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Peer workers and Service innovation. Experiences from Norway, Sweden and Canada

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Service innovation

- We define this as: A change in a service that lead to better use of resources and more efficient impact of the efforts.
- There is a Norwegian saying “Whoever has the shoe on knows best where the pressure is”
- From this we can learn that the service receiver has experienced what problems he/she has, and has an opinion of what is needed to change the situation and handle problems in the best way.

The Peer worker role in innovation

- It is easier for peer workers to see and understand what a person is struggling with and take him/her seriously. A peer worker can announce the patients perspectives to service providers.
- A peer worker knows what a peer needs and can help him/her to choose and ask for help
- The professions have a tendency to “sell” their service or knowledge without checking enough what the service receiver really need. 3

Who's interests should the change take into account?

- There are several interests in how the services are formed and carried out
- As Medical Industries, professions, service Agencies, investors, Economists and politicians
And of course user organizations.
- It will always be a challenge to put the users interests in the center for change as there are so many other interests and actors that use the «users interests» to legitimate their own.
- And what about common sense?

User led innovation

- There is a scale from collecting users experiences with services as a background for changes and innovation, to have the users directly involved in the process or even be those who run the process, so called “user led innovation”
- Still this is very seldom in both Norway, Canada and Sweden.

Natural involvement

- It is a challenge to find natural ways to involve users in innovation processes
- It is important to give responsibility and tasks that might have impact and at the same time are possible to handle

Experiences from Norway, Sweden and Canada

- It's difficult to give a general consideration of these countries.
- They are all welfare states with well developed welfare systems. As a system of solidarity this was a historic innovation but has to be re-innovated and modernized to survive
- A central dimension in the development and innovation of welfare systems is to which degree the system and services should decide or facilitate for the users wellbeing and recovery.

Experiences

- There are elements of both sides of this dimension in all three countries welfare system
- Sweden has perhaps the most developed system and Canada the less. Norway is somewhere between these two countries.
- When it comes to development of peer support, this is most developed in Canada and less in Sweden

Peer workers and innovation

- In Canada they have had a program for implementing Peer Workers in the health and welfare system and they have developed a certification, accreditation and education system for Peer workers. They have also developed several roles for Peer workers.
- We will consider the Peer Worker system in Canada as an innovation and improvement of the welfare system

The development in Norway

- In Norway we don't have the same systematic program for developing Peer Workers, but we have opened up for this way of involving the users competences in health and welfare.
- This way of thinking and develop the welfare system is getting increasingly support. '
- Norway is on the same track as Canada. We also believe that Peer works can add significant value to our system

The development in Sweden

- AS far as I know and am able to judge the development in Sweden are behind Canada and Norway when it comes to Peer Workers.
- Sweden has a very good tradition in innovation and entrepreneurship and we expect that they will come in a fast track very soon and establish a system of peer workers.