A close-up photograph of a young girl with dark, curly hair blowing bubbles. She is holding a red bubble wand and a small white container of bubble solution. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting with trees. The overall mood is joyful and carefree.

This guide contributes
to the implementation of
Region Västra Götaland's
sustainability goals

5 steps in the right direction

– a guide for a human
rights-based approach

This is a brief guide for anyone interested in initiating a human rights-based approach in their service.

The guide includes four principles and five steps with inspiring examples from services that have already tried them. There is no answer sheet and no simple checklist. The work must always be based on your situation and the people your service meet, the rights holders.

The guide was produced in 2018 and revised in 2024 by Region Västra Götaland Head Office.

This guide is part of Region Västra Götaland's sustainability goals and the work on human rights.

www.vgregion.se/en/about/sustainability

www.vgregion.se/manskligarattigheter

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Dear reader,

The services of Region Västra Götaland aim to apply a human rights-based approach in their work. But what exactly does that mean?

The UN Human Rights Conventions will be put into practice at all levels within our services. UN development bodies have agreed on what a human rights-based approach entails. This guide outlines the approach taken by Region Västra Götaland, which is based on the UN definition.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child has been incorporated in Swedish law since 2020. This means that we must become even better at looking after the rights of the child in all our services. We must also work actively against all forms of discrimination, create equitable and equal conditions for everyone and work to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities. The UN has operationalised its work on human rights through 17 sustainable development goals in Agenda 2030. The goals are designed to implement human rights for everyone.

Region Västra Götaland's sustainability goals require us to promote good health and wellbeing for everyone, work for equity and equal rights, for greater trust, security and participation, and for each person's right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

The goals apply to all Region Västra Götaland's departments and companies, as well as services financed by the Region. Taken together, the goals are intended to reinforce sustainable implementation of Region Västra Götaland's mission in health and medical care, public transport, regional development and culture.

We are all rights holders! In Region Västra Götaland, rights holders are those who come into contact with any of our services, those affected by our decisions, those who belong to or live near our service, as well as employees in relation to their employer.

Duty bearers are all politicians, managers and employees. It is they who are responsible for ensuring that rights holders are treated in accordance with their human rights.

Here you can read more about [Region Västra Götaland's sustainability goals](#) and its work on [human rights](#).

Human rights

It is a prime principle of human rights that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. This applies to all people throughout the world, regardless of nation, culture or specific situation. No discrimination can be tolerated.

The states of the world have agreed that human rights are inalienable, indivisible and interdependent, being prerequisites for each other. It is like a house of cards, where removing one card brings down the others. For instance, if a person is denied from their right to education, they will find it more difficult later on to fulfil their rights to employment and optimal health.

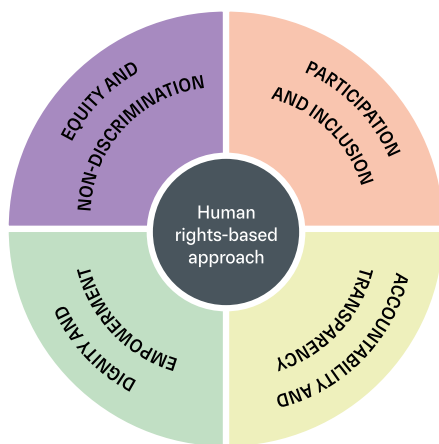
Sweden has adopted the following UN core conventions on human rights:

- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Principles for a human rights-based approach

Human rights are not just ends in themselves; they are also means that help determine the approach we should take in our work. The UN has produced a number of principles designed to facilitate a human rights-based approach:

- Dignity and empowerment
- Equity and non-discrimination
- Participation and inclusion
- Accountability and transparency



All our work-related practices, including the five steps described in this guide, must be based on these principles. Using them as a template, it is easier to get things right from the very beginning. For example, if we start by including the target group based on their dignity and empowerment, we will work more efficiently in terms of resources and pave the way for new solutions. We will also increase people's involvement and create confidence in the democratic system. Discrimination and inequality also result in high costs due to, for example, poor mental health and an increase in sick leave. Accountability and transparency are essential principles for safeguarding democracy and discouraging abuse of power.

Principle: Dignity and empowerment

People's inherent dignity and integrity is one of the foundations of human rights. We must trust in people's own capacities. All efforts made for an individual should serve to increase their empowerment, that is, the individual's feeling that they are in control of their situation. The duty bearer must support the rights holder's own capacity.

