

The policy
of the City of Reykjavik
regarding
the elderly
until
2017



Reykjavikurborg
Velferðarsvið



To begin with...

The City of Reykjavik aims to be an age-friendly city that addresses the needs of its older citizens with consideration. An age-friendly city is a city that is accessible, attractive and accommodating to the elderly.

Services for elderly people have been the responsibility of both the State and the municipalities. The aim is for the municipalities to take over all such services in the coming years. Therefore, the City authorities wish to formulate a policy on elderly people. This policy will be formulated in close cooperation with representative associations of the elderly and specialists in geriatric services. This policy will reflect the future vision of the City of Reykjavik as regards how to meet the needs of the elderly while ensuring that society can benefit from what they have to offer.

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This policy on elderly people looks to the future, with emphasis on how the City can support the social involvement and activity of elderly people.
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It is not only access to services that has a decisive effect on wellbeing and quality of life; individuals also need to feel that they have autonomy and are able to interact meaningfully with those who are close to them and other people.

It is therefore important that services are organized in such a manner that residential care workers and those working in institutions endeavor to make the most of initiatives and achieve what is desired by those who make use of the service. In this way, services will be provided on the conditions of those that use it.

It is proposed that in the long run people and services provided to them will no longer be sorted into categories according to age, illness, disability or other criteria, but that services and support will rather be provided according to the needs of each individual. There is great emphasis on consultation with elderly people and geriatric-care professionals in formulating policy on the elderly. The findings of studies in this field will also be taken into account.

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The aim is that all direct services, including health care, will be provided by the City of Reykjavik.
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This policy addresses the City's chief points of emphasis with regard to the elderly. The Chapters are as follows:

- Quality and consultation
- Preventive measures
- Support for independent living
- Diverse accommodation options
- Health services
- Family members
- Staff



Quality and consultation

Services for elderly people in Reykjavík shall be of high quality and this shall be reflected in all services offered. Quality means that services shall meet predefined quality criteria, that decision-making regarding the services shall be transparent and that equality is ensured. Particular emphasis is placed on reliability and safety.

REGULAR SURVEYS OF THE CONDITION AND ATTITUDES OF THE ELDERLY

The intention is to regularly conduct surveys on quality of life for elderly people, in order to form an overall impression of changes that occur. It is important to conduct comparable studies at least every four years.

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The part played by senior citizens in raising children has been studied in Iceland, and findings show that 62% of senior citizens have assisted with child care, of which 37% did so twice a week or more. The people who enjoy their role as carers feel younger and hope to live longer.

(Amalía Björnsdóttir and Ingibjörg H. Harðardóttir, 2007)

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STRENGTHENING OF INFORMATION AND ADVISORY SERVICES

It is the wish of the City of Reykjavik that a wide variety of courses and recreation activities are offered to elderly people, regardless of whether they are organized by the City authorities, by volunteers from among the local people, or by social membership organizations. Information and advisory services relating to the issues of elderly people need to be strengthened and information about the services available to the elderly in the City shall be provided to them on user-friendly web pages, in published information material and through better advisory service.

Information about services must be accessible.

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The conditions of each case shall be considered and service provided every day of the year and round the clock when needed, with emphasis on flexibility and safety.

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READY ACCESS TO SERVICES

In order to ensure continuity in service and to provide overall supervision of the needs and wishes of citizens as the responsibility of a single body, the aim is for the City of Reykjavik to be responsible for all direct services. Residential care is already part of the service provided by the City to people in their homes and in the coming years all geriatric care will pass from the hands of the State to become the responsibility of the municipalities. An important step has therefore already been taken.

FEEDBACK ON SERVICES

Residents receiving residential care can electronically submit feedback on anything regarding the service which they receive, whether in the form of complaints or praise. The City of Reykjavik will in the coming years adopt this type of feedback service for all residential care services and thereby ensure that feedback goes through the proper channels, resulting in a better service.

