Moving toward a recovery-oriented approach in the Swedish mental health system—an interview study of Personligt Ombud in Sweden

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Abstract
Introduction: Personligt Ombud (PO) is a Swedish version of case management (CM) which was established with the Swedish Mental Health Reform in 1995. The main purpose of POs is to ensure that people with psychiatric disabilities receive the services needed to live an independent life in the community and to coordinate these services. Studies have shown that POs provide more support than this and it was interesting to investigate this further.

Aim: The aim of the study was to explore what supportive strategies Personligt Ombuds (POs) use in their work with the clients who have PO support.

Method: To obtain extensive descriptions of strategies that POs use in work, POs from different parts of Sweden were chosen and asked to participate in the study and 22 POs agreed to participate. The interviews were conducted over the telephone. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using qualitative content analysis.

Findings: The findings of the study were reflected in a main category where PO could be described as a facilitator of an active changing process, where the clients make their personal changes in life, based on personal active choices. POs used several strategies, such as defining goals, acting to push the client forward, acting as mentors, strengthening the client and mobilizing external resources.

Conclusion: Many of the strategies POs used are similar to strategies in recovery-oriented services and, in particular, in Strengths Model Case Management. However, there are strategies that POs could develop to be even more recovery-oriented. There is a lack of systematic review of the strengths of a client, and this could be solved by using an already existing assessment instrument like the one in the Strengths Model Case Management.

Keywords: Case management; psychiatric disabilities; recovery; strengths model; support

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The mental health services field has changed in recent decades, moving toward community-based support. Today, it is well known that people with psychiatric disabilities can recover and make major improvements in their lives (Davidson, Mezzina, Rowe, & Thompson, 2010). In recent decades, the concept of recovery and the development of recovery-oriented practices have become important aspects. Recovery does not mean a full reduction of symptoms, which no longer interferes with life (Turton et al., 2011). Recovery is about improving well-being, even if symptoms still occur occasionally (Slade, 2010).

People with psychiatric disabilities are not a homogeneous group, which means that each individual has different dreams, aspirations, and goals in life, and are supposed to be given the same chance to live a fulfilling, meaningful life in society like other citizens (Farkas & Anthony, 2010). This means that practitioners have to support their clients to improve or develop valued social roles in order to support social inclusion (Anthony, 1993, 2003; Craig, 2008; Davidson et al., 2010; Farkas, 2007; Slade, 2009a; Topor, Borg, Di Girolamo, & Davidson, 2011). There are also other important aspects for each person’s recovery process that practitioners have to support, such as communicating hope (Davidson et al., 2007; Deegan, 1996; Jacobson & Greenley, 2001; Onken, Craig, Ridgway, Ralph, & Cook, 2007; Rapp & Goscha, 2006; Topor, 2001), working from individual choices, and using a strengths-based approach (Borg, Karlsson, Tondora, & Davidson, 2009; Davidson, Drake, Schmutte, Dinzeo, & Andres-Hyman, 2009; Farkas, Gagne, Anthony, & Chamberlin, 2005; Rapp & Goscha, 2006; Slade, 2009a; Topor et al., 2011).

In Sweden, a significant change was made with the Swedish Mental Health Reform in 1995, where one aim was to improve the lives of people with psychiatric disabilities and to create opportunities for this group to get involved in the life of the community in the same way as other citizens. In an earlier investigation, Psykiatriutredningen (1992) noticed that people with psychiatric disabilities had the worst living conditions of all disability groups and that the welfare system did not work for this target group. It also showed that people with psychiatric disabilities rarely seek care/support by themselves and their knowledge of their civil rights to receive care/support was lacking. Another problem that was identified was that different kind of services are organized in different organizations and are administrated at different levels in society. This can be difficult for a person to grasp. The investigation, Psykiatriutredningen (1992) suggested the development of case management (CM), which had shown good results in both the US and the UK. This was one of the reasons why the Swedish government decided to develop a Swedish version of CM, Personligt Ombud (PO), in connection with the Swedish Mental Health Reform. The PO service was first tested in 10 pilot projects, and the evaluations of these projects showed beneficial effects for the clients. In May 2000, the Swedish government decided to expand the PO service by providing government funding to municipals that were interested in developing a PO service.
(Socialstyrelsen, 2008). Today there are 320 POs in Sweden (Socialstyrelsen, 2011b). They have different educational backgrounds, for example, psychiatric aide, nurse, social worker, occupational therapist, and rehabilitation counselor.