The promotion of dignity and empowerment is an important factor in achieving Region Västra Götaland's sustainability goal "Good health and well-being".

► Example: Health literacy

Health literacy is an individual's capacity to understand and assess information about their own health and to feel empowered. For them to do this, we need to support the rights holder's own capacity and develop our communication strategies in a manner that they will understand.

A health-literate organisation makes it easy for people to navigate, understand and use information and services so they

will be able to look after their health. Special challenges are how to manage differences in the conditions that influence the ability to take care of your own health and how to ensure that efforts are distributed equally according to what people need. As far as health and medical care reforms are concerned, health literacy relates to healthcare that is equal and focuses on promoting health, as well as participation, equity in digitalisation, and patient safety.

” If one is constantly treated as a human being, I believe it is easier to begin to feel like a human being again. ”

AGNETA PERSSON,
SPECIALIST THROUGH
EXPERIENCE/RIGHTS
HOLDER



Here you can watch the film “[Meetings on equal terms – a human-rights based approach in psychiatry](https://vregion.se)” (vregion.se)

► **Example: Joint work on improvement**

At a psychiatric care unit at the Sahlgrenska University Hospital, duty bearers and rights holders have worked together to identify and remove unnecessary rules and procedures. For example, there were rules stipulating when people could drink coffee in the unit and how many cups they were allowed, as well as how many pillows a patient could have in his or her room.

These rules and procedures created frustration among the

rights holders and were perceived as condescending, since they were not designed in accordance with the individual’s preferences and needs. After the improvements were made, both the rights holders and duty bearers feel that the atmosphere is calmer and as a result fewer coercive measures are made.

DIGNITY AND
EMPOWERMENT

Principle: Equity and non-discrimination

Human rights apply to everyone. We have a duty to create equal conditions for everyone, so that they can, for example, use our services or enjoy a good work environment.

The right to non-discrimination is central to all conventions on human rights. The Swedish Discrimination Act cites seven grounds of discrimination: sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation and age. These grounds have been chosen because people are often treated unfairly due to these factors.

The discriminatory grounds, together with other aspects such as socio-economic status and educational background, have a bearing on the conditions for a person's enjoyment of their human rights. Our job as duty bearers is to empower those who have fallen behind to catch up – no one must be left behind.

The promotion of equity and non-discrimination is an important factor in achieving Region Västra Götaland's sustainability goal "Equity and equal rights".

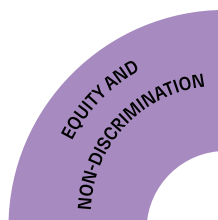
► **Example: Gender mainstreaming**

The aim of gender mainstreaming is to ensure that men and women, boys and girls, and individuals with transgender identity, will be equally empowered and have the same opportunities to influence society and their own lives. It means that a gender perspective must be included in all analyses, in all resource allocation, all decision-making and all services and projects.

The Centre for Equity in Healthcare has joined with Data and Analysis to map unjustified differences between men and women in the healthcare areas of medicines, resources and waiting times.

Sometimes the differences are to the disadvantage of women, sometimes of men. One explanation of the differences is how preconceptions about men and women affect patients and staff in a healthcare setting. To address the differences, sections designed to inform the recipient's state of knowledge have been included in training materials and inserted in governing documents, such as medical guidelines, regional healthcare processes and tools for assessment, diagnosis and the prescribing of medicines and resources.

[Here you can find the survey of gender differences in health and medical care in Region Västra Götaland \(PDF\) \(vgregion.se\)](#)



► **Example: The best interest of the child**

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulates, among other things, that all parents and guardians have joint responsibility for the child's upbringing and development. The best interests of the child must always be the primary consideration. All children have a right to a safe childhood and adolescence, as well as good and equal health. To facilitate this, parents need to be given equal conditions to access information, initiatives and support in the best possible way. This means that everyone should be offered parenting support based on their needs.

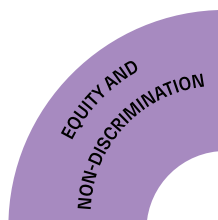
Understand the family is a tool to reach out to parents who live with various cognitive impediments. The tool is intended for all those who come across parents and parents-to-be in their work. It contains concrete

tips and suggestions on how to provide guidance in parenting and give appropriate support.

