

Better Recruitment as a Result of Senior Policy

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Translation: Eli Schiøtz, November 2004

Langerud Nursing Home was built in 1976/77 and was then the largest nursing home in Scandinavia. In 2003 it had 256 beds on about 13 500 m² floor area, including 16 double rooms, the rest single rooms. The objective is to give the best and most comprehensive service to older people and become the best nursing home in Oslo. Three years ago the nursing home found it had a need to increase the recruitment and reduce costs, and the result was reorganization.

- I am not sure that I would have stayed in my profession as an assistant nurse if I hadn't been offered new challenges, says Per Arne Garthe.

Three years ago Garthe was totally worn out and was on sick leave. No wonder, because he had been working holidays, evenings and nights for 25 years in a caring job with many heavy lifts. When he was 51, his body told him to "ease up".

At the same time his working place Langerud started reorganizing. The result was that one assistant nurse or care assistant on each of the 8 units was given the job as senior adviser. Garthe could then, after three months off sick, return to his new "job" without a rotation system and with all holidays free!

Recruitment Solution

The head of Langerud, Bergljot Voie presents the result of the reorganization:

- We strengthened our work force in two ways: by recruiting young people and at the same time keeping older and well qualified assistant nurses by offering them new and more interesting duties. Several arrangements were initiated. The most radical was reducing the number of nurses in the units and creating a nursing pool. Senior and well qualified assistant nurses took over their functions and were put in charge. Another initiative in this process was the use of senior advisers. A senior adviser teaches young employees with foreign backgrounds to become care assistants. The result was that more senior assistant nurses got new job titles and new tasks.

The nursing home cooperates with the employment office in Oslo to take on young applicants with foreign backgrounds. The first 3 to 6 months they work as trainees. During that period the senior advisers train them in their tasks. After the trainee period they receive up to a half year salary from the employment exchange office.

- During that period we are able to find the best qualified persons for permanent engagement here. Those who are offered a job are also offered a course as care assistants. The others get testimonials and have a good basis for finding other work, Voie says.

Voie sums up the senior employee initiatives at Langerud:

- Creation of senior adviser positions: no rotation work, holidays free and higher salary
- Formation of nursing pools and putting the senior assistant nurses in charge of the units
- Cooperation with the employment exchange office, which is paying the trainees up to a half year salary

Satisfied Residents

Langerud Nursing Home is big: 153 beds for long term residents, room for 26 day time visitors and many beds for short time or rehabilitation purpose. 300 staff works full or part time.

The administrative region that Langerud belongs to in Oslo has signed an agreement with CSP to initiate arrangements for practising a life span HRM. The senior advisers and senior assistant nurses at Langerud are both part of this contract.

Senior adviser Per Arne Garthe is responsible for 5 trainees. They come from Tunisia, Senegal, Thailand, Sierra Leone and India.

– Their ability to speak Norwegian varies a lot, he says. – Some have come to Norway recently, while others have lived here for years. They are all offered language studies, and they learn Norwegian while working here. The first months they work in the unit kitchens. I then teach, among other things, Norwegian diet and food names. The following months they are trained in nursing. Most of the residents are very positive to this arrangement; they experience that people from other cultures may show older people more respect than we Norwegians often do. This gets the trainees and residents more in touch with each other. Some of the residents however are negative to being so close to persons of other colour – just the way it often functions in society, adds Garthe.

He thinks that in general the trainee system is positive for the residents. Besides, the trainees relieve the nursing team of kitchen work so that they have more time for the residents.

– And this is really what they need, insists Per Arne Garthe, who is very satisfied with his new job. 2 years ago he was about to quit, but now he looks forward to many working years at Langerud Nursing Home in Oslo.