According to the National Board of Health and Welfare (NBHW), the main purpose of POs is to make sure that persons with psychiatric disabilities get the services they are entitled to, but also to make sure that the services are coordinated. In the process of developing the PO service, the NBHW published a written document with the PO services essential ideas and principles and educated the newly employed POs in their new role (Socialstyrelsen, 2002). The NBHW’s (Socialstyrelsen, 2011a) guidelines mention the importance of the PO together with the client identifying the needs of care/support and rehabilitation and supporting the client to reach his or her own goals by finding services that promote the recovery process. PO has a freestanding role in the Swedish welfare system, which means that PO does not belong to any authority and are not regulated in any law. PO cannot make authoritative decisions and has no medical responsibility or responsibility for treatment. PO only represents the client. The NBHW is very clear on the point that POs are not supposed to provide a service that can be found in other services (Socialstyrelsen, 2008). To a certain extent, Bjorkman, Hansson, and Sandlund (2002) and Berggren and Gunnarsson (2010) recognize the POs’ principles as being similar to the Strengths Model CM by Rapp and Goscha (2006). The Strengths Model CM has a strong positive view of the client’s abilities to make important changes in life and it aims to support the clients to make those changes. For example, the CM uses an assessment involving seven domains in life (daily living situation, financial situation, vocational/educational situation, social supports, health situation, leisure/recreational, and spirituality/cultural), with questions focusing on present and current strengths, client’s desires, aspirations, and resources, both those that are present and those that were used in the past. The CM also provides own support. The Strengths Model CM has been successfully tested in vocational rehabilitation with other targets groups in Sweden (Marnetoft & Selander, 2000; Selander & Marnetoft, 2005).

A study of Berggren, Blomberg, and Petersson (2010) showed that PO acts as a negotiator and, in this way, supports the client’s change and development of empowerment. Coordination is the most basic mission a PO has, but a study of Markström, Lindqvist, and Sandlund (2009) showed that a PO makes far more effort than just coordination. A recent study of Klockmo, Marnetoft, Nordenmark, and Dalin (2012) showed that POs had greater knowledge about recovery compared with two other services. There is a lack of knowledge about how POs perform their work and how extensive their efforts are regarding supporting their clients in their recovery process. Against this background it was considered important to investigate the type of effort that POs provide to clients during their recovery process. To our knowledge we have not found any study that has done this before.

The aim of the study was to explore what supportive strategies POs use in their work with clients having PO support.
METHOD

In this study we used a qualitative content analysis with an inductive approach inspired by Graneheim and Lundman (2004) to answer our aim regarding the strategies used by POs in supporting their clients recovery process.

Informants

PO services are organized in several parts of Sweden, in big cities, urban areas and rural areas. According to NBHW’s evaluations, POs also differ in age, educational background, and work experience. In qualitative content analysis, it is important to obtain extensive descriptions (Sandelowski, 2000); therefore, purposeful sampling according to Patton (2002) was used. In order to capture similarities and differences in the POs work, POs were selected from different parts of Sweden.

A letter was sent to the heads of 23 PO services with information about the study and a request for participation approval. The heads of 18 PO services approved of their POs participation in the study. A letter was sent to these services by e-mail, with information and a request about participation in the study. At some PO services, several POs were interested in participating, and in the end, two POs were interviewed from the same service. Finally, 22 POs (6 men and 16 women) agreed to participate in an interview. The interviewed differed in age; from 35 to 65 years of age. They also had various educational backgrounds, for example, psychiatric aide, psychotherapist, occupational therapist, social worker, teacher, and nurse. Additionally, some POs had some kind of personal experience of psychiatric disabilities.

Data collection

When the participants agreed to participate in an interview, they were contacted by telephone to obtain additional information about the study, given the opportunity to ask questions and to set up an appointment for the interview. Since PO services are organized in different geographical parts of Sweden the interviews were conducted by telephone. According to Sturges and Hanrahan (2004), telephone interviewing is a useful method for collecting qualitative data, one advantage being the ability to reach persons across a greater geographic area. Another advantage is that the person could be more forthcoming in their responses because an interview by telephone is more anonymous (Musselwhite, Cuff, McGregor, & King, 2007). The first author conducted the interviews during December 2010 to February 2011.

