



# Swedish Compassionate Care Leave Benefits, ”Närståendepenning”

Care Leave Event, Finnish Parliament  
19 September 2024, hybrid session, Helsinki

Elizabeth Hanson  
Swedish Family Care Competence Centre (Nka), Linnaeus University

[elizabeth.hanson@lnu.se](mailto:elizabeth.hanson@lnu.se)

# Key facts

---

Benefit for the care of a closely related person is monies that you receive for caring for a significant other who is seriously ill.

Persons receiving the benefit have a right to be on leave from their paid work to care for their relative/significant other.

Seriously ill is defined as *a distinct threat to the person's life, a risk that the person will not survive the illness- the risk is related to the near future.*

*Closely related person* refers to a relative or any other person who has a close relationship with the sick person e.g. friend or a neighbour.

Care means being with the person to provide support (either at home, hospital or other care setting).

You and the person you are caring for are insured in Sweden.

The care is provided in Sweden or in another EU/EEA country.

You can receive up to a limit of 80% of your normal income and for a maximum period of 100 days.

The days can be shared among family members/friends who are providing care.

It is possible to receive compensation for three quarters, a half or a quarter of a working day.

The benefit can be paused (e.g. if the sick person's condition stabilises temporarily) and can then be re-started.

An application is sent to the Swedish Social Insurance Agency within 3 months of the first day you claim for.

- The applicant must ask the sick person's physician to write a doctor's report which describes the sick person's current health status.
- The sick person also needs to give their consent via completing a form "Consent for compassionate benefit".

# Experiences of the benefit in practice

---



- Under-utilised by carers:
  - 1996: 6,500 beneficiaries, 2017: 17,200 and 2023: 16,140
  - average of between 5-9 days per beneficiary (most often the very last days of life of the sick person)
- Clear gender differences: 70% of beneficiaries are women, typical beneficiary is a 45 year old women caring for her aged parent in the last days of life
- Few carers make use of the flexibility of the benefit:
  - in most cases it is a sole carer receiving the benefit, with only 18% cases where there is shared care
  - only 5% of cases apply for part of the day
- The application process is often experienced as a complex, bureaucratic system, creating additional stress for the carer

# Challenges in the legislation and proposed actions

---

- Lack of clarity around the definition of seriously ill – life threatening illness (imminent)
  - mainly applied to persons with advanced (metastatic) cancer at the very end of life
  - could usefully apply to persons with life threatening mental ill-health such as severe anorexia, persons with a high suicide risk.
- Excludes working carers whose relative lives outside EU/EEA countries and/or relative who is not insured in Sweden.

## **Suggested actions:**

- A major information campaign targeted at carers/potential carers of working age with a relative with a serious, life threatening illness
- Education, training, and regular information for health care professionals and investigators processing the applications (Swedish Social Insurance Agency)
- Simplify the application and process as much as possible
- Provide regular detailed statistics on uptake and beneficiaries