UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG
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# The Convention on the Rights of the Child in practice: Social workers' experience and acting space when implementing the Convention within the City of Gothenburg

# Abstract

**Title:** The Convention on the Rights of the Child in practice: Social workers' experience and acting space when implementing the Convention within the City of Gothenburg
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The aim with this thesis is to examine how social workers, who work in short-term and long-term residential housing activities within the City of Gothenburg and meet children in their work with adults, experience the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in practice, and their perceived circumstances related to opportunities and obstacles regarding the implementation of CRC. As such, the research question that guided the aim are: How do social worker experience that CRC works in practice? What are the social workers own experience regarding interacting and caring communicating with the children they meet? How do social workers as street-level bureaucrats experience their own acting space when working with CRC in practice? The thesis gives new insight into how children´s rights are met at different levels within the City of Gothenburg, as most previous research has focussed on social secretaires experience of the implementation of the convention, looking at social workers experience can help to get an insight into how the convention are established at different levels.

The analysed empirical material consists of five interviews of social workers, who works in these short-term and long-term residential housing activities. The data material has been analysed using content analysis, where theoretical frameworks from care science concepts and street-level bureaucracy theory has been used to interpret the results. The analysis found that these social workers experience a certain ambiguity about how to work with CRC in practice. Both in terms of implementing CRC in their tasks, and how much they should involve the children by communicating with them. In addition, this study also showed that social workers' own experiences of acting space, when working with CRC in practice, as bureaucrats at street-level, are perceived to be limited.

**Keywords:** Convention on the Rights of the Child, implementation, social workers, children's rights, acting space

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## List of abbreviations

BBIC – barns behov i centrum, which translates to children's' needs in the centre. A standardised assessment tool used by social assistants working with children in the social services

CRC – Convention on the Rights of the Child

UNICEF – the United Nations International Children´s Emergency Fund

WHO – World Health Organisation

# 1. Introduction and research problem formulation

According to a survey conducted by the National Board of Health and Welfare regarding reports of unrest, 8% of the reports concerned children directly. However, it was more common for reports to be made related to the parents´ and guardians´ problems than to causes that concerned the child itself. As many as 60% of the reports of unrest that were related to adults around the child were, among other things, violence in close relationships, substance abuse and mental illness. Results like this show that many children in Sweden grow up in insecure homes (Socialstyrelsen, 2020:7). Children who grow up in homes, where there may be a substance abuse problem, domestic violence, and mental illness, are at higher risk of developing both physical and mental illness themselves than other children (Folkhälsomyndigheten, 2016:11).

In a survey conducted by the Swedish Public Health Agency (2016) regarding children in families with substance abuse problems, violence, and mental illness, it appears from both the parents and the children themselves that there is a lack of collaboration between different participants they encounter. These participants can, for example, be schools, healthcare, and social services. Reason as why the collaboration isn't working can be because of there is a lack of a clear structure for the roles, responsibilities, and mandates for the various participants (2016:21;24). The results shows that parents and children in families where there is a substance abuse problem, both parents and children want the problems in the family to be addressed, regardless of whether it is harsh to acknowledge one´s problems, it is important that it is addressed so the family can get the support they need (Folkhälsomyndigheten, 2016:31).

In 1990, the Swedish government ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Even though it already became legally binding in 1990, it did not prove to be sufficient to strengthen children´s rights. On January 1, 2020, the CRC became Swedish law. Meaning the convention has been given a stronger legal position, which means that it now has the same status as other Swedish laws (UNICEF, 2020). Advantages of incorporating CRC include that its content and views on children are taken more seriously and have a greater impact in practice at both state and municipal level. There are also higher demands on the competence of our decision-makers, authorities, and courts regarding children´s rights and needs. Nevertheless, there are some arguments against the incorporation of CRC into Swedish law. Some of them are, among other things, that an incorporation can led to confusion and conflict

with Swedish national laws, as the convention is written in foreign languages and technology that is foreign to Swedish legal culture. Furthermore, there is also an argument that children´s rights are already met in national laws and therefore CRC does not need to be statutory (UNICEF, 2020).