Here you can read more about the tool [Understand the family](https://vgregion.se/understand-the-family) (vgregion.se)

Since 2010, the Swedish Health and Medical Services Act requires health and medical care professionals to pay special attention to children as dependents. Children as dependents must be attended to and provided with information, advice and support if a parent/significant other falls ill, becomes disabled or is affected by some other condition. This is to prevent that the child develops a bad health. Region Västra Götaland has a regional guideline that govern this work.

Here you can find [a regional guideline](https://vgregion.se/regional-guideline) (vgregion.se)



► **Example: The pain cube**

The pain cube is a tool for discussing and reflecting on gender norms and pain. Preconceptions about men and women affect how patients expressing pain are dealt with, assessed and treated. By discussing it, we can also find ways to more equitable health and medical care. The pain cube contains a number of questions that can serve as a starting point for work on providing gender equal health and medical care.

Here you can read more about the tool [The pain cube](http://The.pain.cube.vgregion.se) (vgregion.se)

► **Example: LGBTQ certification**

To implement a human rights-based approach, we also need to reflect on, learn more about and change the norms associated with LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer).

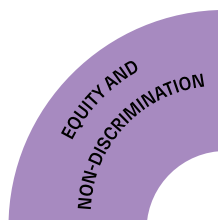
The LGBTQ certification is Region Västra Götaland's training course for norm-aware work in terms of gender and sexuality.

The certification has been developed by the **Knowledge Centre for Sexual Health**.

The aim is to improve the knowledge and skills of members of staff to enable them to be more inclusive in their work. In this way, good, equitable healthcare is facilitated for all patients in a good staff work environment.

The LGBTQ certification is fully digital and consists of two parts. The first part, undertaken individually, is training on norms about gender and sexuality, the focus being on developing knowledge and providing skills training. The second part consists of development work undertaken by the entire service which should then lead to an action plan.

Here you can find [Region Västra Götaland's LGBTQ certification](http://Region.Västra.Götaland.s.LGBTQ.certification.vgregion.se) (vgregion.se)



Principle: Participation and inclusion

Participation and inclusion in matters concerning oneself and one's own situation is a human right. Those who are in any way affected – directly or indirectly – by work duties, measures and projects should therefore be offered participation on their own terms. The role of the duty bearer is to enable participation and inclusion so that everyone can make their voice heard and participate in society.

The promotion of participation, inclusion and dialogue is an important factor in achieving Region Västra Götaland's sustainability goal "Trust, security and participation".

► Example: Consultation

The advisory Committee for Human Rights has five consultations forums where politicians meet representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The five consultations are on national minorities, children's rights, disabilities, LGBTQ and human rights.

The consultations are intended to help

- ensure the views of civil society are addressed in Region Västra Götaland's services
- ensure sustainable

development by promoting human rights, democracy, equity and by discouraging discrimination

- promote participation and dialogue between civil society and Region Västra Götaland
- in the implementation of Region Västra Götaland's sustainability goals.

The consultations are mainly directed at organisations that represent rights holders whose human rights risk being denied or where social protection is weakest.

Here you can read more about [Consultations](https://www.vgregion.se/consultations) (vgregion.se)

► **Example: User council**

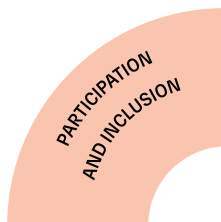
A user council can be organised in various ways, but basically it involves having user representatives influencing the services. It is one way of putting the principle of participation and inclusion into practice.

One example of a user council in Region Västra Götaland's services is at the Forensic Psychiatric Care Unit at the Sahlgrenska University Hospital. Via the council, the patients have been able to have a say in everything from procedures to the provision of care, and this has led to several improvements. Examples are: extended walking periods, greater product variety in the café and the purchase of

iPads. The council acts as an important link between patients and the service. Through regular dialogue, the council contributes to improving the patients' experience of compulsory commitment in an institution and the methods of the service itself.

The National Collaboration for Mental Health in Gothenburg and Västra Götaland has produced a manual and online training course on user involvement.

Here you can find the [Manual and online training course on user involvement](https://www.nsp-hvstragotland.se) (nsp-hvstragotland.se)



► **Example: Active involvement**

Active involvement is a principle based on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In practice, it involves ensuring that people with disabilities are involved, can have a voice and can influence various decisions and initiatives that affect their lives. The aim is to provide better conditions for products and services to be relevant and useful for their users.

