

Appendix 1:

Unlawful influence in Angered

City of Gothenburg, Angered district administrative office

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In January 2019 a project on unlawful influence was launched in the Angered district administration office in the City of Gothenburg. It was funded by the district administration office and is estimated to run until December 2020.

Background

The district of Angered contains areas that have long been influenced by established clan and family-based networks that perpetrate organised crime. This is mainly one family network that dominates in Hammarkullen and has national and international links. The problematic situation with the criminal clan-based network in Angered has been described and analysed in several ways by researchers and in the media.

One distinguishing feature of parallel social structures run by criminal networks is that they exert a powerful influence on the population in the area in which they operate. Inhabitants are forced to work around and adapt to the criminal structure. This means that the local population are also making it easier for criminals to operate, for example by not reporting crime to the police or not coming forward as witnesses in court. We also see locals actively avoiding conflict or confrontations with members of the criminal family network, so helping to increase their power and influence.

The project Otillåten påverkan i Angered (Unlawful influence in Angered) has gathered information on how the same mechanisms that are seen in the population in Angered are also being seen in the City's services in Angered. Just as the population has adapted, staff employed by the City in the area are forced to work around and adapt to the powerful criminal structures locally. In the short term, this is a health and safety issue, as staff who do not adapt the performance of their professional duties to pressure from criminals suffer threats and sometimes even violence and/or criminal damage. In the long term this is also a threat to the structures of society and the democratic system if we allow parallel criminal social structures to dictate how we work in local government services.

Implementation

In 2018 Angered district administration office noted a major rise in the number of threats and attempts to influence social services staff. The increase was judged to be a consequence of agencies stepping up efforts to combat a family-based criminal network. This multi-agency initiative led to issues in families being brought to the attention of social services, which took action accordingly,

such as taking children into care under the Care of Young People (Special Provisions) Act (LVU). This in turn led to a number of serious and wide-ranging threats to social services staff.

Due to the rise in threats, an inquiry was appointed in January 2019 in which an independent party conducted a number of interviews with social services staff. The result of the interviews confirmed the picture of an unsafe working environment for social welfare officers and managers. The inquiry also pointed to a need to change working methods in a number of areas to better be able to tackle influence from parallel social structures.

The project initially focused on the sector Individual and family care and disabilities (IFO-FH). The second phase of the project, which started in spring 2020, also includes the sectors Culture and leisure, and Care of the elderly.

Description of the project

The project mainly comprises two parts: one part seeking to prevent unlawful influence and one part seeking to strengthen work to tackle threats and influence when it occurs.

Preventive work:

Sub-project 1. Training and skills.

Sub-project 2. New procedures for “risk cases” where a risk of unlawful influence is identified.

Sub-project 3. Data security.

Reactive work (when threats and influence arise)

Sub-project 4. Clarifying and updating procedures on:

- assessing threat scenarios
- protective measures
- police reports and reporting occupational injuries
- case documentation
- coordinating cases
- support to managers and staff

Sub-project 5. Managing the legal process.

Approaches when dealing with unlawful influence and crime prevention.

The project tackles the problem of unlawful influence from several perspectives and thus prevents different types of crime:

- The most visible effect is likely to be a reduction in threats and violence against local government employees.
- The project also helps to reduce influence from criminal structures and thus also their opportunities to commit e.g. benefit fraud.

- Staff are strengthened to act when they discover irregularities, and gain greater support to report crime and provide witness reports even against known criminal networks.
- Staff are strengthened in reporting concerns regarding children at risk, and in conducting inquiries that can lead to children being taken into care under LVU, even if this means threats and influence from criminal structures. In the long run, this means that these children will have the chance to grow up in an environment without violence, drugs and crime.

Goals of the project

The long-term goal is to promote democracy by maintaining a high level of confidence in our operations and make influence from criminals and undemocratic structures impossible.

In the shorter term, the project is to lead to:

- all staff in the Angered district administration office being equipped to prevent and resist unlawful influence from parallel social structures.
- the district administration being well prepared with clear procedures for reacting to and tackling unlawful influence when it arises.

Follow-up and evaluation

An evaluation of the project implementation process and an evaluation of the effect of the results so far are planned for autumn 2020.

The project monitors statistics on reports of occupational injuries where unlawful influence is cited as the cause of the report.

In the autumn, a survey of social services staff will be conducted to follow up the work so far. The purpose of the survey is:

- to measure whether the goal of equipping staff to prevent and resist unlawful influence has been attained.
- to measure whether the goal of the district administration being well prepared with clear procedures for reacting to and tackling unlawful influence when it arises has been attained.

An external consultant/researcher will also monitor the work, partly by conducting qualitative interviews.

What is innovative about the project?

In the project survey phase a search was conducted for other municipalities or agencies with similar experience to exchange information and knowledge. We got in touch with a number of municipalities and operations that described similar problems but had not found ways of tackling them. During the course of the project we have been contacted by municipalities that have heard of the project, wanting to conduct study visits and asking us to visit their management teams and tell them about our work. However, this has had to be postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The major discovery during the course of the project is that the problem of unlawful influence from parallel social structures against the administration's staff is more wide-ranging and more complex than was first thought. The researcher involved in the project will enable us to understand and describe the problem in a new way.

Work to combat unlawful influence in local government that does exist is mainly focused on politicians and also on particular municipal tasks such as issuing alcohol licenses. Unlawful influence in social work is relatively unexplored territory.

Important lessons to take on board

The project began with an interview study and a series of workshops in social services. The experience gained from this, which brought to the surface problems that had previously been hidden and unstated, is that it raises many questions and needs for support. To meet these needs, the measures needed to be introduced more rapidly than anticipated. We have taken these experiences with us into the next phase in which we will survey the Culture and leisure sector and Care of the elderly.

Adjustments/corrections for other countries

It is likely that only minor adjustments would be needed to replicate the project in other European countries. The challenges are likely to be similar irrespective of the structure of local government operations.