

Achieving quality long-term care in residential facilities

Christina Loizou
Research Unit in Behaviour and Social Issues
University of Nicosia

Introduction

Cyprus is a new Member State of the EU since 2004. The ageing of the population is an increasing problem in Cyprus as it is in other European countries, with growing needs for care of the elderly. Residential or paid long-term care in the Cypriot society is a relatively new topic of discussion, as, until a few years back, most people in need of long-term care (both the elderly and the disabled, or other people with special needs of all ages) were cared for at home. According to the 2001 population census only 3.8% of the elderly resided in nursery homes, while the rest stayed at home under family care. In the recent years two new institutions have developed in Cyprus: paid *home care and care by immigrant home carers*. The whole system of social long-term care and the social long-term care policy is the responsibility of the Social Welfare Services, under the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance.

In Cyprus Residential Long-term Care facilities are divided in 3 categories: state care homes, local Community care homes and private care homes. All 3 categories are inspected and evaluated for their quality of services by the Social Welfare Services (SWS). Inspection of facilities is based on Law and corresponding regulations enforced in 1991, subsequently amended in 2000. Moreover the Social Welfare Services provide benefits-in-kind and benefits-in-cash to individuals who are in need of long-term care and are either residing in their homes or in residential care homes.

Number of residential Long-term Care Homes in Cyprus²

District	State	Community	Private	Total St./Com/Priv.	Carers
Nicosia	1	19	32	53	2
Limassol	1	7	30	38	2
Larnaca	2	8	6	16	3
Pafos	1	1	8	10	-----
Famagusta	-	2	-	2	-----
Evrichou	-	3	--	3	-----
Total	5	40	76	121	7*

* These 7 Carers are responsible for People with Special needs in Long-term care residential facilities. They can accommodate up to 5 persons.

Long-term care in Cyprus

National dialogue on key-issues of long-term care

Long-term care is a fairly new concept in terms of discussion at national level. In fact it does not comprise a topic of discussion per se, but it is discussed under the more general framework of the National Strategy on Social Protection and Social Inclusion, which is coordinated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance. The National Strategy for Social Inclusion 2008-2010 (NSSI)¹ aims at combating poverty and social exclusion by securing the opportunity of access to material and non-material resources, rights and services for all citizens. This possibility is an adequate and necessary condition for the active participation of all citizens in social affairs, it provides a preventive function against exclusion, while at the same time fights against all the possible, old and new, forms of social discrimination that lead to exclusion.

Particularly with regard to long-term care in order to reduce the risk of poverty and to promote social inclusion the National Strategy aims at an adequate and viable policy in the field of long-term care, which mainly includes institutional and home care. Institutional as well as home care demand for quality in the services provided. At the same time lead to policy orientation for the development of long-term care at the community level. This central orientation forms the main priorities and objectives of long-term care, which are the following:

- Promoting the strategy of deinstitutionalisation and the development of community care;
- Safeguarding quality in the provision of adequate and viable long-term care services;
- Developing and strengthening human resources in long-term care services;
- Improving coordination between health care and long-term care.

The actions being promoted within the framework of the National Strategy for Health and Long-term Care 2008-2010 predetermine the implementation of the National Health Scheme, which is currently under planning.

Challenges

The ageing population, the drop in fertility rates and the extension of life-expectancy are all challenges that Cyprus has to face in order to provide accessible, sustainable and quality care services.

Approach to external quality assurance in Cyprus

The quality assurance system implemented in Cyprus is quite different than the one described in the example of Bavaria, in the sense that the whole system in Cyprus is fairly centralised. The sole body who has the responsibility of safeguarding quality assurance is the Social Welfare Services (SWS), under the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance. SWS operate with a Central

Office and a division of District Offices³. Each District Office is responsible for the long-term care facilities under its own district, but the policy is issued centrally.

