

Impact on child welfare services: Results from applying HTA-methods to SIA at SBU

In 2015 the Swedish government commissioned the Swedish Agency for Health Technology Assessment (SBU), to also systematically review research on social work interventions. Taking on this new task, SBU based it's work on their experience of assessing healthcare technologies for 28 years. With some exceptions, the well-tested procedures, and routines from conducting HTAs have been successfully adapted for reviews on social services, so called SIAs (Social Intervention Assessments). In order to benefit from international collaboration in this field, SBU was in 2019 commissioned by the government to initiate an international network for agencies that do SIAs, thus in 2021 the International Network for Social Intervention Assessment was established.

But conditions for dissemination vary between the health and social services sectors. After years of supporting the healthcare sector, SBU is well-known and well-respected among clinicians and stakeholders in Sweden. In contrast, with respect to social services, SBU was a new actor, with fewer publications and no established reputation. Another obstacle has been and still is the different infrastructure. Compared to the healthcare system, there are few specialists social work associations that could have an intermediary role in disseminating SBU reports. Another challenge is that the basic training of social workers has not been well adapted to evidence-based practice. The delivery of health services is run by 21 regional organisations and the content decided primarily by the physicians, while social services is run by 294 municipals where politicians have sparse knowledge of social issues.

As a consequence, our efforts have focused on building an infrastructure that can support dissemination and implementation of SBU's reports. This presentation describes the impact of three SBU social intervention assessments on child welfare services: Treatment Foster Care Oregon for Delinquent Adolescents, Independent living services for youth aging out of institutional care, and Risk and needs assessment regarding reoffending in adolescents. In addition, we will also describe the "SBU model" this work has resulted in, developed in the Swedish context, ie. a tool for practitioners to facilitate their assessment of evidence in social work.