



Brukshälsan is a small occupational health service unit operating in a rural area near Söderfors (about 100 km north of Stockholm). The unit was set up ten years ago in response to the needs of SMEs in the region and is run by the three founding members. They also work in association with a physiotherapist, a psychologist and a safety officer.

Brukshälsan serves 5 medium sized enterprises and 18 SSEs. This small unit provides a personal service and stresses the importance of good medical care and social support. This caring ethos runs hand in hand with vital business considerations such as productivity and profitability.

Providing a comprehensive health service

Brukshälsan's client base comes largely from the steel industry where there is a high level of manual labour. The company aims to improve safety measures, enhance the working environment, reduce sick leave rates, rehabilitate staff on long term sick leave and provide health checks when new employees are taken on.

Health promotion programmes – exercise, diet, weight reduction, drug misuse, job satisfaction – form Brukshälsan's core business. It also runs short courses on first aid, heart and lung resuscitation and avoiding back problems. Special physiotherapy treatment is provided for employees at risk of developing long term muscular-skeletal problems. Policy programmes for the prevention of alcohol and drug misuse have been

implemented with the approval of employees and "Quit smoking" programmes set up with the aim of cutting smoking by 50%. One-day seminars have been organised for foremen and other group leaders on subjects such as "Sleep problems and shiftwork", "Burn out" and "Coping with bullying at the workplace".

Special projects

Brukshälsan runs a number of projects aimed at helping people with long-term health problems get back into the workplace.

One in particular provides support for people on sick leave due to stress related burn out and other types of mental exhaustion. Within the county, about 100 people suffer from this kind of illness every year and 20 of those are referred to a psychologist.

From good health to high productivity

The primary objective of any project is to enhance productivity by improving employee health. The goals are decided jointly by employees, management and Brukshälsan, e.g. reducing smoking rates, weight reduction, physical exercise, stress reduction, prevent-



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Project infrastructure

Primary Care
General practitioners
Social insurance offices
Employment exchange
Community offices

BRUKSHÄLSAN

AA-Minnesota model
Sjundeå Rehabilitation Centre

Subcontractors:
• psychologist
• physiotherapist
• safety engineer

ing burn out and long term sick leave and helping unemployed people to return to the workplace. Regular personal contact, feedback and follow-up visits are vital for a project to succeed.

How measures are implemented

A customer's needs are assessed and a written outline of the project sent to the enterprise to be discussed. Agreements on the projects is then reached with the leaders, unions and the employees. The five SMEs that formally subscribe to Brukshälsan are expected to take part in health promotion projects on a regular basis. SSEs have more leeway to choose between services, but are obliged to contribute at least 40 ECU per employee annually.

Improved health: a success story

Projects have resulted in employees adopting healthier lifestyles and contributed to very low levels of sick leave in some organisations. No evidence of a positive economic impact is available. However, levels of customer satisfaction are well above expectation and the enterprises are thriving. The health policies advocated by Brukshälsan

could well have contributed to this success.

Relevance for SSEs

Brukshälsan's services are designed to meet the needs of five SMEs, but they match the needs of the SSEs very well too. Establishing these services in medium sized organisations has paved the way for their acceptance into smaller enterprises. Examples of two SSE's are given below.

Smedjan, Scana Söderfors AB

This steel hammer forge has 19 employees working four shifts. The work is quite demanding physically and there is a high accident risk in this industry. However, the sick leave rate is very low, about 1.9%, and no occupational accidents have occurred in the last six years. The four shift groups are self-governed and manage production planning and delivery of the products within the group. Job rotation prevents monotony, job satisfaction and commitment to work are very high and the staff turn-over is very low (in a six-year period only one staff member has left). The staff took part in a health promotion project resulting in a marked

increase in physical exercise and lower smoking rates. Stress is not a big problem and tends to be managed within the shift groups.

Kardell Sweden

Kardell produces quality mops for both domestic and industrial premises. The wool is made from eco-flax which has won an environmental award – good environmental practice is part of the company's ethos. Kardell has 30 employees, 22 of whom are women. Much of the work demands skill and dexterity.

The commitment to health promoting activities has so far been rather limited, (not unusual given the traditionally low awareness of health issues in this trade). However, a "quit smoking" project has been launched aimed at reducing smoking levels by 30% . Lung function tests showed a marked improvement since the project began. Brukshälsan's involvement has encouraged further improvements in the work environment too. Although much of the work is monotonous, job satisfaction is high and staff turn over low.