



Children receiving child welfare services **are not heard**

A finding from countrywide supervision in 2011 of municipal child welfare services was that children are given too few opportunities to talk with the staff. In many municipalities, whether or not staff had conversations with children, and how this was organized, was left to chance.

On 1 January 2010, responsibility for general supervision of child welfare services was given to the Norwegian Board of Health Supervision. In 2011, the Offices of the County Governors and the Norwegian Board of Health Supervision carried out countrywide supervision of child welfare services.

The aim of supervision was to examine

whether a sample of Norwegian municipalities (44 municipalities) organized and managed child welfare services in such a way as to ensure that services were provided in accordance with the requirements in the Child Welfare Act. This included investigation, evaluation of the services provided, and opportunities for the child to participate – in other words that children were given information and the opportunity to express their views and opinions.

The child is the main person and has the right to be consulted

It is important that children are given the opportunity to talk about themselves and



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express their views and opinions, both when they are being assessed and when measures to help them are being evaluated. It is not compulsory for children to express their views, but they must be given the opportunity to do so, before decisions are taken about them. This applies to children from the age of seven, and to younger children who are able to form their own opinions. Child welfare

staff must inform children about their rights, provide information in a way that is appropriate for the child's age and maturity, and assess the need for talking to children in a private room.

Not all children are consulted

The Offices of the County Governors found breaches of the legislation or areas with potential for improvement in 40 out of 44 municipalities.



” Ein må gi informasjonen på barnet sine premisser ”

how they experience their situation. This can provide the child welfare services with a better insight into the child's situation, and make it easier to find appropriate measures to help the child.

Both the Child Welfare Act and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child contain regulations to ensure that children are consulted. Children receiving child welfare services must be given information and the opportunity to

For example:

- the child welfare services lacked routines for talking to children
- they had routines, but did not follow them
- they talked to the children, but did not record the results
- the managers did not ask about whether staff had talked to the children
- the staff lacked knowledge about children's right to participate.



We do not actually know how many children were consulted. Vague formulations are used in the supervision reports, such as: children were not consulted *in all cases*, *some* conversations were carried out with children, *in many cases* it was not recorded whether children were asked about how they experienced the measures that were provided to help them.

Assessment of supervision

We are very concerned that some of the most vulnerable children are not adequately informed, and that they are not consulted about their own case. Their right to participate has not been adequately met. Whether children are given the opportunity to participate or not, is often up to individual members of staff. We do not know why staff in the child welfare services do not consult children, but the supervision reports give some indications about the challenges that the municipalities face in this area.



Investigation

A child welfare case is initiated when the child welfare services receive a report from a person or from an organization about concern for a child. According to the Child Welfare Act, the child welfare services must as soon as possible, and at the latest within one week, go through the reports that they have received, and decide whether the reports shall be followed up. If there are reasonable grounds to believe that measures are needed, they shall assess the case.

Evaluation of measures to help a child:

The child welfare services shall help each child to have good living conditions and the opportunity to develop, by giving advice and guidance, and by implementing measures to help the child. Examples of such measures are: providing a support person, a place in a day nursery, respite care, help in their own home and economic help. The child welfare services shall evaluate the measures regularly to ensure that they are adequate.