Active Involvement is also the name of a forum for collaboration between the disability movement and transport services operator Västtrafik on issues involving accessibility and equity of treatment in public transport systems.

The forum's work is intended to facilitate (and is characterised by) shared learning and problem-solving through close partnership. Representatives of associations for people with disability take part in several projects designed to develop and improve Västtrafik's services and products.

One approach used is to undertake joint insight training sessions, for example interlinking practical experience and theory to gain insights into how a service appears to someone who is visually or mobility impaired.



PARTICIPATION
AND INCLUSION

Principle: Accountability and transparency

For rights holders to fully be able to enjoy their human rights, it must be clear who is responsible for ensuring that human rights are upheld. Who takes the decisions? Do I have the right to a second opinion? Can the decision be appealed? To whom do I turn? There must also be transparency in services so that it is possible to detect human rights violations, should they occur.

The promotion of accountability and transparency is an important factor in achieving Region Västra Götaland's sustainability goal "Trust, security and participation".

► Example: Views on healthcare

If someone is not satisfied with some aspect of the healthcare services they have received, they can complain or submit their views directly to the healthcare authority or contact the Patient Advisory Committee. Many of Region Västra Götaland's hospital administrations make clear on their websites what your rights as a

patient are and where to turn if you are dissatisfied with the care received. For example, Angered Local Hospital states on its website that you, the patient, are a rights holder and what it entails.

Here you can submit your views to the [Patient Advisory Committee](http://vgregion.se) (vgregion.se)

Here is the website for [Angered Local Hospital](http://angeredsnarsjukhus.se) (angeredsnarsjukhus.se)

ACCOUNTABILITY AND
TRANSPARENCY

► **Example: Whistleblowing**

Region Västra Götaland has a whistleblower service allowing employees to report malpractices in the workplace when it is in the public interest to make them known. Whistleblowing may take place because of, for example, systematic discrimination or other irregularities relating to life and health. It may also be about environmental crime, serious financial crime, corruption or bribery.

Here is [Region Västra Götaland's whistleblower service](http://vgregion.se) (vgregion.se)

► **Example: The accessibility database (TD)**

TD is a tool to safeguard human rights by increasing accessibility and transparency within society. TD is used to describe obstacles,

difficulties and shortcomings in the physical environment and how people are treated. All services that Region Västra Götaland owns, finances or has agreements with must be entered into inventory.

Rights holders are informed about accessibility at a location as well as the accessibility on the way there. The duty bearer receives the information required to carry out necessary measures in the physical environment. This improves the chances of the rights holder being aware of their human rights.

Here you can find the [Accessibility Database](http://vgregion.se) (vgregion.se)



ACCOUNTABILITY AND
TRANSPARENCY





Step 1: Build up knowledge

Create knowledge about human rights which relate to your mission, service and the people you support.

- ✓ Don't think in "all or nothing" terms. If there is only half an hour, make the most of it!
- ✓ Don't avoid difficult questions – they will probably provide the greatest opportunities for development.
- ✗ Never be condescending – there are no stupid questions!

Knowledge lays the foundations

Region Västra Götaland's sustainability goals underscore the importance of the continuous acquisition of knowledge about human rights. Knowledge is also a good start for a human rights-based approach.

Those of us who work at Region Västra Götaland or are elected representatives in the organisation should have sound knowledge of human rights and be able to implement those rights as part of our mission. This not only requires basic training in human rights in general, but

also more in-depth knowledge about the rights that relates in particular to the service mission. These may be human rights relating in particular to psychiatry and the right to the best possible mental health, or, in our museums, the right to take part or participate in cultural life.

It is most desirable if rights holders and duty bearers work together. By together acquiring knowledge of what human rights entail for the service, they can supply different perspectives of equal value.

► Example: Meet the Travellers exhibition

Since 2004, Bohusläns Museum has been working with the traveller community, who belong to Sweden's official Roma minorities, to highlight how traveller history is part of our common history. Bohusläns Museum subscribes to the values implicit in human rights and uses a human rights-based approach in its methodology. When an exhibition on traveller history was raised, it was therefore immediately clear that the work should be undertaken in collaboration with the “experts by experience”, actual travellers.



