

Problems of public service providers at the municipal level (day care) in Czech Republic

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Abstract

One of the basic economic and social problems of Europe is its aging population. Quality of life in old age is one of the most frequently mentioned themes in present. Public policy seeks to ensure appropriate conditions for lifestyle, health and social care. Public policy issues is question whether individual countries are able to secure suitable and quality social services for seniors, in addition financially acceptable and sufficient range. One of the tools of social services is domiciliary service day care, which is used by most of seniors. Due to the problem with aging population, the issue of public services is much discussed, and most of all at the local level. The aim of this paper is to assess what problems public service providers encounter on a municipal level - for example domiciliary services.

Keywords: Day Care /Domiciliary Services, Clients, Financing, Public Services.

1. INTRODUCTION

Public policies can be understood as a policy that aims to meet the objectives of the whole society, thus to meet social needs.

Public policy is mainly interested in the social and political processes leading to the satisfaction of specific, differentiated human needs of members of society, whose satisfaction cannot be mediated exclusively by the private sector. Public policy focuses on the analysis of the functioning of the public sector, which is the opposite to the private sector [12] .

The theory of public finances assigns to every public budget the performance of functions that are derived from functions of public finances (allocation, redistribution and stabilization functions). But the utilization of these functions differs according to governmental levels in EU countries and also the measure of secured services is associated with them. For a more exact classification of public expenditure in functional point of view is used classification of functions of governmental institutions (Classification of the functions of the government–COFOG). According to functional classification COFOG [3] we can classify the public services in the form of ten categories that represent the functional areas of government (state). Public expenditures according to the functions of governmental institutions in the EU (COFOG) are designed for:

- General public services (Executive and legislative organs, financial and fiscal affairs, external affairs foreign economic aid, basic research, public debt services, transfer of a general character between different levels old government)
- Defence (military and civil defence, foreign military aid)
- Public order and safety (police, fire-protection services, law courts, prisons)
- Economic affairs (general economic, labour and commercial affairs, agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, fuel and energy)
- Environmental protection (waste and water waste management, pollution abatement)

- Housing and community amenities (housing development, community development, water supply)
- Recreation, culture and religion (recreational and sporting, cultural services)
- Education
- Social security (sickness and disability, old age, survivors, family and children, unemployment, housing, social exclusion), [4].

Public services in the Czech Republic is divided into the following groups:

- Public services that are provided in the form of financial support,
- Administrative activities in the broad sense, whether or not they are regulated by law
- Material public services, which are the state, region or municipality organized, delivered in kind, material form.

One of the major public services, which are provided as services for the elderly, are social services. Social services are an important item in the publicly provided services, we range it in the field of social policy [5].

From an economic point of view, there is a question of whether social services are necessary. As Mertl([7] states, in connection with demographic progress and the decrease of informal social services, there are increasing numbers of people who could demand this care. Social services is specific by touching integrally the personality of consumers and is bound to local aim (municipality problem). One problem with social services is the information asymmetry: social workers and social service providers have much more information than their clients. Social services are not an optional good but people are left to the need of it [8].

Social services have been called goods of experience or goods of trust. The true face of these goods is seen at the moment of consumption [15]. One possible way to satisfy the need for social services is the family environment itself: According to Godet [2], family is not only a private concern; it is also a matter of public concern, determining social cohesion and sustainable development through its connections to many externalities that are positive for society.

2. CARE SERVICE AS A TOOL OF SOCIAL SERVICES

One of the most used social services is day care (see Table 1: The Number of Registered Providers of Social Services). The law (Act no. 108/2006 Sb., On Social Services) defines social services as a field or ambulant service provided to people with low self-sufficiency because of age, chronic illness, or disability, and to families with children whose situation requires the assistance of another person [6] .

Day care includes these activities:

- assisting with basic self-care;
- assisting with personal hygiene or providing conditions for managing personal hygiene;
- providing food or helping with diet;
- helping with household maintenance;
- mediating contact with social surrounding.

Table 1: The Number of Registered Providers of Social Services in the Czech Republic (as of 27 Jan 2015).

