

### How can we do better?

It is vital to see the individual as a whole person out of a holistic perspective. We need to offer activities that strengthen the individual socially and emotionally.

By doing this we give the individual an opportunity to build up self-esteem, self-image and tools to build up life-skills to get a higher quality of life, better conditions and equal terms.

We have to set national and international standards and codes of ethics for using animals as a tool for assisted activities and counseling.

By doing this we can create legitimacy for alternative treatment and achieve evidence based methods for follow-up and evaluation of given assessed activities or treatments in social service and healthcare.



## “How do we create legitimacy for care takers within the health care system that offer alternative treatments?”



*International conference 11-12 November 2009 in Nordanstig, Sweden.*

### “How do we create legitimacy for care takers within the healthcare system that offer alternative treatments?”

The final agenda for the conference will be presented at the end of august. If you are interested in hearing more about the conference, please send an e-mail to [carina.nilsson@nordanstig.se](mailto:carina.nilsson@nordanstig.se)

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En investering för framtiden



Nordanstigs  
kommun

Hälsinge  
Utbildning



## The project in the Municipality of Nordanstig, Sweden

*In the municipality of Nordanstig we see various possibilities for implementing alternative treatment where animal is used as a tool in preventing social exclusion and preventing institutional social and healthcare, long term sick leave in a meaningful way.*

### We foresee three target groups:

#### 1. Social emotional learning

Young people having difficulties can benefit from a whole array of activities. Training sessions with an animal can improve their self-esteem and give them a feeling of accomplishment.

By interacting with an animal, they will experience how their actions trigger certain reactions from the animal, helping them become more aware of their own behavior and its effect on the behavior of others. They will learn the importance of body language and the correct use of intonation in communication.

Or they can simply grow more confident through interactions with a being that accepts them purely as they are, without any form of bias or judgment.

This sort of service can be offered to youth counseling centers, schools that work with troubled or unmotivated children and adolescents or institutions that work with adolescents who have a history of substance abuse.

#### 2. Preventing long term sick leave

People suffering from a long-term illness often slip into social isolation and can become depressed or apathetic as a result. Regular visits from a dog give them something to look forward to, resulting in a higher sense of well-being.

In addition, the dog can play an important role in their physical training program, thus motivating them to attend the sessions by making it more fun and stimulating them by taking the focus away from the actual purpose of the sessions. It is no longer just exercise, it becomes a fun game!

This, together with an increase in emotional and psychological health, can speed up the recovery process and can even make people less dependent on pharmaceutical drugs such as anti-depressants or painkillers.

#### 3. Physical and/or mental disability,

Initiatives can include simple physical exercises to help regain or improve fine motor skills, training sessions to maintain/increase cognitive skills and memory use or activities in public places to facilitate social acceptance and encourage people to get out more.

In a more clinical setting, we can use animals to assist in psychological or physical therapy.

People suffering from mental trauma can benefit from a horse/dog being present during their therapy sessions. Through working with the animal, they can disconnect themselves from their surroundings and feel more relaxed and free to discuss more personal issues.

The animal can help to create a warm and safe environment for the client. In addition, short activities with the animal can provide welcome breaks during sessions, enabling the client to free her/his mind for a short time.

Individuals undergoing physical rehabilitation can be motivated to attend their physical training sessions by having the opportunity to work with an animal.

*All of these services can be tailor made to fit the needs of a certain target group or institution.*

## High quality standards and codes of ethics

*for animals that are being used as a tool in alternative treatments within social care- and healthcare.*

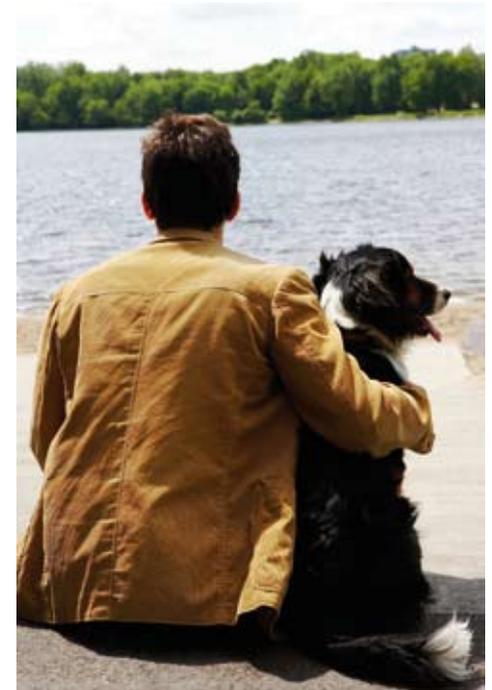
In our work we are seeking a high level of quality and set standards and codes of ethics for animal assisted therapy and counselling! There are a wide range of perspectives and different methods that are being used in this field if we look at an international level.

In Sweden there is a lack of experience when compared internationally. Some research with very good results has been presented, and that has led to a more open minded approach to animal assisted activities and animal assisted therapy.

The goal is now to set focus on how animal assisted activities and counselling can help preventing social and cultural exclusion, assist in high quality results of rehabilitation and social and emotional learning.

### We need to go forward with further development within this field.

- To set standards for models and methods on a national and international level, to create legitimacy for alternative treatments within social care and healthcare, and to strive for evidence based methods within this area.
- Raising the professional level of facilitators. To build up the education system so it meets the set quality indicators and codes of ethics for using animals as a tool in social care and healthcare.



### All listed after care assistance actions that are available for care leavers:

- Needs assessment
- Pathway plan
- Individual monitoring
- Guardian support/personal adviser
- Child involvement in her/his future
- Housing
- Financial allowances, benefits
- Support with education and training
- Support with getting and maintaining a job
- Life-skills training
- Psychological counseling
- Health service
- Support with special needs (disability, pregnancy, childcare)
- Support for a child or a young person to keep contact with significant persons (parents, former foster parents)