Rights holders and duty bearers produced the exhibition based on equal participation. For example, it was obvious that travellers had until then been invisible in the museum's collections, which meant that potential exhibits were examined and their function discussed on a joint basis. Knowledge was thereby acquired jointly through rights holders and duty bearers working together. Working on the exhibition provided the museum with new knowledge about the collections, which include both object finds and photographs, as well as the possibility of acquiring new exhibits.

Meet the Travellers exhibition is Sweden's first permanent exhibition about the traveller community.

Here you can read more about [Bohusläns Museum's Meet the Travellers exhibition](https://www.bohuslansmuseum.se) (bohuslansmuseum.se)

Training in human rights

- Basic online training on human rights for public sector employees/stakeholders

Here is the [online training course in human rights \(mrtutbildning.se\)](http://mrtutbildning.se) (Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) and Uppsala University)

- Subject-specific training courses in human rights can be found on Region Västra Götaland's web portal

Here is [Region Västra Götaland's learning portal \(vgregion.se\)](http://vgregion.se)

- Government-commissioned educational course in human rights for public sector employees

Here is the [educational course \(mr-forum.se\)](http://mr-forum.se) (Uppsala University)

Educational courses in human rights are also offered by other universities, government agencies, the County Administrative Board, adult education associations and consultants.

Training, tools and support are also provided by Region Västra Götaland's expert units:

- Centre for Equity in Healthcare (KJV)

Here you can read about the [Centre for Equity in Healthcare \(vgregion.se\)](http://vgregion.se)

- Knowledge Centre for Sexual Health (KSH)

Here you can read about the [Knowledge Centre for Sexual Health \(vgregion.se\)](http://vgregion.se)

- Region Västra Götaland's Competence Centre on Domestic Violence (VKV)

Here you can read about [Region Västra Götaland's Competence Centre on Domestic Violence \(valdinararelationer.se\)](http://valdinararelationer.se)

- Knowledge Support for Mental Health (KPH)

Here you can read about [Knowledge Support for Mental Health \(vgregion.se\)](http://vgregion.se)



Step 2: Analyse

When a service is developing or there are changes or decisions to be made, we must analyse them and undertake quality assurance together with the parties concerned, proceeding on a human rights basis.

- ✓ If it is not possible for everyone affected by the matter to be involved, maybe at least some people with different perspectives can take part.
- ✓ Listen carefully! Don't harbour preconceptions about who can contribute and what the rights holders think.
- ✗ Try to avoid having the analysis done by one person in isolation – even if this may be the quicker option!

Analyse together

Get people with different competencies and experience to help with the analysis, both rights holders and duty bearers. If rights holders cannot be included, find other ways for them to have real influence on the analysis, how it is carried out and what conclusions can be drawn. People with knowledge of human rights should be included.

Important issues when analysing service:

A) Human rights in the service

Which human rights are affected by the organisation's responsibilities and mission? What are you good at and want to keep? And what are your challenges and dilemmas? Do you respect or violate people's human rights? Do you protect people from violations by others?

B) Rights holders affected by the service

Who are the rights holders in your operation? Whom do you support? Who are indirect

rights holders? Indirect rights holders may be children who are dependents or people who live near to your service.

C) Access to rights

Do different groups of rights holders have different access to their rights? Are there unjustified differences between men and women? Children and adults? LGBTQ people? National minorities? Are there physical obstacles? Barriers to trust? Financial barriers? Educational barriers? Are there rights holders in marginalised situations who require additional efforts from us?

D) Clarity and transparency

Does every rights holder understand the decisions and other information which concern them? Do they understand when decisions can be appealed, or how they can influence the situation? Is it clear that we are accountable for how the service complies with human rights?

► **Example: Examination and analysis of the best interest of the child**

When there are changes or decisions, we must analyse the consequences of the proposals for human rights. One example is provided by enquiries into a child's best interests/child impact analyses undertaken to ensure decisions and measures accord with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child has been incorporated in Swedish law since 1 January 2020. It places strict requirements on Region Västra Götaland to examine and analyse what is in the best interests of a child.

Region Västra Götaland has produced a regional guideline for the examination and analysis the best interest of the child. It is intended to provide inspiration and support when assessing decisions and measures to determine what is in a child's best interests.

