



5 Steps in the Right Direction

– a human rights-based approach

This is a brief guide for anyone interested in initiating a human rights-based approach in their organisation. The guide includes **four principles** and **five steps** with inspiring examples from organisations that have already tried them. There is no answer sheet and no simple check-list. The work must always be based on your situation and the people your organisation caters for, the right holders.

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Hi!

Region Västra Götaland aims to apply a human rights-based approach in everyday work. But what exactly does that mean?

The UN convention on human rights will be put into practice at all levels within our organisation. UN development bodies have agreed on what the human rights-based approach entails and three organisations in Region Västra Götaland have tested and adapted the UN definition to suit our particular needs as well as possible. The three organisations are Angered Local Hospital, parts of the psychiatric clinic at Sahlgrenska University Hospital (Psychosis care Northeast and ward 242) and Bohuslän Museum, Västärvet.

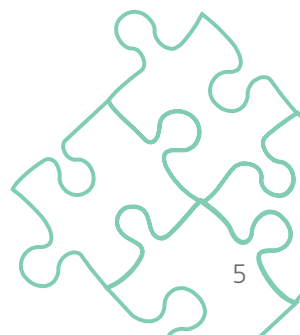
The UN has operationalized its work for human rights through 17 sustainable development goals in the Agenda 2030. The objectives are designed to realize human rights for everyone. The Convention on the Rights of the Child will be Swedish law in 2020. This means that we must become even better at looking after the rights of the child in all our organisations. We must also work actively against all forms of discrimination, create equal conditions for everyone and work to ensure accessibility for people with disability. Region Västra Götaland has designed an action plan on human rights called "For Every Human Being". The plan contains twelve goals and is valid until 2020. **Click here to read more about Region Västra Götaland's work with human rights.**

Region Västra Götaland is also developing person-centred approach that will improve patients' situations in accordance with the Patient's 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. Person-centred and human rights-based approach complement each other to strengthen the position of each individual. **Click here to read more about the person-centred approach used at Region Västra Götaland.**

We are all rights holders! In Region Västra Götaland, anyone seeking care or coming in contact with any of our other functions, those affected by our decisions, those who are close to or living in the vicinity of our numerous functions as well as the employees in relation to their employer.

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

This guide has been produced by the Department for Human Rights at Region Västra Götaland, however many others have contributed to its development. Special thanks go to the participants in the project, "To come to one's own right": Agneta, Anna-Karin, Hung, Annika and Barbara.



The foundation for human rights

The states of the world have agreed that human rights are universal, meaning they apply for every person, always and everywhere. No discrimination can be tolerated. The states have also agreed that human rights are indivisible: they are interlinked and are prerequisites of each other. Rather like a house of cards, removing one card brings down the others. For instance, if a person is not given their right to education, they will find it more difficult later to obtain their rights to employment and optimal health.

Principles for human rights-based approach

Human rights are not just ends in themselves; they are also means. They are an answer to **how** we will work. The UN has stated a number of principles to facilitate human rights-based approach:

- dignity and empowerment
- equality 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 start. For example, if we start by including the target group based on their dignity and empowerment, we will work 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 poor mental health and increase in sick leave. Accountability and transparency are essential principles for safeguarding democracy and discouraging abuse of power.



Dignity and empowerment

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

▶ Example

In ward 242 at Sahlgrenska University Hospital, duty bearers and rights holders have worked together to detect and remove unnecessary rules and procedures. For example, there were rules stipulating when people could drink coffee 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 for the individual's preferences and needs. After the changes were made, both the rights holders and duty bearers feel that the atmosphere is calmer and as a result less coercion is used.



“If you are always treated like a human being, I believe it is easier to feel like a human being again.”

Agneta Persson, own specialist/rights holder



The principles must be applied in all steps!

Equality and non-discrimination

Human rights apply to everyone. We are obliged to create equal conditions for everyone who uses our health care services as well as providing a good working environment for our employees.

The right to non-discrimination is essential to all conventions on human rights. The Swedish Discrimination Act cites seven discriminatory grounds: sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation and age. These grounds have been selected since people often are treated unfairly due to these factors. The discriminatory grounds, together with other aspects such as socio-economic status and educational background, influence the conditions for providing human rights. Our job as duty bearers is to empower those who have fallen behind to catch up – no one must be left behind.

