

Elder-care for everyone

General election day, September 17th, is the day when Sweden's future is to be decided, and it will be up to you and me to cast our vote. We all share the same responsibilities, and all votes are equal. Should we further and improve our welfare system, or should we downgrade by taking one out of every five tax krona out of the public coffers? Should we continue developing the Swedish welfare model – or should we abandon it?

Sweden is a good country in which to live and grow old – life expectancy here is among the longest in the world. This is a sort of welfare certificate, a stamp of approval showing that our efforts to ensure welfare for all have produced the desired results. Now we're moving forward and are developing today's elder-care services even further. Our aim is to ensure that together, the State, county councils and municipal authorities can achieve our objective of making Sweden the world's best country in which to grow old.

Our commitment to elder-care has already produced concrete results. We've capped maximum rates in the elder care-services. For people over 65, a high-cost protection scheme has been introduced in the dental services. Local authorities and county councils have been allocated more resources towards improving conditions in the elder-care and medical services. Supervision of the elder-care services has also been improved. Financial support for relatives and voluntary organisations has quadrupled during 2006.

Good staff, good elder-care

The work of community-care and health-care staff has become broader in scope and is far more complex than previously. Today, staff is increasingly encountering elderly people with multiple illnesses, people with dementia and elderly people with a mother tongue other than Swedish. Since staff needs better opportunities to develop their skills, a national professional competence system will be developed and an inquiry will be set in motion to establish a statutory lowest level of professional expertise.



The Competence Ladder is an important commitment to continued improvement of the health and elder-care services. Over a three-year period, more than three billion kronor will be allocated to programmes designed to enhance the professional skills of health and elder care-staff. During 2006 and 2007, further employment opportunities will be made available at municipal level. These new jobs will be used to improve the quality of the services on offer and will be of benefit to both the health-care and nursing sectors. The municipalities have also been enabled to take on long-term unemployed to help raise the quality of the home-help and community-care services.

Sweden must be the world's best country in which to grow old

During the next ten years, we'll be increasing our commitment to elder care by ten billion kronor with a view to developing community-care services across the entire country. The national development plan for services for the elderly takes in all aspects of care and is designed especially to improve care and nursing services for those who are severely ill, to ensure safe accommodation for the elderly, to improve community-care, and to stimulate preventive measures wherever possible. The plan also incorporates a large number of practical recommendations.

Among other things, our ambition is to stimulate the building of special homes for the elderly, to improve the home nursing services by bringing in more doctors, and to continue our commitment to nursing and health-care staff. We also aim to enhance our dementia skills and stimulate voluntary work, friendship centres and the introduction of more communal premises. We'll also introduce more uniform care assessment procedures across the whole country and give local authorities greater possibilities of providing services for the elderly without prior means-testing.

The alternative

Against the Social Democratic policy of greater commitment to care for the elderly stand the Moderate Party and their right-wing allies. They want to increase the cost of medicines and medical treatment and exclude medicines from the discount system. They also want people on disability and early retirement pensions to receive a lower old-age pension for the rest of their lives. They aim to do this by drastically lowering the figures used for calculation of old-age pension.

In the Moderates' Sweden, tax cuts come before quality in the welfare services. The elderly need greater medical attention and will therefore be hard hit by higher prices for medicines and treatment by the medical services.

In the long term, the Moderates and their right-wing alliance want to lower taxes to about the European average. That means a tax cut of 250 billion kronor that would be taken out of the public coffers and badly hit the elderly. This would lead to a completely different Sweden – one



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in which anyone needing care and treatment in their declining years would be forced to pay out of their own pockets or rely on help from self-sacrificing relatives.

In our Sweden, everyone is welcome. Which Sweden will you choose?



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