Here you can read about [Child Impact Analysis](https://vgregion.se) (vgregion.se)

► **Example: Equity of vaccination against COVID-19**

In Region Västra Götaland's approach to vaccinating against COVID-19, it has always endeavoured to ensure healthcare which is equal and provided on equal terms. However, to offer vaccination on an equitable basis, in accordance with the conditions and needs of the individual, the organisation had to work hard to overcome various obstacles preventing people's access to healthcare.

A working group with representatives from Region Västra Götaland, municipalities, associations and religious communities focused on reaching out to people whom we usually fail to reach: the homeless and those who are socially marginalised. As a result of our efforts, the statistics indicated that the number of vaccinated individuals had increased significantly in municipalities and urban areas where vaccination coverage had always, from the very beginning, been extremely low.

- **Geographical barriers:** Region Västra Götaland’s initial approach to offering vaccines at vaccination centres by booking a time slot using BankID constituted a barrier for the target group. The solution was to use mobile vaccination teams who offered to vaccinate wherever these individuals happened to be, rather than vice-versa. Vaccination was carried out, for instance, at temporary shelters for the homeless, breakfast cafés and on the premises of the Faktum street newspaper.

- **Trust-related barriers:** The target group has little trust in Swedish government agencies. Many cannot be reached by Region Västra Götaland’s usual information channels and fake news tends to have greater breakthrough. This means that associations and religious communities, which enjoy greater trust among the target group, ended up playing an important role.

- **Informational barriers:** During the pandemic, both the Public Health Agency of Sweden and Region Västra Götaland were quick to translate information online into various languages. But for this information to reach its intended recipients, discussions and dialogue were needed. Gothenburg Municipality’s vaccination guides were key to reaching out linguistically and culturally by providing information about the vaccine and responding to issues in the immediate area.





Step 3: Set goals and plan

Use human rights as a basis when setting goals and planning your activities.

- ✓ Tear down barriers that exclude people from your activities.
- ✓ Make an effort to reach those who need your service the most.
- ✗ Don't think: "We'll do the same for everyone".

Highlight human rights

It is important to make direct links to human rights. This makes it easier to direct measures and activities towards ensuring human rights are upheld. It also provides a mandate for systematic priorities in daily work.

Human rights are applied throughout Region Västra Götaland's sustainability goals, with their focus on health and well-being, equity and equal rights, greater trust, security and participation and each person's right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. Planning and follow-up of the sustainability goals takes place within the framework of the services normal work on budget items, organisational planning and annual and mid-year follow-up. By linking human rights to goals and organisational planning, you also contribute to implementation of Region Västra Götaland's sustainability goals.

► Example: UN audits for the benefit of organisational development

Human rights are to be integrated in psychiatry and the vision of zero coercive measures based on Region Västra Götaland's sustainability goal **Trust, security and participation** and its area of application. When the UN undertook audits based on their human rights conventions, they criticised Sweden for the excessive use of coercion in its psychiatric healthcare system. When a psychiatric inpatient ward at Sahlgrenska University Hospital worked on reducing coercive measures, they opted to link their work to human rights.

Here you can read more about the [UN audit of human rights in Sweden](https://regeringen.se) (regeringen.se)

Leave no one behind

Start from the results of your analysis and give priority to measures and resources for individuals or groups at greatest risk of marginalisation. The overall objective of **Agenda 2030** that no one should be left behind can then be achieved. Human rights place demands on an equal distribution of resources and equal service. To achieve an equitable outcome, different measures are needed for each individual.

In the first image at the bottom of the page the service has attempted to treat everybody equally, that is, they are all given boxes that are equal in height, resulting in some not being able to watch the game.

In the centre and final images, the measures have instead been

dictated by human rights. In the centre image, boxes have been put out for those who need them, and there is thus an equal opportunity for all to watch.

In the third image, the fence has been replaced by a net allowing everyone to watch the game without any additional aids. From the start, the service has tried to ensure that there were no obstacles to everybody participating; this is also called universal design. Necessary for some – good for all!

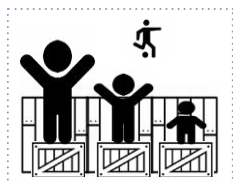




Photo: Francis Löfvenholm

Step 4: Implement

Ensure the rights holders are at the centre when implementing the activity. They are the ones we are catering for.