Social Services	Number of Providers in CR	South-Moravian Region	City of Brno
Social Services	845	77	20
Relief Services	316	42	30
Day Care Centre Services	97	18	11
Day Care Centres	315	34	21
Halfway Houses	47	5	4
Homes with Special Re-gime	290	57	33
Senior Homes	540	67	40
Professional Social Consultancy	752	114	92
Protected Living	207	22	10
Social Activation Service for the Elderly	253	39	22
Personal Assistance	271	26	14

Source: [9]

Dohnálek [1] defines one role of social services as helping elderly people, or those whose state of health resulted in low self-sufficiency in basic life skills, by providing the possibility of staying in the home with the assistance of a kind staff. People are thus enabled to live a full and happy life, with respect for their social and individual needs and with the active help of their family. Nordenfelt [11] points out that just it is mainly at home where seniors are able easier to manage their social contacts.

The following factors are the main influences on the intensity of social service demands:

- municipal level (dimension of space),
- the ageing population,
- and the number of social service providers in a concrete region.

The demographic prognosis presents an unequivocal conclusion: the population in the Czech Republic is ageing. If the current rates of reproduction remain steady, this process will only continue in the coming years. The ageing population is connected with insufficient economic productivity and will also undoubtedly result in very specific and demanding conditions for the whole of society, with particular pressure on social services for seniors [10].

Participation of every financial source is different according to the sort of social services. Day care is a major diagnostic service which protects client interests with a “reimbursement limit”. This is partially financed from public sources; the amount of reimbursement for the individual services is set by the provider. Providers have different price levels for different cost calculations. For example, there can be different prices for meals that are distributed in a city and meals distributed in a village because of varying costs for fuel and for the time of carers. Setting prices on the basis of a client’s salary is not possible. It is, however, possible for the service provider to set different prices for weekdays and weekends, although these prices should not exceed the legally established maximum reimbursement. The consumer must be familiarized with the prices beforehand.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The aim of this paper is to assess what problems they encounter on a municipal level public service providers - for example domiciliary services. In the context of this research we focus not only on public providers, but also on other legal forms which are on the market of domiciliary services at the municipal level. Future trends in public services were investigated by basing on primary data collection from the questionnaire on a sample of nursing services within the scope of City of Brno.

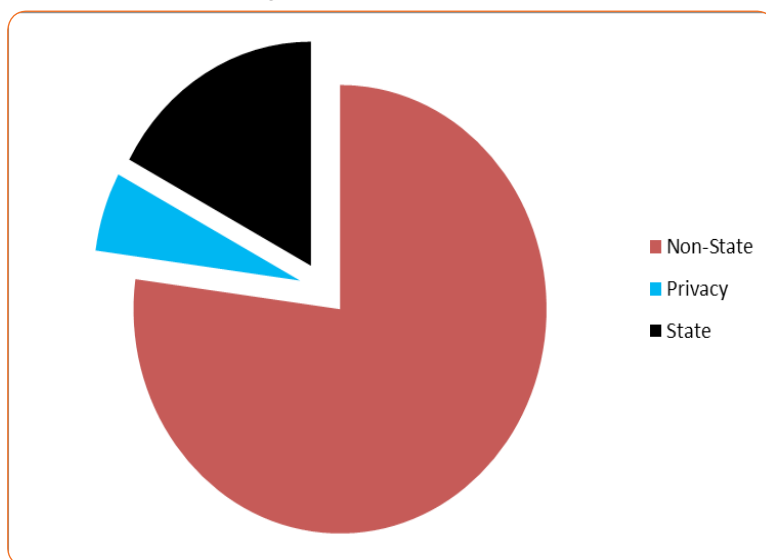
The question, why we decided to realize research on the municipal level, contributed expert analysis of the Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs, from which it became clear that the statistics do not identify for example the range of care services. Of the approximately 115 000 people, to whereby the day care was provided to in 2010, it cannot be traced with what frequency the service had been provided (eg. 1x per day during the week or how many times per month. [13] . This is related to the issue of the services offered by various providers at the municipal level, who must adapt services according to the demand. The authors themselves [13] suggests the establishment of a professional platform that is able to represent the views of the state governments, non-governmental sector and research.

3.1 The research sample and methods

In Brno, there are many social service providers. Some providers are from the statutory city of Brno, some are non-governmental companies working in the Brno region, and some are private companies providing social services. These providers offer various services, from day care through day care centres to long-term day care services. In Brno, there are six state social service providers.