Law and sanctions

Each residential long-term care home has to be registered under the Law 222/91 on Long-term Care Residential Facilities for the Elderly and the Disabled⁵ and the Regulatory Amended Law 213/2000⁶, which provide regulations for the operation of residential care homes for elderly and the disabled. In order to be registered, the residential care homes have to pass the SWS notified inspection, which will prove that the facilities comply with the law regulations. After registration these facilities undergo un-notified inspections by an SWS officer at 6 months intervals. The inspector gives a report using an inspection tool⁷, which was developed based on the law regulations and which is divided into the following law-complying quality assurance requirements: Personnel Qualifications, Level of Care, Facilities, Comfort, Security, Level of health care, Quality of foods / level of Nutrition, Behavioural treatment of the residents and their families, Indoor and Outdoor Cleanliness, Furnishings and Infrastructure Sufficiency, Amusement and Occupational Therapy, Contacts with Relatives and the Community, General atmosphere in the premises and compliance with the regulations (e.g. fire, hygiene etc.).

In case the facility does not comply with any of the above, the management is given notice and a period of time in which they have to improve the points made out by the inspector. After this period the inspection is repeated. In case of failure to comply, premises are subject to closure.

Comparing with the Bavarian good practice example, in Cyprus, the inspection is carried out by only one inspector and not by a team of experts. Also there is no system of participant observation, which might permit the evaluator to get a more complete picture of everyday life at the residential long-term care home.

Subsidisation of Citizens

Citizens in Germany contribute in a statutory Long-Term Care Plan in addition to pension, unemployment insurance, health insurance and accident insurance funds. In Cyprus there is no such provision and for the reimbursement of LTC 1) people can privately pay LTC, or 2) state can subsidise LTC provision through public assistance²:

- a) In the case of pensioners, their whole pension is paid against their long-term care in case individuals need to reside in care homes or use the home-care scheme. In case the money is not enough, the amount is complemented by the Social Welfare Services.
- b) In the case of Public Assistance recipients, the Social Welfare Services cover the whole sum of the amount needed for their care. This includes both elderly and disabled persons of all ages.

These funds cover the cases of all forms of residential care facilities, these being State, Community or Private. Of course in all cases there are maximum limits in the states' contribution. The actual financial subsidy per month is a minimum of €623.02 and a maximum of €743.82

(including pensions). According to the 2009 yearly report⁴ of SWS the persons who received subsidy for long-term care in State residential facilities were the following:

	N of persons
<u>Residential Facilities</u>	
State residential facilities:	152
Community residential facilities	427
Private residential facilities	1,154
Total	1,733
<u>Home Care</u>	
State Carers	130
Private Carers	2,736
Community Carers	1,082
Total	3,948

Subsidisation of Care Facilities

The basic objectives of SWS is the organisation and the mobilisation of the local communities in defining and facing their social needs, the development of cooperative action among the State, Local Authorities and Non-Government Organisations, aiming at the de-centralisation of services and better services to the citizens at local level. Their ultimate goal is the safeguarding of social cohesion through collective action and active citizenship. Technical and financial support is provided for the set up and operation of social care programmes, in order to reinforce citizens' participation at local level through two Schemes:

- a) *Grants in Aid Scheme* through which the following were subsidised:
 - 35 Home Care programmes;
 - 43 Residential Care Facilities for the Elderly and the Disabled;
 - 40 Programmes of Day Care for the Elderly and the Disabled.
- b) *Local Authority Subsidisation Scheme*. This Scheme was introduced in the last quarter of 2009. Through this the following were subsidised:
 - 4 Home Care Programmes;
 - 5 programmes of Day Care for the Elderly and the Disabled.

Quality management

In contrast to the procedures followed in Bavaria and in other European countries, in Cyprus there is no system of quality management regarding long-term care residential facilities. All quality assurance, inspection and evaluation are carried out in the form described above. Unlike the Bavarian example, there is no accreditation process, no external audit evaluation team and no auditing system in general. The sole form of evaluation is the above mentioned report of inspection and compliance with the regulations under the Law of 2000.

