

# Healthy Life Centres

## THE NORWEGIAN DIRECTORATE OF HEALTH

on behalf of the Joint Action on Chronic Diseases and Promoting Healthy Ageing Across the Life Cycle

JA-CHRODIS Vilnius, November 2015

**A Healthy Life Centre (HLC) is an interdisciplinary primary health care service which offers effective, evidence-based measures for people with, or in high risk of disease, who need support in health behaviour change and in coping health problems and chronic disease.**

The Norwegian directorate of health has published a guide for the establishment, management and quality of the HLC. The guide will be updated in 2015 and later translated to English.



### BASIC SERVICES

The HLC is part of the public health care service in the municipality. HLC programs have a patient centred approach and aim at strengthening the individual's control of his or her own health. As a minimum HLCs offers participation in various exercise groups, and individually or group based counselling or courses for increased physical activity, healthy nutrition and tobacco cessation. Many HLCs also offer counselling, support and education on issues related to mental health, sleep and alcohol. In the municipality, the HLC functions as a resource-, knowledge- and contact centre for behaviour change, health promotion and disease prevention. More than 250 Norwegian municipalities have HLC, and the number is continuously increasing.

### COOPERATION

Cooperation with other municipal health care services, hospitals, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), private and public organizations and local authorities is of vital importance in order to provide continuous and integrated health care and help people to establish independent and lasting health enhancing habits. A key task for the HLC is to guide the participants into suitable and feasible local programs that they can continue with on their own after participation in the HLC. The HLCs should provide a good overview of such programs.

### RESULTS

Evaluations have shown that HLCs recruit people with or in high risk of non communicable diseases, musculo-skeletal disorders, mild anxiety and/or depression and overweight, and who do not seek or participate in other services such as fitness centres on their own. Approx. 60 % of the participants are unemployed or on sick leave. The services provided from the HLCs are important in a habilitation/ rehabilitation process. The HLC cooperates with the occupational health care and employers in follow up of employees on sick leave to facilitate their return to work. Participants need help to find appropriate services, build motivation and to create strategies for maintaining sustainable coping and behavior change. General practitioners who refer patients to HLCs are of the opinion that the HLCs offer good services. Studies indicate that participation in the programs can lead to improved physical fitness, weight loss and improved self-perceived health and quality of life, as well as maintaining health behaviour change one year after the follow-up. More knowledge about the impact of the services offered by the HLCs is needed. A three year national effect study on Healthy Life Centers is planned from the autumn of 2015.

### COST - EFFICIENT

Studies have shown that behavior change interventions are profitable/cost-efficient. For example it is estimated that for each person who does not smoke, who avoids overweight and is regularly physically active, the welfare benefit/gain/reward will be at NOK 7.5-12.5 million. Another example is that dietary and exercise changes can be equally efficient as treatment with insulin in type 2 diabetics, while it may be less expensive than the drug therapy.

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