The non-state social service companies have the largest representation: 27 companies. There are only two private social service providers (see Figure 1).

Fig. 1 : Percentage of Social Service Providers in Brno.



Source: author

The research was addressed to all providers of social care in Brno city, it's the method of specific choice of respondents – providers. Data was collected using a survey questionnaire. The questions were open in order to collect individualized answers. A total of 35 questionnaires were sent in an electronic format. From the 35 respondents that were asked answered 19–the

rate of answers was till 1 month from sending the questionnaires (sometimes there was a phone demanding used). We deal with the 54% of returning the questionnaires back—we can consider these results as representative though, we can bear them as relevant in next discussion.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

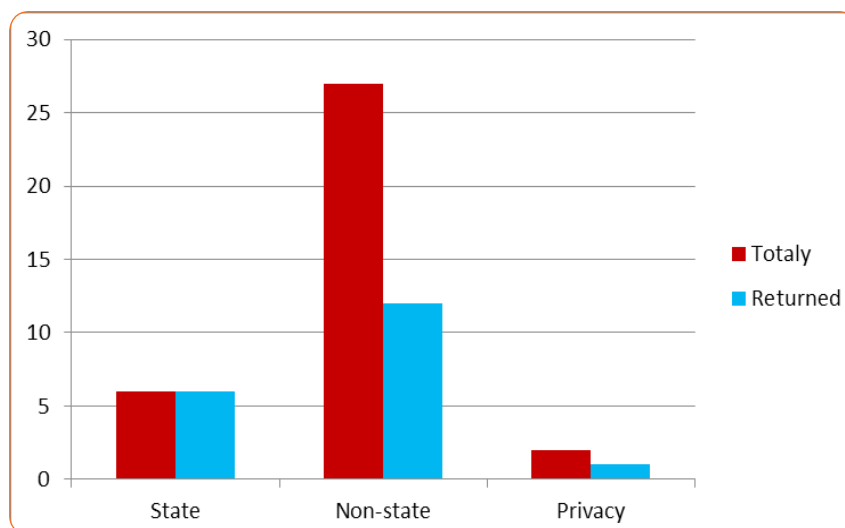
There are 35 social service providers in Brno (Table 1 indicates that there were 20 social service providers in Brno as of 27 January 2015. This difference is because some companies are not listed as registered providers on the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs web site.

The questionnaire used for the survey had eight open questions:

- What services do you provide?
- What service is the most frequently used?
- How many seniors do you provide your service to?
- How many percentage of seniors used the most frequently provide services?
- What services are the seniors interested in that it is not possible to provide?
- What are the difficulties in providing these services?
- Is there enough money to provide your services?
- In what specific areas do you see room for improvement?

Figure 2 shows the questionnaire return rate.

Fig. 2: The Total Number of Addressed Providers and the Questionnaire Return Rate



Source: author.

The data was assessed based on information from nineteen social service providers, which is more than 54% of the social service providers in Brno.

The survey showed that in addition to day care, the companies provide other services that are mentioned in the Act on Social Services. The most frequently used services are lunch delivery and help with personal hygiene. The providers agree that these services are used approximately equally and there is a major interest in them.

The capacity of clients that can use social services varies greatly. While the state providers each

care for more than one thousand clients on average, in non-state companies the number of clients is much lower. The private companies serve the lowest numbers of clients.

The most frequently used service is assisting with personal hygiene. The state providers report that this service is used by 65% of their clients; non-state providers claim it is used by around 72% of their clients. On average, when looking at the providers altogether, personal hygiene services are used by more than 79%.

Services in which clients are interested but that cannot be provided for various reasons include administering medication, accompanying clients on walks, and providing evening supervision. The main reason these services are not provided is financial. With some services, such as social services that have not yet been defined, there are legal problems.

In addition to financial problems, the number of employees and their qualifications can be a reason that services are not provided. Social service providers differ in their opinions of their financial situation: the state providers claim to consider funding sufficient but simultaneously assert that they are unable to extend their services with the present funding; private and non-state providers criticize the amount of funding, which they connect with their inability to extend or improve their services even in the face of increasing demands.

The better quality of service sees the providers mainly in the higher amount of finance.

