



URBAN GREEN CARE

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case study

GRÖNA REHAB

GOTHENBURG BOTANICAL GARDEN AND THE VÄSTRA GÖTALAND REGIONAL GOVERNMENT URBAN GREEN CARE

Green Rehab (the english translation for Gröna Rehab) offers rehabilitation services to burnt-out public employees in a natural setting.

"What makes Green Rehab stand out is that we incorporate both gardening and wild nature as a part of rehabilitation."

MODEL IN A NUTSHELL

— **Website**
www.vgregion.se/gronarehab

— **Country**
Sweden

— **Main sector**
Public

— **Specific sector**
Health and rehabilitation,
urban horticulture,
outdoor education

— **Stage of development**
A permanent part of
the Botanical Garden in
Gothenburg, Sweden

— **Our work in SDGs**



BOTANISKA
GÖTEBORGS BOTANISKA TRÄDGÅRD

FROM FEW TO MANY

Green Rehab was founded out of international research on the subject. Inspiration came from **Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in Alnarp**. Green Rehab is located in Gothenburg Botanical Garden, under administration of the county council. The staff of **Green Rehab** consists of 2 physiotherapists, 1 psychotherapist, 1 occupational therapist, 1 gardener and 1 biologist/manager/administrator. Partners include the **Swedish social insurance agency** aiming to improve the participation of every patient so that they can keep their financial compensation during the rehab period.

The “beneficiaries” - the patients - at Green Rehab are **employees from the country council** (55,000 county council employees making it also the largest employer in Sweden), many of them from the health care sector. The programme could be scaled up to support more of those with stress-related diseases. The participants at Green Rehab are on **long term sick leave** when they start the programme.



FROM IDEA TO ACTION

In 2004, the county council had a lot of burnt-out employees, with stress-related illness and/or mild depression. The Gothenburg Botanical Garden had a project that catalogued and summarised research on the connection between nature, gardening, health and wellbeing. The county politicians wanted to put the theoretical knowledge into practice. And from this **Green Rehab started in 2006** for people on long term sick leave with diagnosed burn-out. The goal is to give the participants a restart to an active sustainable life and that they are able to go back to work or study.

The key activities are centred around **rehabilitation for people with stress-related diseases**. The rehabilitation period for people on sick leave is from 12 to 28 weeks, 3 days a week, 3 hours a day. The rehabilitation is group-based, with seven participants/group. The rehabilitation activities include: nature walks, therapeutic conversations in groups, handicrafts, gardening, body awareness, stress management, art therapy and supportive conversations.

The business model depends entirely on **public funding** paid on a yearly basis by the country council. This payment offers **35-40 rehabilitation places a year**. The participants keep their sickness compensation from the Swedish Social Insurance Agency during the rehabilitation period.

From the beginning, evaluation and research has been a part of Green Rehab. Both qualitative and quantitative scientific studies have been made. Some of our **impacts** include:

- The programme has provided rehabilitation for **more than 750 people over 15 years** (2006-2020)
- In average, **90%** of the participants in the rehabilitation programme **go back to work or study**
- **Fully financed** annual funding (4,2 million SEK), by the country council
- **A scientific thesis** “To stress the importance of nature” is written about Green Rehab by PhD Eva Sahlin.
- **Two books** have been published about the Green Rehab model
- Currently in the council, there are **15 other initiatives** that have been inspired by Green Rehab
- A number of **awards** and special mentions

FROM OLD TO NEW

The innovative part is the **combination of traditional rehabilitation with gardening and nature walks**. This has been shown to be successful. The results show that we can help most of the participants to make a restart and resume work or study. The participants entering the rehabilitation programme are all on long term sick leave and the cooperation with the employer is essential.

What makes Green Rehab different from most other forms of rehabilitation is the **organised contact with nature** - gardening and wild nature - **as essential part of the rehabilitation**. The programme carries out gardening and nature walks, and even in other activities we try to be outdoors and in contact with nature as much as possible.

FROM NOW TO THEN

It is difficult to pin down only one thing that contributes to the success of Green Rehab, as there are many; here are just a few to get started:

- Supportive "green" environment
- Well educated and experienced staff
- Successful outward communication
- Support from the financers
- The ability to be "right in time" for our participants
- The process benefits from a wide range of rehab knowledge of the staff

This year has been a particularly difficult year for everyone, an immediate challenge we face with the difficulties the pandemic have caused on our services and activities. We are constantly seeking to improve the model and there are many challenges that prohibit our growth and success that we confront frequently.

Some of the main conditions necessary for implementing our vision include:

- **Positive politicians** can help integrate and extend our solutions to wider public institutions and services
- To extend and replicate our model, we need **more financing**

