

ISF Report 2013:1

When Sickness Benefit is denied

Swedish Social Insurance Inspectorate

Stockholm 2013

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Summary

The Swedish Social Insurance Inspectorate (Inspektionen för socialförsäkringen, ISF) is an independent supervisory agency for the Swedish social insurance system. The objectives of the agency are to strengthen compliance with legislation and other statutes, and to improve the efficiency of the social insurance system through system supervision and efficiency analysis and evaluation.

The ISF's work is mainly conducted on a project basis and is commissioned by the Government or initiated autonomously by the agency. This report has been commissioned by the Government.

Background

Information from government agencies, such as the Swedish Social Insurance Agency (henceforth the Agency), needs to be comprehensible, relevant and accurate. If this is not the case it is likely to have an impact on the individual's ability to exercise his or her legal rights. This in turn can undermine the legitimacy of the agencies.

Objectives

The ISF has been commissioned by the Government to conduct a study on how the Agency communicates decisions to individuals when sickness benefit is denied or withdrawn.

Individuals have the right to request a re-examination of the decision by the Agency. In conjunction with this, the ISF has also been commissioned to study the Agency's routines for the re-examination of cases. The ISF has chosen to present these two assignments in a joint report.

Methods

In this study, 600 individuals and their corresponding case files (N=605) and re-examination case files (N=287) from the Agency have been reviewed with a focus on whether the Agency's information in the decision is comprehensible and relevant to the individual. Additionally, the ISF has also analysed register data and undertaken semi-structured interviews with the Agency.

Findings

The prerequisites for being entitled to sickness benefit are described accurately and tailored to the individual's situation in one out of ten decisions. The study shows that the Agency does not fully describe the individual circumstances justifying denial or withdrawal of sickness benefit in one out of four decisions.

The study also shows that the probability of having one's decision changed fluctuates depending on which, of the three responsible, re-examination unit that has reviewed the decision. Consequently this may have implications for the legal rights of the individual.

Conclusions

The main conclusion of this report is that the information given to individuals when sickness benefit is denied or withdrawn is insufficient. The information does not give the individual the opportunity to fully exercise their legal rights. It is also concluded that the re-examination process cannot guarantee an accurate and uniform application of legislation.