Staff Training measures

In Cyprus all employers provide contributions to the Social Insurance Services which are then used to finance in-work training provided by a semi-governmental organisation. Also, due to high organisation of volunteerism in Cyprus, training can also be organised by the relevant network. Such training involves the Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council which, since 2003, run 8 (eight) 12-hour educational / training programmes for Carers for the Elderly⁸ in all districts. The next programme is scheduled to be delivered in the first six months of 2011. So far 150 people attended these programmes, mainly carers and other staff working in elderly people's homes.

Smaller scale programmes can also be implemented by municipalities, such as the Municipality of Strovolos. This training was carried out through the ECVC (Elderly Care Vocational Certificate) programme, which gave both theoretical and practical training at the community residential care home, to people who would like to train to care for the elderly both with purpose of being employed in a long-term care facility as well as for caring for their own elderly people at home⁹.

Moreover, the State Residential facilities train their staff at all levels, including managerial staff.

Discussion on Future Role of Residential Facilities

As mentioned above all the discussion about the future role of long-term residential facilities is within the framework of the NSSI. Cyprus also investigates the possibility of other forms of financing care services - such as through care allowances, which are not means-tested, or even trying to promote the greater involvement of local authorities.

Potential Transferability of the Bavarian example of Good Practice in Cyprus

The Bavarian example of good practice could be a very useful example for the discussion on long-term residential facilities in Cyprus. However, in order for such a practice to be implemented in Cyprus new institutions should be set up and law reforms might be necessary. SWS should consider a system of external evaluation that might use the quality assurance system that exists in Bavaria.

Initially the criteria and regulations for the registration of residential facilities should be revised, in order to comply with what is suggested in the Bavarian model. Most of the criteria already apply, but there is a need of cooperation with the Ministry of Health in order to be able to evaluate the health quality of the residents.

Furthermore, in order to be able to achieve quality standards, an additional inspection and evaluation system should be introduced, which might include an interdisciplinary auditing team (as in the Bavarian example), and a revised accreditation tool, which would include additional criteria than the already existing. A very important element that can prove very useful is the participant observation process that would give a better picture on the behavioural treatment of the residents and their families and the standard of care provision.

Finally a better system of evaluating the qualifications of the staff should be introduced, both regarding the carers, as well as the managerial staff. If it is proven that these do not comply with the expected standards, the competent body should be able to suggest measures and /or training for improvement. This competent body should contribute to further quality standards.

Topics suggested for discussion

- In view of the ageing of the population:
 - Initiation of European and National dialogue on the necessity of improving long-term care residential facilities;
 - Cooperation between health and social services.
- For achieving quality assurance / management:
 - Possibility of introducing external quality assurance mechanism;
 - Facing the problem of shortage of financial resources which poses an obstacle for achieving qualification standards.
- Exchange of experiences with regard to staff training and educating.
- Discussion of Member States on setting standards for the modernisation of residential facilities.

Sources

1. Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance (2008) *National Strategy Reports on Social Protection and Social Inclusion (2008-2010)*.
2. Information provided by the Department of Community Services of the Social Welfare Services.
3. http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/sws/sws.nsf/dmlindex_en/dmlindex_en?OpenDocument.
4. [http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/sws/sws.nsf/All/E78FAD5E8672C33CC225772000191306/\\$file/Ετήσια%20εκθεση%20ΥΚΕ1.pdf?OpenElement](http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/sws/sws.nsf/All/E78FAD5E8672C33CC225772000191306/$file/Ετήσια%20εκθεση%20ΥΚΕ1.pdf?OpenElement).
5. Law 222/91 on Long-term Care Residential Facilities for the Elderly and the Disabled.
6. Law 213/2000 on Long-term Care Residential Facilities for the Elderly and the Disabled.
7. Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, Social Welfare Services, *Report of Inspection of Residential Facilities for the Elderly and the Disabled*.
8. Information provided by the Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council - <http://www.volunteerism-cc.org.cy>.
9. Information provided by the Municipality of Strovolos – www.strovolos.org.cy.