In 2019 the City of Gothenburg conducted a survey of the work concerning children's rights within the city´s own organisation, ahead of the CRC becoming Swedish law. The purpose of the survey was to gain an insight into the work the City of Gothenburg was doing with CRC, as well as preparations that may need to be introduced before the convention become a law. The survey would also contribute with more knowledge about the situation, which in the long run contributes to the City of Gothenburg living up to national legislation (Göteborgs Stad, 2019:4). The survey showed that excellent work has been done in some parts, but also that it has proved to be a challenge on other parts, which led to uncertainty among staff, regarding what differences it can be to work with CRC after it has become a Swedish law. In the district Angered the survey showed that good work has been done. Angered have each year produced a child rights book. Further, also the district West Gothenburg has carried out special skills-enhancing initiatives in connection with CRC becoming a law. The City of Gothenburg´s social services have for many years worked with the BBIC (Children´s needs in the center) material, which means methods focused on child interviews and protection assessments, a support for children to have a say (Göteborgs Stad, 2019:10).

Challenges in working with children's rights within the City of Gothenburg have been that administrations and companies have experienced that they have been given too little time in decision-making processes, and that this affects their ability to work / make decisions with a child perspective in mind. Furthermore, it is also emphasized that financial resources in the organisation itself are seen as an obstacle to ensuring that children's rights are respected. Some administrations and companies mention that working with children´s rights are not always transparent but can be personal and then takes place based on the interests of individuals instead of being handled within the structural framework. In addition, it is also discussed that there is a lack of competence and a lack of comprehensive information on the issue, regarding how to work with the child perspective in mind, in the city's organisations. As mentioned above, the survey showed that there is some uncertainty among staff working with the child rights issue about what differences there may be in one's way of working after CRC has become law. The City Management Office stated that there are shortcomings within

certain administrations and companies about the view of working with children´s rights as everyone's responsibility. In addition, CRC has not always been identified as a local statutory responsibility that must be performed in all operations. This confusion about the issue of responsibility and lack of routines for follow-up may be the reason why there is a lack of an active approach to children's rights. (Göteborgs Stad, 2019:11-12).

After the City of Gothenburg made this survey about how the city is working with children´s rights, the municipality noticed that they must increase the municipality´s joint management of the child rights perspective and to increase the competence and ambition level of child rights in the city. The City of Gothenburg did this by drawing up a child rights plan. The plan focused on the conditions that must be in place to strengthen children´s rights in all areas of scope of practice during the period 2022-2024 (Göteborgs Stad Barnrättsplan, 2021:4-5). Although most children in Gothenburg have good conditions for growing up, there are insufficiency in how the City of Gothenburg lives up to CRC articles. In the work of giving all children and young people equal opportunities and where the child´s rights are protected, the entire city´s areas of housing activity need to contribute. The City of Gothenburg must see every child as a bearer of rights and the city´s collective areas of activity as bearers of obligations (Göteborgs Stad Barnrättsplan, 2021:9).

Within the City of Gothenburg, there are several different housing activities where the focus is on people living in homelessness. Some of them are only for women who need housing, and in these housing activities children may be included. The staff who work there are social workers who are there for the adults' need for support and help in their everyday lives, however, these social workers can meet children in their profession. There is a need to increase the knowledge about how staff, in this case social worker, who work in short-term and long-term residential apartment housing within the City of Gothenburg and meet children in their work with adults, experience what it is like to work with CRC in practice. These social workers are seen as street-level bureaucrats, it is then important to examine what their acting space is like, in relation to integrating and communicating with the children they may meet. Previous research has focussed on social secretaries' experiences of the implementation of the CRC and looking at social workers experience can help to get an insight into how children's rights are established at different levels in the City of Gothenburg.

## 1.1 Aim and research questions

This thesis aims to examine social workers´ experience of the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in practice, and their perceived circumstances related to opportunities and obstacles regarding the implementation.

Research questions are:

1. How do social worker experience that CRC works in practice?

2. What are the social workers own experience regarding interacting and caring communicating with the children they meet?

3. How do social workers as street-level bureaucrats experience their own acting space when working with CRC in practice?