An interview guide covering areas such as: how persons get in touch with the PO services, what is happening when the client and PO begin to work, describe the process with clients and your role, examples of a typical case, the freestanding role and the PO’s organization. The interview guide was used to maintain a certain structure in the interviews by allowing the POs to speak and reflect about the same areas in their work. Follow-up questions were used: “Earlier you said something about →, could you develop that?” or “Can you give me an example of when you did it like that?”

The interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. The interviews were, with
the permission of participants, recorded and transcribed into text.

Data analysis

The analysis process followed the steps as presented by Graneheim and Lundman (2004), where the coherent transcribed text was read from the aim and read several times to get a sense of the whole picture. The body of text was analyzed from the content and was divided into meaningful units. The authors then gradually worked with the content and created condensed units in the form of short descriptions of the text. Codes were created from the condensed meaning units and labeled close to the text. The codes were examined and compared to each other and finally those codes that belonged to each other were sorted out into 18 sub-categories. The sub-categories whose content was shown to belong to each other were brought together into five categories. From the categories, one main category was identified (Table I).

The aim of the analysis was to stay close to the text, and a movement between the whole and the parts characterized the analyzing process. This choice kept the analysis at a descriptive level, but Sandelowski (2010) emphasizes that researchers always do something with their data and therefore any kind of analysis always involves some kind of interpretation. The analyzing process was partly cross-validated by the second and the third author to increase the credibility of the analysis (Table II).

FINDINGS

The aim was to explore the strategies that POs use in their work to support their client’s recovery process. The findings were reflected in a main category, showing POs to be facilitators of an active changing process. In this process, PO let the client make his or her own personal changes in life based on personal active choices. POs used several strategies, such as defining goals, acting to push the client forward, acting as mentors, strengthening the client, and mobilizing external resources. The main category describes how POs used strategies to put the client...

Table I. Example of the analysis process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning unit</th>
<th>Condensed meaning unit</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Sub-category</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Main category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“... there must be a mission, if the client doesn't have a mission. They have to present a mission. Otherwise they have to wait and contact us again and then maybe be placed in our queue. We cannot start to work with those who have no mission.”</td>
<td>There must be a mission; otherwise we cannot work with the client.</td>
<td>A clear wish is demanded.</td>
<td>To have a clear thought.</td>
<td>Defining goals.</td>
<td>PO as a facilitator of an active changing process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
into an active process, where the client needed to reflect about different options and make active choices about how to move on in his/her life. POs cannot make the change; it is up to the clients themselves, but POs promoted the change. POs had a holistic view of the person where support was given on the terms of the client’s wants and needs. It was also clear that their support aimed toward a development within the person.

... my goal, it’s about that this person will make a development during the “mission” that we have. So that the person himself feels that something is happening, something happened during the time I had a PO. Now I’m on another level, so to speak, it’s like a computer game or something, to come up a few levels; it is the purpose of our job. (Interview 22)

**Defining goals**

In the POs’ service it was important to have a goal to work toward. Most of the clients who sought PO support wanted to make some kind of change in their lives. ... the client presents some kind of wish. For no-one makes contact unless they want something. (Interview 10)

In recent years, POs experienced a difference where it was more common that clients have *a clear thought*, where they more likely had a clear idea of the problem they wanted to be solved. According to the POs, the most common problem was regarding financial strains, followed by loneliness, while some clients wanted support to move and change their residence, and some wanted support to obtain a job/employment or get some

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Table II. Overview of the main category, categories, and sub-categories emerged in the analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-categories</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Main category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To have a clear thought</td>
<td>Defining goals</td>
<td>PO as a facilitator of an active changing process</td>
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<tr>
<td>To find goals together</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To act</td>
<td>Actions to push the client forward</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To support reflection</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To motivate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To believe in the client’s capacity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To explain the Swedish welfare system</td>
<td>Acting as a mentor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To set up a “smorgasbord” (options/possibilities)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To discuss</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To involve the client in the process</td>
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<tr>
<td>To prepare</td>
<td>Strengthen the client</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To bring structure</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To stand on the clients side</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To find formal resources</td>
<td>Mobilizing external</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To balance between clients’ needs and wishes</td>
<td>resources</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>and the authorities frameworks</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To find natural resources</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To coordinate</td>
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<tr>
<td>To monitor</td>
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kind of education. Another common reason for contacting the PO service was about dissatisfaction of other services, to have support in appealing against a decision made by an authority. Some felt anxious about an upcoming meeting with caseworkers at various public authorities and wanted a PO to accompany them. POs mentioned the need for the client to have a clear idea of what he/she wanted when seeking the PO's support.

