

CASE #THERAPYGUARANTEE

# Investing one euro in psychotherapy saves around five euros



Timely psychotherapy would allow 7,500 people to leave the benefit system for a paid job. This would save **around € 166 million.**

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Psychotherapy is an effective research-based treatment method which aligns with the requirements of the national Current Care Guidelines. Unlike other forms of treatment, psychotherapy is not available in publicly funded health care. Short-term psychotherapy given at an early stage alleviates suffering, restores the person's ability to work and creates savings.

Kela's rehabilitative psychotherapy is meant for persons with protracted symptoms, making it unsuitable for people who need psychotherapy at an early stage. Moreover, it is directed to adults whose ability to work or study is impaired, despite the fact that there is a considerable need for psychotherapy outside the labour market as well.

There are also regional disparities associated with the rehabilitative psychotherapy: People living in the Uusimaa region go to psychotherapy almost three times more often than people living in Lapland, in spite of the fact that the mental health index of the National Institute for Health and Welfare indicates that Lapland has a more acute need for psychotherapy.

In addition to Kela's rehabilitative psychotherapy, there is a need for short-term psychotherapy that should be provided by primary health care at an early stage.

The therapy guarantee means that the patient can begin their short-term psychotherapy sessions in 28 days after the examination in primary health care. This short-term psychotherapy can be provided in the form of individual, group or family psychotherapy if self-treatment, peer support, online therapy, and support discussions are insufficient.

According to the OECD, the total costs of mental disorders amount to around 11 billion euros in Finland. Most of these costs result from sick leaves, disability pensions, and costs to employers.



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The One Life health project strives towards a healthier Finland. The Finnish Brain Association, the Finnish Diabetes Association, the Filha Finnish Lung Health Association, the Organisation for Respiratory Health, the Finnish Association for Mental Health, the Finnish Heart Association, and the Cancer Society of Finland have teamed up to promote people's health and welfare throughout their lives. Duodecim participates in the project as an expert organisation.

## Costs

The objective is to provide 125,000 short-term psychotherapies per year, meaning around 800 therapists/year.

On average, the short-term therapy consists of 6 or 7 sessions, the maximum number of therapy sessions being 20. Group therapy also needs to be taken into account in the required personnel resources. The therapy guarantee can be partly fulfilled by redirecting some of the current health care personnel resources to psychotherapy. The full implementation of the therapy guarantee would require approximately 500 new therapists, either as employees or service providers. This would result in around 30 million euros in additional health care costs. However, early-stage psychotherapy is known to reduce a person's need for other health care services, which would save the health care sector around five million euros.

## Profits

Research has shown that investing in psychotherapy will pay off by reducing the need for sickness benefits, the sick leave costs of employers, and the use of other health care services.

Two out of three patients complete their therapy, and psychotherapy proves beneficial for around 50% of them.

Around 6% of people who received treatment were able to leave the benefit system for a paid job. If early-stage psychotherapy was offered in primary health care, around 7,500 people would be able to leave the benefit system and enter employment, saving around 166 million euros due to a reduction in disability pension expenses (100 million) and an increase in income tax revenue (66 million). This means that investing one euro in psychotherapy would save more than five euros.

## Conclusion

Offering early-stage psychotherapy services as a part of public health care and improving the availability of these services will create significant health benefits, also from an economic perspective.

The psychotherapy guarantee will lead to better integration of psychotherapy with other health services, create more possibilities to monitor the quality of psychotherapy, and curb the increase in psychotherapy service fees.



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