- ✓ Treat every human being on the basis of their capabilities.
- ✓ Ask the person in question what could work in their life – that's where you find the great ideas!
- ✓ Work in partnership and invite those involved to work with you.
- ✗ Do not make irreversible decisions over the head of the rights holder – unless it is a matter of life or death.

Ensure that decisions are taken as close to those affected as possible.

In order to empower rights holders and create more equal relationships, decisions affecting an individual must be taken as close as possible to the individual in question. The rights holders should also participate in the decision-making. When the rights holder is a child, we must work in accordance with children's rights and as far as possible strive to see the child's own perspective, not just that of the parents or others close to the child.

► **Example: Person-centred healthcare**

A person-centred approach is designed to improve patients' situations in accordance with the Swedish Patient Act.

A person-centred approach means recognising the patient's knowledge, needs, resources and capabilities as the starting point in their care. This also applies to relations between

colleagues as well as between managers and employees. A person-centred and human rights-based approach complement each other to strengthen an individual's position.

► **Example: Tear down barriers**

Tear down barriers is a tool for more equitable healthcare via increased cultural awareness. The tool is intended for those working in health and medical care (including dental care) who on a daily basis treat people who have varying experiences, preconditions and expectations. The aim is to improve patient treatment and deliver more equitable health and healthcare. The tool is also a way of counteracting infringements, discrimination and racism, as well as promoting an inclusive and safe work environment.

Here you can read more about the [Tear down barriers tool \(PDF\)](#)

Here you can create a [Tear down barriers action plan \(PDF\)](#)

Here you will find [Tear down barriers training \(vgregion.se\)](#) (Learning Portal)

Communicate in an equitable manner and intelligibly

Wherever possible, communication must always be adapted to the individual's abilities. In the first instance it is always the person the service deals with who should be given the opportunity to be involved.

► Example: Accessible and inclusive information

The information provided by Region Västra Götaland must be accessible, intelligible and inclusive. We must inform based on the terms and needs of the recipient. Some technical adjustments may be needed to put the information into easier Swedish or to make the message more direct. Translations into other languages may be needed, or sign language, pictorial language and forms of address that have been subjected to norm-critical review to ensure they are inclusive.

Furthermore, national minorities have specific rights to translations and influence in relation to matters that concern them.

As the person who creates communication material, publicises it and informs the general public, you have the final responsibility for ensuring the information is accessible, intelligible and inclusive. The **Head Office Communication Team** is there to help Region Västra Götaland staff by providing a range of support, tips and training opportunities.

Here you will find the Head Office Communication Team [Accessible information](#)
Region Västra Götaland – Head Office
(vgregion.se)

► **Example: Pictorial aids**

All patients have a right to participate in their own care, and the care must always be based on and involve the patient. Sometimes pictures and simple text in the patient's language can be a way of facilitating discussions and meetings. Region Västra Götaland's pictorial aids are used to enable staff to perform their work, to ensure the patients can get the care they need, and to ensure the care is as effective and safe as possible.

The pictorial aids are produced by speech therapists, linguistic researchers and healthcare staff in various operations.

Here you will find the pictorial aids [Pictorial aids in healthcare – Dart \(vgregion.se\)](#)

► **Example: Aids for writing equitable text**

The Centre for Equity in Healthcare has produced some aids for writing equitable text. Many text items directed

at patients or those close to them and many text items directed at staff can contribute to equity by

- using pictures and being written in a way that is inclusive and welcoming of more people
- making the information accessible to more people
- avoiding stereotyping people
- highlighting norms and subjecting them to critical review.

For patients and those close to them, these may be information brochures or online information. For staff, these may be, for example, memos, care schedules or patient record notes.

Here you will find the tool [Aids for writing equitable text, part 1 – document analysis \(PDF\)](#)

Here you will find the tool [Aids for writing equitable text, part 2 – writing tips \(PDF\)](#)

Here you will find [analysis templates – aids for writing equitable text \(PDF\)](#)

Cooperation with the rights holder at the centre

If we are to try to ensure that everyone's human rights are upheld, there needs to be cooperation between our various services and other agencies. Human rights are indivisible, but society has distributed responsibility for them to different actors. The rights holders must be at the centre and as far as possible they should also be invited to participate.