... there must be a “mission”, if there is no “mission”, we cannot do anything. They have to present something to work towards. (Interview 15)

Those interviewed in the study were also of the opinion that it was not necessary for the client to have a clear idea or goal when seeking PO support, as it was something they found out together. It was typical that the client wanted something, but they did not know where to start. POs used several strategies to explore the client’s thoughts about his/her life and tried to find some positive aspects in life to build on further, asking questions about future and previous interests. Together they found something to begin with.

... and then I usually try to help them by letting them illustrate a picture about the future. Then you can usually pick some parts you can start with. (Interview 21)

... I have a conversation where I ask: How are you? What does a day look like for you? What about your home, do you have difficulties with your laundry? (Interview 18)

There were also clients that experienced many problems in their life and could not point out something to begin with, where everything in life seemed to be bad. POs supported the client by sorting out and prioritizing what situation feels to be of the most importance to begin with. These discussions were important in other matters as well, when POs could summarize the thoughts and suggest a concrete goal for the client to reach, where the client could say yes or no.

We summarize and connect from a longer conversation, which can be quite fragmented and vague as well of course. But we package it, so to speak – Oh well, it is about your economic situation? (Interview 22)

POs evaluated their work during the process and whether there was any progress toward the goal. If there was not, they questioned why. It was usual that when a problem was solved, other problems were raised where the client wanted the PO’s support to solve other things and develop new goals.

And during that time, we don’t see our work in isolation, but meanwhile we are connecting with the person and see other things, talk about things, see other needs where one thing leads to another. (Interview 1)

POs often worked out some kind of strategy, because one thing could depend on other things and it was important that things happen in the right order. Sometimes unexpected things happened or things turned out differently to what was planned. Therefore, it was important to either have a plan B or be in the position to change plans.

**Actions to support and push the client forward**

It was important to keep the client’s process moving. It was important that
the client felt that something was happening and therefore PO was acting right away, following the client’s wishes. POs also gave their clients a lift to meetings with support and/or care agencies. It was important that the meeting took place because it can take time to arrange a new appointment. It was common for clients to have debts and some clients were, for example, at risk of losing their apartments, where PO negotiated payment plans. POs thought it was important to get rid of debts to make it possible for the client’s recovery process to move forward. One of POs’ missions from NBHW is to connect the clients to needed services, but sometimes it took too long before caseworkers were able to deal with the applications and sometimes there was a backlog to get the service. At these times, POs gave temporary support because it was important for the client’s process to progress.

So we can be something instead while waiting, we make up files and sort paper and stuff. (Interview 6)

POs supported the client to reflect about themselves, to explore their thoughts and feelings about things that might affect them in the present time and could be holding them back in the process. POs asked questions about what is worth fighting for and what the client needs to leave behind. POs thought that some things could not be changed, because they belonged to the past. For POs, it was important to support the client to strive forward. POs supported the client to see things in a different light and to increase the understanding of him/herself as a person.

... what has been difficult in the past, if they can see connections.

You know you can reflect on why you are doing this as you do and identify your own patterns. (Interview 7)

POs also worked to push the person forward by using motivation strategies, where POs tried to awaken the client’s thoughts about considering changes in areas of their life. One strategy was to ask questions about their living situation. POs thought the client had to experience a problem before he or she was motivated to really work for a change in that area.

Don’t you find it hard not having money for food? – No, not really. Then that is not a problem for him. (Interview 3)

POs also tried to get the client out of the apartment, because they thought the client needed to experience something else other than just being at home. This strategy might work as an inspiration for the client, and POs enticed the client by taking a walk outside, drinking coffee at a café, and taking a ride in the car.

POs believed in the person’s capacity to make a difference in their life, where PO did not stop the client’s dreams but promoted and stimulated the client by creating the conditions to make them possible. POs thought it was not the end of the world if things went wrong, that the client had at least tried to reach something. This way, it is easier to let it go—you know it did not work out. POs acted to make it easier for the client to focus on the process, but POs believed the client was able to resolve some of situations in the future.