▶ Example

The UN has adopted gender integration as a strategy to fulfil the Women's Convention. Gender integration is one strategy for creating a more equal society. The aim of

gender integration is to ensure that women and men, girls and boys will have the same power and capacity 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 organisations and projects.

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, and that the best interests of the child must always be the primary consideration. To ensure that employees who work with children and parents know enough about equality and gender-equal parenting, organisations can use the equal parenthood tool "En förälder blir till". Using this as a guide, organisations are able to improve their work on gender equal parenting, different types of family, cultural awareness and mental health.*

* Training in this topic is arranged by Centre for Equity in Health
Click here for more information.



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In order to implement human rights-based approach, we also need to reflect on, learn more about and possibly change the norms regarding LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer). Normino is an online game about norms and LGBTQ developed by Närhälsan Knowledge Centre for Sexual Health.

Normino is used as the first part of Region Västra Götaland's LGBTQ certificate but can also be used by anyone as an introduction. The LGBTQ certificate has been produced to ensure the right to a good work environment and equality in health care for LGBTQ people.

You can read more about Normino and the LGBTQ certificate here.

The Norm Game functions as a discussion material for everyone who works with patients and their close family and friends. The game was produced by the Centre for Equity in Health and raises questions such as: Which norms are found in health care? Which are hard to see? How do norms influence the climate between patients and staff? Do the norms have any significance for the care patients receive? Norm-critical development work can then start based on the responses.

You can read more about the Norm Game here.

The principles must be applied in all steps!



Participation and inclusion

Being involved and included in matters concerning oneself and one's own situation is a human right, and is also health enhancing. 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.

► Example

Psychosis care Northeast holds regular meetings where committed rights holders can meet duty bearers and discuss how to develop the organisation from the viewpoint of the rights holders' experiences.

Region Västra Götaland, in collaboration with NSPHiG (National Collaboration for Mental Health in Gothenburg – a network of patient, rights holders and relatives' organisations within psychiatry) has worked with Peer support over 3 years with good results. Peer supporters have suffered from mental health issues themselves and contribute to building bridges between

rights holders and duty bearers in health services. Peer supporters work alongside the regular staff at out-patient and in-patient psychiatric care in Västra Götaland. The role of peer supporters is to encourage rights holders to participate more in their care/treatment, as well as providing hope and capacity for recovery through their own experiences. Research shows that care time is reduced for rights holders who have peer supporters, and that rights holders gain more confidence in their own capacity.

More information about peer support can be found here.

Work on intercultural dialogue is another area under development in Region Västra Götaland. A prerequisite for intercultural dialogue is being attentive of prejudice and that which is taken for granted. You need to show a genuine interest for the person you are meeting. In the area of psychiatry, for example, rights holders and duty bearers may have differing ideas about mental health and illness that must be acknowledged if healthcare is to be successful.



Accountability and transparency

It must be clear who is responsible for the fulfilment of human rights for rights holders to be able to demand the rights. Who makes the decisions, for example, and do I have the right to a second opinion? Can decisions be appealed? To whom do I turn?

There must also be transparency in organisations so that it is possible to detect human rights violations, should they occur.

► Example

Angered Local Hospital clarifies “Your rights as a patient” at its website and explains where to turn to if you are not satisfied with your care.

Angered Local Hospital website

TD – An accessibility database 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. Rights holders are informed about accessibility at a place as well as the accessibility on the way there.

The duty bearer receives information required to carry out necessary measures. This improves the chances of people obtaining their human rights.

Click here to go to TD

At the Forensic Psychiatric Care Unit at the Sahlgrenska University Hospital, complaints about any irregularities can be submitted anonymously by the duty bearer through informing the Working Group for Equality. This is a method of increasing the transparency in the organisation and drawing attention to any human rights violations.

Working systematically with records, the principle of public access to information and freedom of speech are other important areas for safeguarding human rights.





Obtain knowledge about human rights related to mission and duties.

- ✓ 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 – the greatest chances for development are probably found there.
- ✗ Never be condescending – there are no stupid questions!

Human rights-based approach should start by obtaining basic knowledge about human rights and their significance for your organisation. It is probably best if rights holders and duty bearers together acquire knowledge of human rights in the organisation by looking at different perspectives that are valued equally.