SERVICE TEAM FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

The service team for elderly people in Reykjavik works in accordance with the Act on the Affairs of the Elderly, and their task is to monitor the health and social wellbeing of elderly people and coordinate services. In addition, the team makes suggestions to municipalities regarding services for elderly people and seek to ensure that elderly people receive the service that they need. The team is composed of representatives from the Reykjavik Association of Senior Citizens, health care workers and City representatives.

COUNCIL OF ELDERS

It was recently agreed to establish a Council of Elders to which senior citizens would be appointed to act as a consulting body to the City authorities. The purpose and objectives of the Council and the appointment of its members shall be decided by the Office of the Municipal Authorities of Reykjavik in cooperation with the Reykjavik Association of Senior Citizens.

DIRECT SERVICE GROUPS

Direct service groups have been active in some parts of the City. This activity consists of cooperation between the institutions and organizations that are involved in the issues of elderly residents within their relevant neighborhoods. It is important to strengthen the work of close service groups and arrange for such services to be available in all parts of the City.

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Studies show that people wish to be active in their autumn years.
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USER CONSULTATION

The focus of professional services must be in synch with the needs and wishes of senior citizens. In order to examine the needs of the elderly at any given time, the City of Reykjavik will perform a needs analysis each year. User consultation is an important way to capture expectations and desires for resources and remedies. The Service Team for Senior Citizens of Reykjavik, the Council of Elders and the direct service groups are forums where this can be achieved.



THE CITY OF REYKJAVIK AIMS TO BE AN "AGE-FRIENDLY CITY"

It is proposed that the City of Reykjavik applies for membership of the Global Network of Age Friendly Cities, established by the World Health Organization (WHO).

The objective of participation in the Network is to assess the status of Reykjavik with regard to factors such as accessibility and the environment, and to formulate policy for the future and effect measures to make cities accessible, attractive and accommodating to elderly people. By participating in the Network of Age Friendly Cities, the City of Reykjavik would become a better city for all residents and age groups to live in. For its part, WHO emphasizes wide-reaching cooperation and participation of senior citizens in structuring the project. The factors that are especially examined when it comes to making cities age-friendly are divided into the following eight categories:

- 1 Outdoor areas and buildings
- 2 Transportation
- 3 Housing
- 4 Social participation
- 5 Respect and being active in the community
- 6 Education
- 7 Telecommunications and information
- 8 Community and health service

The City of Reykjavik stresses the importance of preventive measures when dealing with the issues of senior citizens. Strong preventive measures can help to increase quality of life and promote activity and health among the citizenry. Information from regular studies of the conditions and attitudes of the elderly is of use when preventive measures are established for this group. It is also important to ensure good access to information and services. Emphasis is placed on providing diverse opportunities for senior citizens for exercise, leisure activities, education, volunteer work and other activities.

EXERCISE

Health and exercise will continue to be promoted by subsidizing of access to swimming pools, and by various types of calisthenics in social centers and swimming pools. The option of cooperating with fitness centers will also be examined.

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Promoting activity and health among senior citizens is also a way to help those whose health and ability to perform daily tasks is declining.

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TRANSFERRING POWER TO PARTICIPANTS IN SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

In 2011, the Welfare Division ran sixteen social centers in Reykjavik. That year a total of 1,277 senior citizens used this option for social activity, and of these women were a significant majority - 922, as compared to 355 men. In recent years various steps have been taken towards increased sustainability in this work and towards increasing the power of those who participate.

This path will be followed in the future but the City of Reykjavik will continue to support this activity by providing housing and other accommodation. Furthermore, increased emphasis will be placed on support for volunteer workers and independently organized social activities, including those of the Reykjavik Association of Senior Citizens.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES WITH SUPPORT

Participation in social activities can be difficult for many people due to illness or disability. The City of Reykjavik will ensure that organized social activities are available with special support for this group of people, e.g. in the service apartment centers in the city.

