

Medical and dental care

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?

In Sweden, everyone is equally entitled to medical care whenever they need it. What determines whether and when you can receive medical treatment are your needs, and nothing else. At the turn of the year, a new law came into force preventing people with private medical insurance from enjoying priority health care. The new law also ensures that any surplus resulting from hospital care will be ploughed back into the medical services. All people are entitled to high-standard medical care whenever they need it, regardless of age, gender or ethnic background.

Swedish health care services among the best in the world

The Swedish health care services are among the best in the world. New, more effective medicines and methods of treatment have enabled more and more illnesses to be cured or alleviated among increasingly old age groups.

Together with Finland, Sweden has the lowest infant mortality rate in the European Union. The survival rate among cancer sufferers is steadily increasing. International comparisons show that the Swedish medical services are of extremely high quality. And, what's more, they cost less than in many other countries in Europe.

However, the medical services can become even better, and the county councils have been granted extra funding to make them more accessible and improve the patient reception services. Since 1994, the number of doctors employed by the medical services has gone up by over 4,400 and the number of nurses and midwives by 12,300. And now we're improving the services still further.



Functioning treatment guarantee

Since 1st November, 2005, a treatment guarantee has been in place for all diagnoses. Now, once a treatment has been decided, nobody needs wait longer than three months. The number of people waiting for treatment is now falling rapidly all over Sweden. If a patient's own county council is unable to provide treatment within three months, the patient must be offered treatment by another county council instead. Generally speaking, by the end of 2006, all county councils will be able to meet their undertakings using only their own resources.

Cheaper dental care for all

Healthy teeth must never be reserved for just a few. Since the seventies, we have had free dental care for all children and young people up to the age of 19. Free dental care for children and young people has helped ensure us of a generally high standard of dental health. On July the 1st, 2002, a high-cost protection scheme was introduced for dental care for persons over the age of 65. This gives more people the opportunity of having an implant or denture. So far, over 130,000 people have been reimbursed for treatments such as these.

Now we're going one step further and are introducing better dental care for the entire population. Nobody should have to refrain from going to the dentist for financial reasons. We aim to make dental examinations cheaper and provide better protection against the high cost of dental care. Nobody should have to pay more than 200 kronor for an examination.

The alternative

Against our policy of providing high-quality, safe medical and dental services for everyone stand the Moderates and their right-wing allies.

Nationally, the Moderates say they want health services for everybody financed out of public funds. But in practice, as in the Stockholm County Council for example, they act quite differently. In Stockholm, the Moderates want to privatise the entire primary health-care service and all the hospitals. They want to introduce VIP lanes in the health-care services by allowing St. Göran's Hospital in Stockholm to give patients with private insurance priority over other patients.

We, the Social Democrats, can never accept medical services like this. Whenever you step inside a publicly financed hospital you must be in no doubt that this is a place where your medical condition is the decisive factor in determining when and how you will receive treatment. Not whether you have taken out private insurance. In publicly financed health services, VIP lanes must be banned.



The Moderates also want to increase the fees you pay for both treatment and medicines. How will it improve things for people in need of care if the cost of treatment and medicines goes up? The people hit hardest by this proposal will be those who can least afford it.

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