... then we pick up our portable printer, and print what we’ve got so we have it there. And you can
start to consider how you are going to print stuff in the future; you might need to do that sometimes. – Well I know a person who has a printer. – Great, then maybe you can use that next time. (Interview 22)

**Acting as a mentor**

One important support in POs’ work was to explain the Swedish welfare system, where POs told the client about different authorities’ laws and legislation, how these work and how they are connected to each other, for example, how a piece of legislation can affect a caseworker’s/ or doctor’s decisions. Another example was that POs made the client aware of their civil rights and how they could use them. POs thought these strategies increased the clients understanding of why things turns out the way they do. It also made the client have reasonable expectations of the authorities.

What kind of medical records have to be enclosed, I am thinking of sickness benefits. And how things are supposed to turn out, there is no point at all in making an application for a disability pension if the capacity for work has to be further investigated; it is pointless to do that. And we tell our clients that. (Interview 20)

POs also acted like a supervisor by setting up a “smorgasbord”, with several options from which the client could choose. POs suggested different services that were available to the client, but also suggested different recreational activities and provided information about opportunities for getting into the labor market.

Different options were carefully discussed between the PO and the client, where the client had an opportunity to reflect and express their own thoughts about different options. POs also shared their earlier experiences of work and gave their point of view on each option. In this process it was important to discuss the different consequences of each choice, so the client can make “good” choices in an effort to reach the goal. For POs, it was important that the client were well informed, so they could make well-informed choices.

... it is really important to talk about what happens from different choices, but I say it is your own choice. I can’t choose for you, I can discuss it with you. (Interview 16)

POs also involved the client in the process where PO, for example, avoided making any phone calls without the client being present; they often made important phone calls together. They often used PO’s mobile phone, but the client him/herself made the phone call where PO accompanied them. If POs were in touch with an authority/caseworker without the client’s presence, POs always brought the information back to the client as soon as possible. POs experienced positive effects from this as it made the client feel more secure and confident and have control over what is happening. It also makes it easier to discuss the next step. Two important basic principles for POs were that PO never makes contact or does anything without the client’s consent, and that POs left the final decision to the client, who was the director of the process.

... I never do anything, I will never make a phone call, I won’t act in any way, until it is clear, that the client clarifies that it is OK. (Interview 8)
Strengthening the client

POs prepared the client before a meeting or a phone call to a caseworker/authority. It was usual that the PO and the client discussed what they wanted from the meeting and agreed about what strategy they were going to use. A common strategy was that they wrote a list of points the client wished to discuss, so nothing would be forgotten. They often made agreements on which one would speak at the meeting. It was also usual that they discussed the outcomes from the meeting, and what was going to happen next.

POs brought structure into the client’s life by supporting them in keeping to the agreements they made with the caseworker/doctor, by helping him/her to remember and make sure that those things they agreed about were done.

We do write down what happened, point by point. If the client is supposed to do something we try to write it down and leave it to the client. (Interview 15)

POs also supported the client in remembering appointments and making sure that all the papers needed were enclosed with different applications. For example, it is usual that authorities want a referral to base their decision upon and make sure the application gets to the authority in time. POs supported the client to remain in the process and not get distracted. Some clients experienced chaos, where POs supported the client to organize by, for example, opening the mail and organizing papers into files and explaining the meaning of all the papers.

... perhaps there are a few paper bags that need to be sorted out and put into files, or to find a system that suits them, so they know where these papers are ... So when the Social Insurance Office calls them they know where the papers are. (Interview 13)

Another way of strengthening the client was to stand by the person’s side, as one PO expressed:

... If the client wishes to have a conflict with our employers, so, then there is no doubt whose side we take. If we are forced to choose, we choose our clients! (Interview 12)

POs described themselves as spokespersons that supported the client to express his/her wishes and needs by using other words in contact with other authorities, where the PO acted and spoke on behalf of the client. The PO supported the client in appealing against negative decisions from caseworkers if the PO thought the client had the right to get the support he/she was entitled to.

Mobilizing external resources

One part of the PO’s profession is to mobilize external resources. One external resource is the formal resources such as Social Services, Medical Health Services, Social Insurance Office, Employment Office, police, etc. When the client experiences a problem in life or has strived toward reaching a goal, POs support the client to find the formal resources needed to make it possible to reach their goal. Example: if the client experienced loneliness, POs gave support to apply for a contact person and, if the client had financial problems, PO gave support to apply for financial benefits and sometimes it was needed to apply for a “God man” (a person that takes care of the financial situation, making sure that...
payments will be made) and, if the clients needed help in their everyday life, POs provided support with applying for Supported Housing Teams and, if the client needed therapy or care, POs support this by getting in touch with psychiatric caregivers.

