

High staff turnover affects municipalities' work with vulnerable children

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In six out of ten municipalities, investigations concerning children and young people have taken longer than four months to complete on more than five occasions during the last two years. This is one of the findings of the 2015 Barnbarometern survey, which examined municipalities' work with vulnerable children and young people. The combination of long investigation periods and alarmingly high staff turnover among social workers affects the ability to provide vulnerable children with good support.

“Children who have been betrayed by the adults around them need quick support from the community. When child investigations are prolonged, there is a danger that children and young people will not get the right support at the right time. Many municipalities have very high staff turnover and we believe that it is important to address this so that investigations can be carried out within the agreed time frame,” says Annicka Lang, Chief Psychologist at Humana Individual & Family.

Humana's Barnbarometer is conducted by the organisation Maskrosbarn and care company Humana and is based on a survey examining the work of 139 municipalities with vulnerable children and young people. In six out of ten of the municipalities, investigations concerning children and young people have taken longer than four months to complete on more than five occasions during the last two years. Twenty-seven percent of the municipalities say that child investigations overrun in at least one in five cases. The results could mean that many municipalities are breaking the law, which stipulates that

investigations must not exceed four months. If an investigation overruns, this could also mean that children receive a lower level of support.

A high workload is cited as an important cause of prolonged investigations. As many as three out of ten municipalities report a staff turnover rate of over 20 percent, a deterioration from 2014. In addition to the effect of staff turnover on the workload, work with unaccompanied refugee children also has an effect in many municipalities.

One of the few areas where municipalities have improved their work during the three years of the survey is child investigations concerning violence in close relationships. Three out of four municipalities say that investigations are always carried out in these situations. On 1 October 2014, it became a legal requirement for an investigation to be initiated in the event of violence, and this is an important reason for the improvement.

“Those of us who encounter children in vulnerable situations know the importance of conducting child investigations, and conducting them quickly. To help the children who are so often forgotten, investigations need to be increasingly initiated in all cases where children come into the picture,” says Lisa Dahlgren, Child Representative Manager, Maskrosbarn.

Humana's Barnbarometer was developed by Humana and the organisation Maskrosbarn.

For more information contact:

Annicka Lang, Chief Psychologist, Humana Individual & Family 0702-55 18 25, annicka.lang@humana.se

Lisa Dahlgren, Child Representative Manager, Maskrosbarn, 076-899 88 58, lisa@maskrosbarn.org

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