

Sweden's Local Institutions

In 1973, the Swedish Parliament and Government decided to institute certain correctional reforms. An Act on Correctional Treatment in Institutions was passed to guide the establishment of closer links between the prison system and the probation and parole service, and closer ties with the various agencies (such as the employment office, the educational system and the social welfare system) that can assist inmates after release. A political decision was made to organize the institutional system in such a way that inmates, before their release, can be housed in institutions in their home district - in local institutions.

At the local institution, inmates were to be enabled before release to arrange their social situation, to establish contact with their private supervisor, probation officer and the social welfare authorities, and to prepare to support themselves upon release. Leaves from the institution and the opportunity to work at a job or study outside the institution on a work or study permit are considered important means to this end.

At the time of the reform decision, about 50 facilities in Sweden corresponded to the requirements laid down for local institutions. However, many of these were old and rather dilapidated. In early 1980, the Swedish Parliament agreed to a plan for the construction of 30 new institutions, to take place over more than a decade.

The local correctional institutions are designed to accommodate male and female offenders sentenced to one year or less and those serving longer sentences who are approaching their completion date. The institutions are located close to the inmate's community and in areas where work or education can take place in the community.

Readjustment to offenders into the community is the main goal of the institutions. To support this goal, workshops, administration and health services, as well as living areas, have been designed to resemble a community environment. Physical and leisure activity areas are available, although these facilities are somewhat limited, partly because of funding restraints and partly to encourage inmates to use community recreational facilities as much as possible and participate in mixed-company sports and leisure activities.

Institutional living areas are organized into eight sections, each section comprising five rooms, a shower, a sauna and a laundry room. Individual rooms have their own toilets. Meals are taken in the institution's dining room which is shared by both staff and inmates. Two rooms, separated from the male offenders' accommodation, are reserved for female offenders. Although they are provided with separate accommodation, female inmates use the same work and activities areas as the men.