▶ **How do we increase our knowledge?**

We have started our development projects with a joint basic course in human rights. During this course, we at the Department for Human Rights together with municipal organisations and rights holders, have learnt more about human rights in general as well as focusing on the organisations' core missions.

For example, human rights with a focus on psychiatry and the right to the highest attainable standard of mental health, or in museum organisations regarding the right to culture.

Tips and links to courses in human rights:

- **Department for Human Rights online courses**
- **Centre for Equity in Health**
- **Närhälsan Knowledge Centre for Sexual Health**
- **Region Västra Götaland's competence centre on domestic violence**
- **SALAR online course on human rights**
- Naturally, courses are also offered by universities, colleges, study associations and consultancies.

In the project "To come to one's own right – empowerment-based psychiatry", one fundamental principle is that rights holders and duty bearers do things together, add knowledge that is valued equally and are on equal terms with each other. This is the guiding principle for the project group and all the activities in the project. The project is run by three people with their own experience of psychiatric care alongside two people working in psychiatry. The personally-experienced knowledge adds an equally important perspective as the professional viewpoints.

Internal dialogue in the project group "To come to one's own right – empowerment-based psychiatry" about cultures, power relations and norms has been important for the human rights-based approach. The main approach in the project has added valuable insights, perspectives and knowledge. Without equality as the starting point and the guiding principle, it would not have been possible to carry out the project's activities according to the human rights-based approach.



2

Analyse.

Try to avoid having the analysis done by one person in isolation. Establish a working group of people with differing skills and experience, both rights holders and duty bearers.

- ✓ If everybody cannot be involved, maybe a few more than usual can be? Someone is better than no-one.
- ✗ Don't do it yourself just because it's quicker!
- ✓ Listen carefully! Don't harbour preconceptions about who can contribute and what the rights holders think.

If rights holders cannot be included in the working group, find ways for them to have real influence on the analysis, how it is carried out and what conclusions can be drawn. People with knowledge on human rights should be included.

▶ **Examples of important issues when analysing an organisation:**

- a) Which human rights is the organisation responsible for? What is the supply and quality of activities like in your organisation? 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? In what roles are you responsible for human rights? As an employer? As a welfare actor? As a democracy actor? And/or as a societal actor? You can read more about the roles of responsibility for human rights in the SALAR pamphlet, "**Human right at local and regional level – a platform for policy and operational development**".
- b) Who is a rights holder? Directly and indirectly? Of course, directly speaking they are for example the patients, but indirectly they could also be close relatives, children and perhaps even those living close by.
- c) Do different groups of rights holders have different access to their rights? What about women compared to men? Children and adults? LBGTQ people? Are there physical obstacles? Trust barriers? Financial barriers? Educational barriers? Are there rights holders in marginalised

situations that we must direct additional efforts to?

- d) Do we have clear decision paths? Does every rights holder understand the decisions and other information which concerns them? Do they understand when decisions can be appealed, or how they can influence the situation? Is it easy to understand who is accountable?

In the event of changes or decisions, we will analyse the consequences of proposals for human rights, such as child impact analyses or investigation of the best interests of the child.

▶ **Example: Human rights picnics – leave no one behind**

For the past three summers the project, "To come to one's own right – empowerment-based psychiatry" has arranged human rights picnics at various locations in Gothenburg, offering coffee and sweets and talking about topics such as human rights, norms and discrimination.

These picnics have been open to everyone. The project has made efforts to eliminate any obstacles that could prevent people from participating.

- **Financial barriers:** Participation and refreshments have been free of charge. The project offered to pay tram-tickets for those who could not afford them.
- **Social barriers:** The project's members offered to meet and accompany people to the picnics if they found it difficult to get there on their own.
- **Physical barriers:** As far as possible, the selected sites were physically accessible and had toilets nearby.

3

Set goals and plan.

- ✓ Link your goals clearly to human rights.
- ✓ Tear down barriers that exclude people from your activities.
- ✓ Make an effort to reach those who need your organisation the most.
- ✗ Don't think, "We'll do the same for everyone".

A) Use the language of human rights

It is important to make direct links to human rights. This makes it easier to aim measures and activities towards the fulfilment of human rights, providing a mandate for systematic priorities in daily work.