ACTIVE WAITING LISTS FOR SERVICES

It shall be ensured that those who first receive services or housing, such as apartments in service centers, are the people that have the greatest need for such services and meet the required conditions.

PROFESSIONAL ASSESSMENT

When assessing the need for services the circumstances and opportunities of each individual shall be taken into account, as well as information regarding physical, mental and social health. Assessment instruments such as RAI-HC shall be used to assess the need for health services and to assess the quality of the service provided.

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Services for the elderly shall be provided in a professional and responsible manner, and with respect for their desires and decisions.
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THE SITUATION FOR ELDERLY PEOPLE IN REYKJAVIK

A population projection for Reykjavik indicates that the number of people aged 67 years and above will increase from 10.9% in 2012 to 12.5% in 2018. A survey of the circumstances and attitudes of senior citizens in Reykjavik showed that 74% of them considered their health state to be very good or rather good. About 79% exercise at least once a week and 87% say they rarely or never feel lonely. 41% say they participate in social activities that are not organized specifically for the elderly and 26% say they participate in social activities organized for the elderly.

(Capacent Gallup, 2012)

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As compared to the attitudes commonly heard among other European nations, Icelandic people have a more positive attitude towards elderly people and are less concerned about the rising average age of the nation. These findings are from a new European survey that was conducted at the beginning of the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations 2012.
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At the end of 2012, there were 4,804 citizens of Reykjavik aged 80 years or older. Of these, 84.1% were living in private residences and 15.9% in retirement or nursing homes.



84.1%

of people aged 80 years or older were living in private residences in 2012.

15.9%

of people aged 80 years or older were living in retirement or nursing homes in 2012.



Support for independent living

It is vital to offer varied support for independent living in order to encourage people to live in their own homes for as long as possible, irrespective of health problems or impaired ability. Such services must be reliable, secure and supportive of the independence of residents.

RESIDENTIAL CARE SERVICES

Residential care services shall be provided with due consideration of the mental and physical health of users as well as their social situation. In these services it is necessary to consider the circumstances in each case and they shall be provided every day of the year and round the clock, if required, with emphasis on flexibility and safety. Residential care services are intended for people who require assistance with housekeeping, personal care and/or residential care.

Residents only have to pay for assistance provided with cleaning and laundry, all other services are free for them. The City of Reykjavik has fully combined all residential services i.e. nursing care and social services, for residents in Laugardalur and Háaleiti. The Welfare Division has agreed that residential care services will be integrated for the remaining 60% of users.

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Support and assistance in the homes of elderly people shall be provided in a professional and responsible manner while respecting the wishes and decisions of the user.
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DAY CARE

An important goal is to guarantee as many resources as possible with regard to support for elderly people living in their own homes, in order to maintain their activity and delay their moving to an institution or prevent it altogether. There are a number of day care centers in Reykjavik and these are associated with nursing homes and the Alzheimer Association of Iceland, in addition to which the City of Reykjavik runs one general day care center and one specialized day care center for people with dementia. In these centers people are offered the opportunity to engage in leisure activities, exercise or receive physiotherapy, and provided with food, facilities for rest, assistance with bathing and medical checks. Opportunities for physical therapy and exercise need to be increased as the number of elderly people and average age increases, which in turn results in more people suffering from dementia.

HEALTHY AND GOOD FOOD

The food that the City of Reykjavik offers to its oldest citizens shall be healthy and appetizing. The people who prepare the food are knowledgeable about quality and nutrition. Residents can obtain food in social centers and enjoy it in a convivial setting or have it delivered to their homes if necessary. The objective is to provide more variety and options, and to offer more specialized food for those who need it.

SPECIALIST SERVICES

Elderly people in Reykjavik face many kinds of problems and challenges, as do other citizens. They can receive help from professionals in various fields, e.g. with regard to finances, housing, violence, abuse, loneliness or other problems. Social workers, psychologists, occupational therapists and nurses are among the specialists that can provide assistance and advice. The importance of integrating specialist services and residential care services where needed is emphasized, in order to better meet the various needs of senior citizens.

