally located buildings in a number of residential areas and the buildings should have a common area for different activities. If tenants need service and minor health treatment it will be provided by home help service in the municipality.

Common areas in Vintage House may be used for various kinds of social activities, which will increase the sense of security as well as the spirit of community among tenants. Social contacts and activities have been showed to hold a great importance regarding an older person's health. The risk of premature death, disease and disabilities are prevented by a high level of both physical and cultural activity. Physically active elderly often meet more people and thereby gain social interactions which by extension lead to a better appetite and eating habits in addition to a diminished need for medication and health care.¹ This should have long term effects in terms of a reduced or delayed need for both home help services and nursing homes.

Common areas in the "Vintage House" can be used for social activities of various kinds. This will increase the spirit of community among tenants and increase the feeling of security. Social contacts and activities are shown to have significant health effects for the elderly. A high level of both physical and cultural activity among elderly exhibit better health and shows a reduced risk for illness, disability and premature mortality. Other positive effects of an active life are better appetite and better eating habits, diminished need for medications and medical care. Impacts may be a reduced or delayed need for home help service and nursing homes.¹

Benefits

Staff concerned

It saves labor time for home help-personal and district nurses if pensioners in need of social services and minor health treatments are living in Vintage Housing, time needed

¹ Lindström, I., Blom, H., & Olmander van Erk, I. (2006). *Ett aktivt liv som senior*. Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting.

for travel would decrease. It also means better work environment for home help personal. If it is possible for pensioners themselves to decide when to move in to a Vintage Housing, then you don't need administration by assistance officials, and it means reduced expenses for the municipality. The long-range effect may be that the queue for an apartment in a nursing home decreases and nursing homes can specialize for caring about elderly with severe illness and in need of qualified nursing skills.

Politicians

The Swedish government has appointed a commission with the task to investigate housing for elderly. The commission has completed the task and in December 2008 they published their findings in the rapport "Bo bra hela livet" (*How to live well all your life*)² The commission recommends that the name "Trygghetsboende" (Sheltered housing) should be used for housing designed for elderly. These housings should have rooms for common use, offer possibilities for the tenants to eat together, and also have appointed personal who organizes activities. The politicians would have an interest in building these housings because the commission thinks that they are cost effective in the long run.

Pensioneers/Targetgroups

To live in an "Årgångshus/Trygghetsboende" means security and opportunities for social contacts for pensioners even when they reached high age. Relatives can be considered as a target group and for them it would be a relief knowing that their next-of-kin is safe, not lonely and living well.

Interest organizations/Unions

The concerned interest organizations are the pensioner organizations and for them Vintage Housing means higher quality for pensioner housings. They will also benefit from the freedom of choice if it's possible for pensioners themselves to choose housing. For the Union members it means mean better work environment and perhaps an acceptable working speed and a feeling of decreased stress when travel time is diminished.

Others

Others that have interest in Vintage Housing are all taxpayers, municipalities and organizations which can use the findings from OLE2 in their line of business.

Summary

Lulebo cooperated with the Social Services Department in the project Our Life as Elderly. Project findings showed that many elderly felt lonely and insecure in their homes and that there was a need for adapted housing for elderly, especially rented apartments for elderly. As a result from these findings Lulebo started building Vintage Housings.

² SOU 2008:113, Bo bra hela livet

“Action Programme – Vintage House no.1” is a document (toolbox) developed by Lulebo that describes findings from the OLE project and how the first Vintage House was built (Appendix 1). Tenants living in the first Vintage House are satisfied with the house and the surroundings (Appendix 2).

References

Lindström, I., Blom, H., & Olmander van Erk, I. (2006). *Ett aktivt liv som senior*. Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting.

SOU 2008:113, Bo bra hela livet. Äldreboendedelegationens slutbetänkande. Stockholm: Socialdepartementet

Appendices

1. Action Programme – Vintage House no.1
2. Brochure, Vintage Housing in Luleå