

Healthy ageing innovations in care for older residents of remote northern areas

The number of older people is rising in all developed societies. Taking care of them is a tremendous challenge, especially in remote and rural areas. Our innovation is based on understanding the needs of older people living in remote communities of Northern Russia. The innovation is called “Foster family for lonely older persons” and suggests proactive identification and planning regarding older persons’ future needs: simplification of the design and delivery of services, and context-sensitive, social and cultural approaches to change their lifestyles and healthy habits.

It allows older people to stay and receive care in their local community, and avoids the relocation stress caused by moving to other areas. In this way, it acknowledges the benefits of an ‘ageing in place’ approach, recommended by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)¹.

- Recommendation 1. Introduce a tiered compensation mechanism with greater remuneration packages for caretakers who provide services to older persons with a higher degree of disability. The foster families can represent a more cost-effective way of providing care to older persons.
- Recommendation 2. Make sure that people know about the foster family initiative. Advertise the programme not only on the regional TV but also by radio and social networks to improve dissemination channels.
- Recommendation 3. The bureaucracy is what affects the sustainability of the foster family programme. Make sure to find the balance between ensuring the safety of this programme for the participants, providing support in a way that is not burdening the participants and collecting data despite resource constraints. This will require a tailored monitoring and evaluation package for various foster family types.

Foster Family for lonely older person means that a person, who is not a relative, lives with an older person and provides care. This arrangement is financially supported by local authoritiesⁱⁱ. Young lonely pensioners in rural areas are those most often involved in foster family work. It creates work places in remote areas and encourages people to stay in rural areas. The experiences of this arrangement have been positive in the Arkhangelsk regionⁱⁱⁱ (Fig. 2).

The foster families programme is one of the Russian government's responses to ensure that older people are being offered an efficient form of familial social support despite increasing demands on state capacities and resources. A tripartite agreement on the foster family is signed by the person performing services (caretaker), the older person and the local social services office. The caretaker for an older person assists in basic living needs (cooking, serving food, hygiene, shopping, healthcare etc.)^{iv}.

Fig.1. The map of the Russian Federation (Arkhangelsk region as an area of innovation)



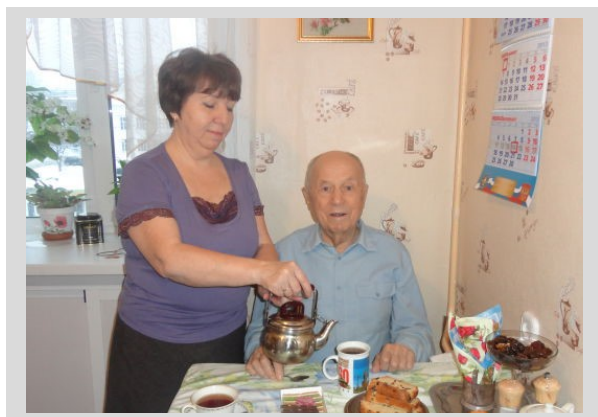
DID YOU KNOW THAT:

- Remote areas are characterized by rather broad community support and high level of inclusion of older people, which is the main precondition and basis for creating informal care networks (neighbors, friends) for the "foster family for the older persons" practice.
- Care received while living with a foster family increases the sense of security and confidence in the future in comparison with other types of accommodation and forms of services.
- Foster family for the older person is a factor that increases the availability of social assistance. It is a means of meeting the most vital and socializing related needs in the family micro-environment in remote rural areas, hence improving their quality of life.

Who is a foster caretaker?

We found out who is a main caretaker in the foster family for older persons programme: A woman (82%) with incomplete higher education (52%) at the age 55 or older (62%), and who has her own family (74%). There was no effect from the level of education, age and marital status of the caretaker on the motives for creating the foster family. The main motivation of the caretaker is the desire to help the older person, which is supported by the legal status of such family by local law^v.

Fig.2. Foster family for lonely older person. Source: <https://arh.mk.ru/>



Learn more about our innovation from the references, or feel free to contact us!

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ⁱ UNECE Policy Brief on Ageing. (2017, March). Older persons in rural and remote areas, 18. <https://www.unece.org/population/ageing/policybriefs.html>. Accessed 27 Sep 2017

ⁱⁱ Government of Arkhangelsk region. (2015). Amendments on Law of Arkhangelsk region from 21.11.2011 №382-26-03 on Foster families for older persons and disabled persons in Arkhangelsk region (amendments in effect from 24.02.2015)

ⁱⁱⁱ Ghiga I. & Golubeva E. (2018) Russian Federation: Foster families for older people in remote northern Russian territories. Research report of WHO program “Community-based social innovations for healthy ageing” https://extranet.who.int/kobe_centre/sites/default/files/pdf/Appendix_C_CBSI_Case_Studies_FI_NAL_lowbandwidth_0.pdf

^{iv} Golubeva E. & Emelyanova A. (2019) The Foster Family As Means Of Promoting Social Inclusion Of Older People. In Päivi Naskali, Joan R. Harbison, Shahnaj Begum (Eds.) New Challenges to Ageing in the Rural North A Critical Interdisciplinary Perspective Springer. 10.1007/978-3-030-20603-1_6

^v Golubeva, E. Y., Khabarova, L., & Soloviev. (2017). Foster family as a new technology of social care in the policy of active aging in remote northern areas. *Human Ecology*, 11, 42-46 [in Russian]