RESPITE CARE

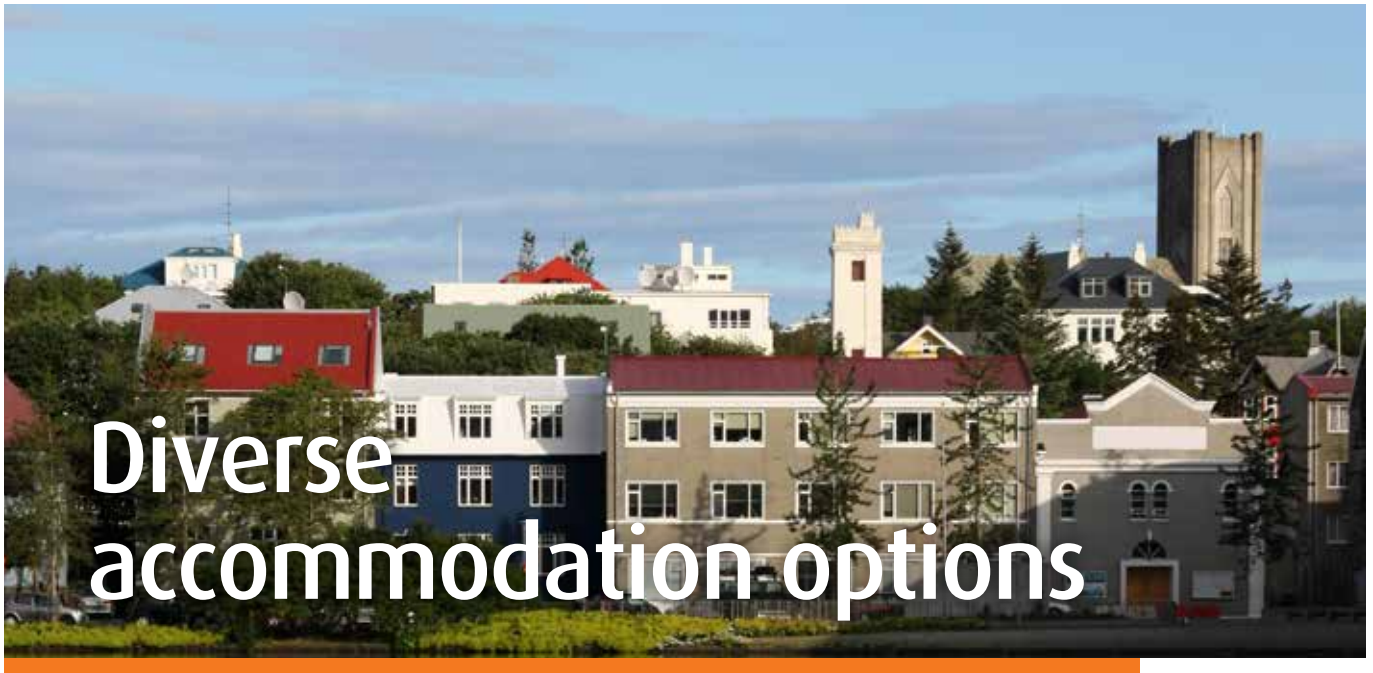
Elderly people living in their own homes may need to stay briefly in a nursing home for rehabilitation, to give their relatives a break or while work goes on towards increasing residential care services. The City of Reykjavik has access to such resources and provides them to those who need them.

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Most senior citizens want to live in their own homes for as long as they feel secure there.
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TRANSPORT SERVICES

Senior citizens who can neither use public transport nor their own vehicle can for a small fee use special transportation services to get to where they need to go. The purpose of this transportation service is among other things to enable people to live in their own homes without becoming socially isolated.