Some providers see a potential for improving and extending their services with a higher number of employees.

The survey indicated that social service providers have the biggest problem with funding, regardless of the type of provider. Most providers admitted that the funding is balanced, but stated that financing is sometimes difficult.

A possible trend in providing social services can be seen in experience. One possibility for making services more attractive for clients and providers is the use of service packets, by means of which the client will be given a discount if using multiple services at once (for example using food delivery and assistance with personal hygiene or help with housework). There would be a certain financial savings with employees shifting. This system is already working in some places (e.g. Plzeň region). In Prague, there are service packets ranging from “basic” (assistance with hygiene, food delivery, and shopping) to “comfort” (escort to doctor, help with contact with authorities, and doing the laundry).

Another way to make social services more effective is shared living. Shared living among the elderly is based on the standard concept of flat sharing: each senior has a private room and they all share the other parts of flat. Seniors pay for the rent, utilities, and social services. Social services are provided around the clock. The concept of shared elder living was introduced in Switzerland in response to the increasing cost of separate living [15].

The research has proved that all public state providers of care services accede to our research responsibly and questionnaires were 100% returned. For other providers (non-governmental, private) reluctance was in evidence, and also the concern about possible disclosure of information within the competitive environment. Reluctance to reply within a competitive environment was mainly from private providers.

5. CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to assess the current situation of public providers (domiciliary) services and to evaluate the most common problems. The questions that were asked were designed as

an open free-choice. It stands to reason from the research that publicly provided care services are able to secure many clients (in thousands) compared to non-profit or private organizations. However the disadvantage is that they cannot prepare a service to the client “make-to-measure”, which is a major advantage of private and non-profit providers. Organizations providing domiciliary services face a number of obstacles, both legislative and financial at the first place. All organizations, regardless of their legal form, cited financial options as the biggest obstacle to their development. Research has also pointed out that publicly provided domiciliary services have less problem with funding compared to other legal forms of services.

One of the ways to fund social services (and day care) is to have the client be able to combine finances from his own income/pension, from insurance money, and from the system of social services. Then the client would be self-sufficient and the system would not operate at a loss. As a result of social service providers being dependent on grants, the system might have a problem with European legislation. The solution to this problem may be cancelling the direct grant system. Social services for entitled clients should not be supported by direct grants to providers, as direct grants contradict European legislation, but based on the other tools. One way would be to transition from the system of grants for social service providers to a system of payment support directly to the entitled client [14].

The trend of current public policies is to keep the person in its natural environment as long as possible. If a person is not able to take care of himself and has nobody to take care of him, it is time for that person to have day care. Day care is a tool enabling people to stay in their familiar surroundings. Day care is provided for payment but the law sets the acceptable maximum price for seniors and they have decent life conditions. According to the population ageing, the level of social income, or pensions, the low capacity in houses of elderly is day care the future trend in caring about elderly. The question is the effectiveness of financing day care the way so it can be offered to seniors in quality and appropriate extent so they are able to finance the service from their income; and the stability of providers both in the financial and providing the qualified employees way.

As stated in the introduction to this paper: public policy interest in social and political processes that lead to satisfaction of specific, differentiated human needs. Social services are one of the services, which deal with the satisfaction of basic human needs for specific population groups. One of these groups is the elderly, who are most numerous clients of domiciliary services. The results from the research are important for further concept in setting funding of public and social policy. It is mainly useful for the effectiveness of public financing - social policy and improving the quality of public services provided to clients. Although this research was focused at the second largest city in the Czech Republic, we have to have in mind that the researches which were conducted at other locations in the Czech Republic prove that financing is a fundamental obstacle to the development of public services for the elderly. Public policies will be in the future the main tool in the care of the elderly, even though on this market of providers perform non-profit and private organizations. As demonstrated in this research, public service providers have mainly larger and longer-term financial stability (and security) than other providers, who are, among other things, dependent on subsidies - thus publicly allocated resources.

What steps are important to ensure more effective care services?

- It is necessary to propose the partial reforms that the restructure in connection with the financing of care services,
- Create a professional platform that would represent the views of the state governments, non-governmental sector and area of research,

- As the method used among providers of care services across legal forms founders as the main research,
- Develop a community planning of day care.

These are additional topics for professional development issues.

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