► Example: The Icelandic model

The Icelandic model is a collaborative model between the police, social emergency service, social services and the healthcare sector in emergency incidents relating to domestic violence in families with children below the age of 18. The Police Authority for Police Region West and the Region Västra Götaland Regional Assembly have decided to implement the Icelandic model throughout Västra Götaland.

When children witness or are subject to domestic violence, there is a risk that they will not come to the attention of the relevant agencies. They are at risk of not getting the protection, support and treatment they need and are entitled to. It is crucial that timely interventions are targeted at everyone in the family: children and adults who have been subject to violence, children who have witnessed/experience violence, and also the perpetrators of violence. It is therefore important that the relevant agencies cooperate and work together as soon as possible. The Icelandic model has been implemented in Gothenburg and Mölndal. It is now due to be rolled out across the whole of Västra Götaland.





Step 5: Follow up and evaluate

Don't limit the follow-up to the outcome. You should also follow up how the process facilitated dignity, equity, participation, accountability and transparency.

- ✓ Listen attentively to both those the service support and those who work in it.
- ✓ Were the goals appropriate and did you achieve the outcomes you were looking for? What can be spread to others?
- ✗ Include anything that did not work out as intended. What should not be repeated?

Follow up goals, outcomes and process

Naturally, the work must be followed up and evaluated. What does the work we do deliver in terms of outcomes? Are we doing the right things? Are we doing things in the right way?

Follow-up and evaluation of the work should not only focus on whether the stated goals were achieved. It is equally important to evaluate the impact of the work, how it accords with human rights, and whether the processes are based on the principles of the human rights-based approach: dignity and empowerment, equity and non-discrimination, participation and inclusion, accountability and transparency.

Ask those who have been involved, not only, for example, whether their health has improved but also what their experience of the process has been.

► Example: The aim of the meeting

One way to follow up goals, outcomes and processes of the human rights-based approach is to use the tool called **The Aim of the Meeting**.

Consider in advance how the meeting is intended to adhere to the principles of the human rights-based approach and write it down. Send this information to the participants before the meeting. Once the meeting is finished, the aim of the meeting is evaluated to see if the meeting was in accordance with the principles of the human rights-based approach. The Aim of the Meeting can be used to support workplace meetings, other services meetings and on large projects.

Here is the tool [The Aim of the Meeting](#) (PDF)

► **Example: Follow-up of consultation forums**

The consultation work of the advisory Committee for Human Rights is followed up with all participants as part of the systematic, long-term development work of the consultations. The follow-up focuses firstly on goals and outcomes, that is, whether the overall goals of the consultation work have been met, and secondly on whether the targets in the consultations' respective roadmaps have been achieved. The implementation

process of the consultations and whether the consultation work has followed the principles of a human rights-based approach in its planning and execution are accorded the same weight in the follow-up. That is to say, what the participants' response is to the level of participation, mutual respect and equal value, equitable outcomes, accountability and transparency they experienced.

Here you can read more about [Consultations](https://www.vgregion.se/om-oss/om-oss-i-vastra-gotaland/om-oss-i-vastra-gotaland-2023-2025) (vgregion.se)



► **Example: Further analysis of outcomes**

In 2021, Region Västra Götaland undertook further investigation of a survey it had conducted, entitled “Health on equal terms?”, with regard to the well-being of homosexuals, bisexuals and those who identify as transgender. It turned out that the health of those who depart from the norm for sexual orientation or gender identity is worse than that of those who adhere to the norm. In many ways, bisexuals posted the worst outcome.

During analysis of the outcomes, the **LGBTQI consultation forum**, which includes representatives of various LGBTQI organisations, was asked why more bisexuals consider themselves having worse health and whether the outcome of the survey might be an indication of minority stress. The consultation participants made valuable contributions which further enhanced the analysis.

Here you can read the report [Health on equal terms? With particular focus on the situation of bisexuals, homosexuals and transgender persons in Västra Götaland \(PDF\)](#)

Good luck!

We hope that this Guide’s four principles, five steps and many practical examples will be a welcome help in your work on promoting human rights and a sustainable Region Västra Götaland – for every human being and for our planet!

REGION VÄSTRA GÖTALAND'S SUSTAINABILITY GOALS

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good health and well-being• Equity and equal rights• Trust, security and participation | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resource-efficient and non-toxic• Low climate impact• Biodiversity |
|--|--|

AGENDA 2030



www.vgregion.se/en/about/sustainability