Diverse accommodation options

APARTMENTS FOR THE ELDERLY

In recent decades a considerable amount of specialized housing, taking into account accessibility for elderly people, has been built in Reykjavik. Such residences are often called service apartments. Service is not provided round the clock; rather, the Welfare Division offers service based on an assessment of each individual's needs in the same manner as for all other citizens. Reykjavik stresses the importance of good cooperation with the people who build such apartments.

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Senior citizens choose to live in their own homes for as long as possible, and to remain independent for as long as they can. Nevertheless, they want to have the option of secure residential care when they no longer feel able to live on their own.

(Sigurveig H. Sigurðardóttir, 2010)

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SERVICE APARTMENTS

The service apartments of the City of Reykjavik constitute a resource that the City can offer those who require a high level of service than can be provided in private residences or who do not feel adequately secure in their own homes. These apartments are rented at affordable prices and their residents are provided with round the clock service. When assessing if people need to live in the service apartments of the City of Reykjavik their physical and mental health is considered and also their housing arrangements and financial position. Allocation of the service apartments of the City of Reykjavik is based on professional assessments.

The focus is on people continuing to be autonomous and active and receiving support as needed to remain so. Available in all service apartment centers are social activities with support, assistance with bathing, assistance with household work and personal care. Service is available round the clock for all apartments and every apartment is connected to a security system with a direct connection to the staff of the apartment center. The objective of the service apartment is to bridge the gap between living in a private residence and in a nursing home, for the people who need such a solution.

Efforts shall be made to offer service apartments for elderly people with different needs, e.g. pet owners, people struggling with substance abuse or mental problems.

In 2011 there were elderly people were living in 373 service apartments provided by the City of Reykjavik. There is room for 434 residents in single and two-room apartments. The average age of residents living in the service apartments of the City of Reykjavik on 31 December 2012 was 84.7 years. The average age of women at this time was 85.5 years and that of men was 82.9.

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It is important to offer a varied selection of housing in order to meet different needs of senior citizens. The City of Reykjavik stresses that elderly people should feel secure in their homes and that their needs for service in the home are met if possible
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SECURITY APARTMENTS

Security apartments are residential centers associated with nursing homes. In these apartments, service is provided round the clock with access to service from a nurse on standby. Residential service and residential care is provided on the basis of an individual assessment and there are facilities for social activities. The City of Reykjavik offers secure apartments in association with the Seljahlíð nursing home, in addition to which the City has agreements with the Eir home regarding service for such apartments.

ALTERATIONS TO HOUSING

In recent years development projects have been ongoing in connection with alterations to private residences. The purpose of these projects has been to make it easier for residents to access their apartments and thereby prevent the need for them to move elsewhere. The aim is to continue developments in this field but it is clear that this will require the joint efforts of many parties, such as the government, municipality and legislative body.

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Those needing a higher level of service than can be provided in private residences shall be provided with accommodation in a nursing home.
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NURSING HOMES

Nursing homes are for those who require a great deal of care and nursing service. All other resources shall have been exhausted before an individual is placed in a nursing home. Staff at nursing homes must be well trained and there shall be an adequate percentage of professional people who are able to assess the need for social and health services and provide residents with the proper care round the clock. There are many nursing homes in Reykjavik and the City runs two of them, Droplaugarstaðir and Seljahlíð. The City of Reykjavik and the Ministry of Welfare are working on a plan for developing and increasing the number of nursing home spaces to meet requirements until the year 2020.

The City of Reykjavik desires to contribute to increased activity and less loneliness in nursing homes and work towards the introduction of policies that will maximize the quality of life and autonomy of residents.

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Importantly, staff should endeavor to make the most of initiatives and achieve the wishes of the people who use the service, in a manner where the service is as far as possible provided on the terms of the elderly people.
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Health service

QUALITY CRITERIA

Reykjavik was the first municipality to introduce quality criteria for health service in private residences. By using the RAI-HC instrument to assess service needs and the quality of the health service provided it is possible to monitor quality and engage in specific improvement work where needed.

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The City of Reykjavik provides health service with qualified professionals who are able to provide service to people living in various forms of residences.