So I called the landlord, and got a little respite in time. Then I helped the client to seek money from the municipal fund to pay the rent, he was behind with three months’ rent. But to get a sustainable situation, I thought he needed a “God man”, so I motivated him to agree to a “God man.” (Interview 2)

... Much is about loneliness, and then my job is to support the person to apply for a contact person, because the contact with me is not forever. Sometimes you need to connect the person with the municipal psychiatry, and sometimes you need to connect the person with the Employment Office or the Social Insurance Office.... (Interview 3)

... the idea is that you get support from others in the community and I'm going to help you to get in touch with those. (Interview 8)

In applying for formal resources POs balanced between the client’s needs and wishes and the authorities’ frameworks. It was important for POs to find a long-lasting solution. Often POs used a non-confrontational approach in contact with other services, because it was important to have a good relationship with other caseworkers as it increased their possibilities to discuss and work out different solutions that were adjusted for each client’s special needs.

It depends on how you work, we had chosen a way that is not confrontational where we try to work forwards and find constructive solutions. Not just write applications and appeal against negative decisions, but try to work together with the caseworkers at Social Services to find constructive solutions. (Interview 1)

Even if it is not as clear as searching formal resources, POs supported the client to get in touch with natural resources in our society. An example of this was that POs supported the client to get in touch with different kinds of educational associations and supported the client to find or pick up old interests as well as finding new interests. POs found that it was becoming more usual that clients ask for real work or studying, and the requests for organized daily activities was decreasing. POs experienced some positive effects for some of the clients, when they had found a real job in the labor market or were studying. POs thought it was positive for the client to be in a “normal” environment with “normal” people.

... a client who asks for some kind of activity. And then you can search for an association, or something educational if they want education. Or go to a study circle of some kind, maybe via “Vuxenskolan” or “ABF.” (Interview 4)

POs were also coordinating both the formal resources as well as the natural resources, where some clients having contact with POs had few or no contact with other care/service givers, while others had many care/service givers in their life, but things still did not work out.

... many of those you meet, they have so many helpers. You can meet a person that has contact with 15 other professionals, who are working towards different goals and there is no cooperation between
them. They may not even be aware of each other either. (Interview 21)

One explanation of this is that the involved actors were not aware of each other and they could be working in different directions toward different goals. POs expressed that this was confusing for the client, where POs tried to straighten things out by gathering the whole network in a meeting with the purpose of getting them to work toward the same goal, the client’s own goal.

POs were monitoring the client’s process, making sure everything went as planned. POs were also monitoring whether caseworkers were following the rules/legislation; if they did not, they reported it (with the client’s consent). POs were also monitoring whether other services took responsibility for their service. In doing this, the client received the service they were granted and alerted them if it did not work out for the client. One PO exemplified a story when the client had applied for financial benefits for rent at Social services who also usually, according to an agreement paid the rent every month. On one occasion, Social services did not pay the rent and the landlord contacted the client. The client had no idea that the payment was not made and, as a result, PO contacted Social services:

Then I realized they had done something wrong. I saw it on them. They have to make a refusal on the rent, because he applied for it. (Interview 13)

DISCUSSION

The main finding from this study showed that POs are a facilitator of an active changing process, where POs used several strategies to keep the client active. For POs, it was important to support the client toward some kind of change in his/her life, and the kind of change or goals that were decided by the client. In fact, individual choices permeate the PO service, where all decisions concerning the client’s own themselves made processes. To make active choices, the client needs to get involved in his/her own process and POs used several strategies for this purpose, for example, POs invited the client into the process by involving the client in what is going on, where a lot of the work was done together. Another way of involving in POs’ work was that nothing is ever done without the client’s consent. In this process POs provided the information the client needed to make a choice and the findings showed that much of PO’s work was done through discussions, where PO acted as a sounding board where the client could discuss different options and consequences. This strategy makes it possible for the client to make active, well-grounded choices about the future and resembles shared decision-making as described by (Anthony, 2010; Borg & Kristiansen, 2004; Drake & Deegan, 2009). This strategy supports the client to be active in his/her own process to make it possible to take responsibility for the choices they make, which is also an essential part of the recovery process (Rapp & Goscha, 2006; Slade, 2009b). Another strategy to keep the client active was that PO was an active part of the process by making it easier for the client to focus on the progress toward a change by, for example, giving them a lift to meetings. Findings from the study showed that POs strengthened the client by preparing
before meetings with the authorities and PO stood by the client’s side and argued for the client’s best interests.