Region Västra Götaland's action plan for systematic work on human rights 2017–2020, "For Every Human Being", focuses on the four human rights that are most clearly linked to the region's core mission: the right to the best possible health, the right to culture, the right to work and the right to education. **You can read the plan here.**

Västarvet is one of the administrations in Region Västra Götaland that has developed its own plan for working with human rights, based on "For Every Human Being". Västarvet has focused on the goals, measures and indicators that are relevant for its own activities. **You can read the plan here.**

The Psychosis care chain Northeast has been linking their efforts to reduce the use of coercive measures to human rights since 2013. These efforts have been motivated and guided by UN criticism regarding the relatively high use of coercive measures in Sweden.

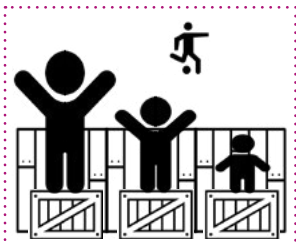
B) Try to reach those who are most in need first.

Start from the results of the analysis and give priority to measures and resources for individuals or groups that suffer the highest risk of marginalisation. The overall objective of Agenda 2030 – leaving no one behind, can then be achieved.

Human rights pose demands on an equal distribution of resources and equal service. Different measures are needed for each individual.

The first image at the bottom of the page illustrates an attempt to treat everybody equally, that is they are all given an equally high stool, resulting in some not being able to see the match. In the image in the middle and the last image, human rights governed the measures instead; in the central image, stools 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 aid. From the start, measures were taken to ensure that there were no obstacles to everybody participating; this is also called universal design.

Necessary for some – good for all!



4

Carry out.

- ✓ Meet every human being on the basis of their capabilities.
- ✓ Ask the persons you meet what could work in their life – that's where you find the great ideas!
- ✓ Build partnerships and always try to include persons that the collaboration concerns.
- ✗ Do not make irreversible decisions that cannot be changed without the rights holder – unless it is a matter of life or death.

A) 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. Decisions should also be taken with the participation of rights holders.

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 only that of the parents or others close to the child. Communication must always be adapted to the individual's abilities and in the first instance it is always the person that meets the organisation who should be given the opportunity to be involved.

Example:

Dart – image support

Region Västra Götaland has a resource centre with the task of developing communicative rights, focusing on accessibility and language. One example of how we try to simplify communication is image support.

Click here to read about image support.

B) Develop cooperation placing the rights holder at the centre

In order for us to strive towards everyone achieving their human rights, cooperation is necessary between our various organisations and other authorities. Human rights are indivisible, but the society has distributed responsibility for them between different actors. For example, family centres and pupil health teams work together. The rights holders must be at the centre and as far as possible they should also be invited to participate.

Example:

When working with human rights, the Psychosis care chain Northeast noticed that the rights holder in their team was not always present at the meetings. The rights holders were asked about how they wanted to participate, and the procedures were changed accordingly.



5

Follow up and evaluate.

- ✓ Ask both those who the organisation caters to and those who work there.
- ✓ Were the goals good, and did you achieve the results that you were striving for?
- ✓ How did you work – did you enable dignity, equality, participation, accountability and transparency?
- ✓ Bring up that which did not work out as intended. What should not be repeated?

Follow up – goals, results and process

Naturally, the work must be followed up and evaluated. What results does the work we do generate? Are we doing the right things? Are we doing things in the right way?

Follow-up and evaluation of the human rights-based approach should not only focus on achieving the stated goals. It is equally important to evaluate the effects of the working practices and how they comply with human rights, and whether the processes are based on the principles of human rights: dignity and empowerment, equality and non-discrimination, participation and inclusion, accountability and transparency.

Ask people who have been involved; not only whether their health has improved but how they have experienced the process.

One way to follow up goals, results and processes of the human rights-based approach that we have used is called “The aim of the meeting”.

Consider in advance how the meeting will fulfil the principles of the human rights-based approach and write it down. Send this information to the participants before the meeting. The aim of the meeting is evaluated at the end of the meeting to see if it included the principles of the human rights-based approach. The aim of the meeting can be used to support for example workplace meetings, other organisation meetings and large projects.

Read about “The aim of the meeting” here.



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