

Literature on The Eden Alternative

"Life Worth Living", "The Eden Alternative Handbook" and "What are old people for" all written by Dr. William (Bill) Thomas. Published by Wander Wyk & Burnham, "The Eden Alternative Handbook" by Summer Hill Company, Inc. In German: "Übermorgen – wenn wir alt sind" by Christa Monkhouse and Renate Wapflinger. Published by Ruffer & Rub.

Who is behind the project?

The project "Improving standards in Danish nursing homes – new strategies" is funded by the Ministry of Social Welfare. It is developed by the three Danish municipalities: Assens, Herlev, and Aabenraa in cooperation with the three consultants Karin Dahl, Aase Porsmose and Ole Holst.

The project runs from October 2007 to June 2009. The three municipalities will collaborate and 25 nursing homes take part in the project.

Additional information

Involved municipalities:

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Improving standards in Danish nursing homes

– new strategies 2007-2008



Ministry of Social Welfare
Aabenraa, Assens and Herlev Municipality

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Danish nursing homes
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The aim of the project

- To improve culture change in Danish nursing homes
- To provide a meaningful everyday life for residents, staff and visitors
- To provide an everyday life in which elderly people's resources are recognised, acknowledged and utilised despite possible disabilities
- To communicate experience and new knowledge to others

How can we achieve this?

The project is based on the American Eden Alternative concept which will be adapted to the Danish system.

This is an innovative process, and those involved in the project work together in close collaboration. The project involves residents, relatives, staff, managers, committees for the elderly, and relatives as well as people in the local area.

What is the Eden Alternative about?

The Eden Alternative concept founded by the American Doctor Bill Thomas in 1991 is widely known in America, Australia and now also in Europe.

The philosophical background of the Eden Alternative is a perception of dignity as something which is inalienable despite age, disabilities and residency. Due to equality and reciprocal recognition, everyday life for residents and working life for staff become increasingly more meaningful, relevant and worthwhile.

The Eden Alternative is in other words a health promoting approach to everyday life and work aiming to reduce loneliness, helplessness and boredom. Instead of focusing on illness, physical care and treatment, it focuses on personal development and on involving the elderly in their own daily living while they are still being provided with the necessary care and treatment.

The Eden Alternative provides an opportunity to put existing theories into practise. It is mainly based on good practise experience. Research in America and Europe supports the good results of the Eden Alternative concept.

What happens when?

The first part of the project is defined as a phase of analysis and development where specific knowledge is collected from the nursing homes involved. The three municipalities will organise introductory meetings that are open to all active partners such as residents, relatives, politicians, representatives from relevant associations and staff.

Developing competences

The data collected from the initial phase of the project is used to design an educational programme for managers and staff. Every six months, two 3-day courses are held for approximately 30 managers and 300 staff members.

Implementing new knowledge

In between these courses, the project is aiming to put the new knowledge into practise in 25 nursing homes from 3 municipalities, so each home has a number of follow up days.

In addition, there will be network groups within as well as between the 3 municipalities to ensure that the knowledge is utilised.

Communicating experience and knowledge to others

In order to monitor the effect the project is having in Denmark, the involved nursing homes' use of this new knowledge is assessed. This will provide a basis for a Danish "Eden Alternative quality-strategy" – a new model for developing standards in Danish nursing homes. In short, the purpose of this effort is to determine if and how the Eden concept can be adapted and used in this country and maybe even influence the local municipalities' policies. During the process, the project will impart information to raise awareness of its potential in Denmark. This information will be circulated via newsletters, journals, the media, relevant websites and with a conference to finalise the project.