POs also believed in the client’s abilities to make important changes to improve the living situation and that the client could do several things by him/herself in the future. To support this change, POs mobilized the resources needed to make it possible for the client to reach the goal. In recent years, POs found that the clients seeking the service were asking for real work or studies and POs thought this was important, because it creates an opportunity for the client to be with “normal people” and “be a part” of society. POs also supported the client to find recreational activities. Social relationships with others have been shown to be a facilitator in social inclusion in society (Mezzina et al., 2006; Schon, Denhov, & Topor, 2009).

The findings from this study showed that many of POs’ strategies could be compared to the basic principles of the Strengths Model CM by Rapp and Goscha (2006). These are strategies where the client is the director of the process and is the one who makes the final decision in the process, where nothing is done without the person’s consent. Another similarity is that POs believe in the client’s abilities to make changes in life and the work is done in community settings. These principles are also found in recovery-oriented services, where Farkas et al. (2005) discuss the need for person-orientation, person-involvement, self-determination and growth-potential. From a recovery perspective, several of the POs’ strategies could be seen as a facilitator for their client’s recovery process. PO brings hope to the client by listening and acts from the client’s story and respects their choices. Another way of bringing hope is that PO doesn’t sit and wait for something to happen, but acts right away. This means that the client feels that something positive is happening and it also brings hope that life could be better in the future. Another important aspect of recovery is the sense of empowerment and many of POs’ strategies empower the client. Examples of strategies are when PO sets up a “smorgasbord” of different choices from which the client can choose. To ensure that there actually is something to choose from, other strategies that both empower the client externally but also increase the client’s self-confidence were to show different strategies the client could use in the future, for example to prepare the client before meetings, talk about rules and legislation and act on behalf of the client (Chamberlin, 1997; Davidson & Roe, 2007; Davidson et al., 2007).

Even when POs have many similarities to recovery-oriented services, POs have a lot of potential to develop to be even more recovery-oriented. For instance, POs seem to use a problem-based approach were the client experienced a problem and PO solved the situation. In recent years, POs mentioned there was a difference in their work, where it’s getting more common that the client “orders” a job. Another difference was that POs demanded that the client needed to have a clear mission to obtain a PO. From a recovery-oriented perspective, this approach is not facilitating the recovery process. It is also in the opposite direction than the Strengths Model of CM where a strengths assessment is used to investigate personal and natural resources that the client can use to reach their goals (Rapp & Goscha, 2006). There are many
reasons for using a more explorative approach in the work. First, it can be difficult for an individual to know exactly what you want, especially when you are not aware of the available options and Farkas and Anthony (2010) recommends having discussions before setting goals. Another reason Rapp and Goscha (2006) mention is that if attention is given to the clients problems, it can be difficult to focus on developing a “place” in the society. But POs’ problem-based approach might have something to do with their fundamental mission, which is to support the client to find other services and coordinate them so as to facilitate the client’s recovery process. There are several things around PO organization that might be interesting also from a recovery-oriented perspective that are important to pay attention to. POs have a different role in the Swedish welfare system where they cannot make decisions about a client’s life; their mission is not framed around a special aspect in the client’s life, which gives POs the opportunity to work in all areas with different things in a client’s life. The developed assessment that is used in Strengths Model CM by (Rapp & Goscha, 2006), could be a useful tool for the PO service to, together with the client, find personal and environmental strengths.

**CONCLUSION**

This study showed that POs acted in a way to strengthen the client to move forward in the recovery process. Many of the strategies used by POs are similar to strategies in recovery-oriented services, and in particular in Strengths Model CM. However, there are strategies that POs could develop to be even more recovery-oriented. There is a lack of a systematic review of the strengths of a client and POs often focus on the clients’ problems. This could be solved by using an already existing assessment instrument like the one in the Strengths Model CM, to more deliberately capture both individual and environmental strengths. Using this strategy could also support POs to shift focus from the problems to support the client to get a more integrated life in society.

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Moving towards recovery orientation in Sweden

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