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DEMENTIA

Each year, care and nursing for people suffering from dementia becomes a bigger part of service for the elderly. People employed by the City to provide services for the elderly must have knowledge of the symptoms of dementia and thereby improve the chances of the relevant people receiving adequate diagnosis in health care centers, from their general practitioner or at the memory department at the National University Hospital of Iceland. Staff must receive particular education and training in caring for and communicating with people who suffer from dementia and it is the responsibility of the City of Reykjavik to provide such training. It seems evident that the increase in number of elderly people will result in an increase in people who are diagnosed with dementia, and therefore the aim is to offer more options with regard to support and housing for this group.

INCREASED SERVICE IN THE HOME

Caring for people at the end of their lives is a delicate matter and requires particular care and skill. Through increased specialization in home care service, the City of Reykjavik aims to provide good palliative care in cooperation with experts in that field.

A cooperation project is already under way between the National University Hospital and home care services. This project is based on intense care for people with heart failure. Such projects result in improved service and better quality of life.



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Health services provided by the City shall be characterized by quality, efficiency and an ability to accommodate variable needs of residents for care and treatment.

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Members of the family play a vital part in service for elderly people but their contribution often goes unnoticed, except in times of great adversity. People may suddenly need to step into the role of carer if the health of their elderly relative takes a turn for the worse, often without any training or experience in such matters. Home care services provided by official entities are intended to support and complement this form of care, not to supplant the role of the family members. Until now, assessing the need for home care service has not involved determining whether support is needed for the relatives of the elderly person concerned. The consequence may be that there is a risk that the needs of carers go unattended.

COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT FOR FAMILY MEMBERS

Family members need counselling and support. It is important that they receive good information and guidance. They must also be able to make decisions for themselves and every now and then they will need to take a break from their role as carer. Carers who are highly constrained due to the illness of their relatives often require longer breaks than provided during the brief time when a home care worker visits, and therefore it is important that elderly people are offered respite care and day care service.

A targeted effort shall be made to map out the support and counselling needs of relatives when assessing the need for home care service. Staff shall be trained in providing counselling and support for relatives.

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Living at home with their loved ones can help to maintain the quality of life for sick elderly people.
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Staff

Knowledge, experience and satisfaction of staff ensures the quality of the service provided. The work must be attractive and a creative and healthy working environment must be offered to help ensure that everybody's skills are utilized.

Services for the elderly is both rewarding and demanding work. Studies conducted in Iceland have revealed that people who provide service to the elderly often experience a great deal of strain but nonetheless agree that their work is important and rewarding. The City of Reykjavik emphasizes continuous education, instruction and training of staff. It is important for staff of foreign origin to be able to both understand Icelandic and communicate in that language.

That the staff feels that their work is respected is of vital importance. People's understanding of care work must be improved and the work facilities and support for staff must be carefully attended to. Staff must have access to adequate tools, facilities and knowledge to be able to execute the tasks entrusted to them.



Senior citizens are givers and takers in society, just like other people living in the City. They are active members of the community who contribute greatly to society, each in their own way. It is important to regard the rising age of the nation as an opportunity for progress and development.

Active ageing is a central concept, which assumes that elderly people are able to do many different things and have many opportunities. Society must have flexibility where the circumstances of each individual are considered, the experience and knowledge of older people must be respected and those who are in a vulnerable position must receive special care.

Services must be based on the individual needs of each person. Growing older is often accompanied by changes and challenges to take on new tasks, but it should be kept in mind that senior citizens do not constitute a uniform group as they still have different interests, desires and opinions. Better quality of life, health service, preventive measures and rehabilitation have greatly contributed to improve the health of elderly people. Improved health diminishes and delays the need for outside support and at the same time increases the ability of senior citizens to contribute to the betterment of society.

City of Reykjavik, Welfare Division, 2013.

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Photographs: Various, from the collection of the City of Reykjavik and Shutterstock.com