

# Swedish home helps seniors spice up their sex lives

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"It's a good book!" 97-year-old Nils exclaims, skimming through a brochure on sexual relations and desires among seniors, in the common room at his retirement home in Sweden.

Here, at the Lindgarden facility in the southern village of Broby, the 56 residents aged 65 and above can now avail of a recently added program on how to lead a healthy sex life.

There are no sex toys or pornography lining the tidy halls. But when a new person moves in, they're immediately offered an informal discussion on intimacy and desire.

"The counselor has a conversation with the client and asks him or her some of the questions we've established about sexual health," Lindgarden director Liselott Klang, 54, told AFP.

She started the project a year ago, initially as a way of allowing her employees to discuss the topic without embarrassment.

"Previously, employees didn't feel comfortable when they saw a resident masturbating in public, or really couldn't understand why someone needed help booking a hotel room," Klang explained.

To make the seniors feel more comfortable, the establishment has put together a "pleasure basket" with creams and sex toys the residents can buy.

The basket contains, among other things, a "Please do not disturb" sign, various creams and lubricants, dildos, penis pumps and penis rings.

Emilie Nilsson, a 39-year-old care assistant, admits she was originally apprehensive.

"It was a bit scary at first," she said.

"But the more you work on it, the more you understand that it's not just about sex. It's about closeness, and that everyone needs a hug."

"So now it's all very natural."

## **'It's about intimacy'**

Sexual health among older and disabled people is an issue coming to the fore—albeit slowly—in many Western countries.

"Sexual health is not just about sex, it's about intimacy," Klang said.

The aim is to "allow the individual to remain an individual even when moving into a nursing home".

For residents, the issue has also become easier to discuss directly with the caregivers, who look after all their [basic needs](#).

"As caregivers, we are very close. We help them with their daily grooming," said Louise Karlsson, one of Lindgarden's managers.

All the staff have received training from sexologist Suzann Larsdotter.

"The issue has been invisible for years, but is now gradually gaining ground in the country," she said.

"It's a new phenomenon, especially in an ageist society like Sweden where seniors are often left out. But there is more and more awareness that [sexual health](#) is a right," the therapist added.

In the common room, Nils and his friends joke about the subject but shy away from discussing it with strangers.

## **'Positive reactions'**

Klang says the project has been met with "positive reactions, a lot of humor, curiosity, but also a certain shyness".

"It can take weeks between the first conversation and the moment when they dare to come and talk more about it," she said.

"But often these become deep discussions where one can talk about grief, loss or longing for a missing partner."

What counts, she said, is that the seniors know they have someone to talk to.

Fantasies and desires, when they exist, are fulfilled as much as possible.

"We have to be able to explain and demonstrate things, like how to hold the catheters in order to be able to have sex," Klang said.

"Each generation thinks that its generation is the most sexually active, the one with the most desire," she said with a chuckle.

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