## 1.2 Relevance for Human Rights

This thesis is a human rights-based report with focus on children´s rights. Examining how, in this case, social workers feel that the CRC works in practice helps to gain an insight into what is needed, or not needed, to be improved. The City of Gothenburg has made a child rights plan to increase the municipal joint management of the child rights perspective, as well as increase the competence and level of ambition for the child rights in the city. The goal is to strengthen children´s rights in all areas of activity during the period 2022-2024 (Göteborgs Stad Barnrättsplan, 2021).

In September 2015, the World heads of states and governments adopted a new development agenda. Agenda 2030 consists of 17 global goals for sustainable development that aim to eradicate poverty, stop climate change, and create peaceful societies and strengthen human rights (FN-förbundet, 2018:4). The fact that the City of Gothenburg has created this child rights plan to strengthen children´s own influence in all different areas can be seen as a way for the municipality to achieve certain parts of the goals within Agenda 2030. A report from the Swedish Public Health Agency shows that children and young people growing up in families with substance abuse, mental illness and violence have a higher risk of developing mental illness or being exposed to violence / psychological violence themselves (Folkhälsomyndigheten, 2016:11).

Goal 10 in Agenda 2030 highlights that the foundation for a sustainable society is that everyone should have the same conditions for achieving an equal society. The children who live in these homes grow up in special circumstances which can indirectly affect their

influence on economic, social, and political resources. In addition, goal 16 is about promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, such as eliminating all forms of violence or torture against children. For all children in the City of Gothenburg to have the right to this security, the municipality must work to reduce all forms of violence, which both the child itself can be exposed to or witness in their own home.

**1.3 Delimitations**

When you as a researcher do research on something, you must always focus more specifically on a certain phenomenon. This thesis aims to understand social workers' experience of working with CRC in practice, and their perceived circumstances related to opportunities and obstacles for the implementation of CRC. The study is not an assessment study of CRC, regarding the measurement of its effects and results, but the study aims to understand individual experiences of the implementation of CRC in practice. More specifically, social workers within the City of Gothenburg are examined. This has meant that votes from social workers in the private sector are not part of this survey. Furthermore, this study also focuses more on social workers in three different housing activities within the City of Gothenburg, this means that a majority of other housing staff from other housing activities are not part of this study. Why the choice was precisely these three housing activities is because they are indirectly not there for the children, but for the adults. This is an interesting aspect to study as the City of Gothenburg wants these staff to work according to CRC as they may meet children in their professional role, as part of its clientele in these housing activities have children.

## 2. Background

This chapter will cover the focus areas for this thesis, which is the Convention on the Rights of the Child becomes law in Sweden, children as relatives and the housing activities where the social worker in question work.

**2.1 The Convention on the Rights of the Child becomes law in Sweden – challenges and opportunities**

The CRC defines children as everyone under the age of 18. The convention was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989, Sweden ratified the convention in 1990 and it became Swedish law on 1 January 2020, and it is titled the law (2018:1197). This means that CRC has the same status as other laws in Sweden today. The articles that Sweden has made law within

the Convention are Articles 1- 42, where Articles 2, 3, 6 and 12 are the four basic principles, and all other articles are based on them. Article 2 is about the equal value and rights of all children, no one may be discriminated against. Article 3 states that in all measures concerning children, the best interests of the child must always be considered, what is in the best interests of the child must be considered in each individual case regarding the child's own opinion and experience. Article 6 deals with every child's right to life, survival, and development. And Article 12 deals with the child's right to form and express their views and to have them considered in all matters affecting them. However, the child's age and maturity must be considered, regarding consideration of their views. (Barnombudsmannen, 2021).

Since Sweden ratified the convention, the question of its incorporation as law into Swedish law has been recurring over the years. There have been some pros and cons of arguments regarding making CRC a Swedish law. Most of the arguments have come from organisations that work with the protection of children's rights, and their argument has been, among other things, that the convention has not had a sufficiently large impact in practice by merely being an international law. Swedish authorities and courts have not used the convention as intended. Other pros' arguments for an incorporation are that the rights of children would be strengthened, as Swedish law would be brought in accordance with the convention. Additionally, the convention would become a real element in the everyday life of every decision taking official. Some of the counterarguments are that the convention is not suitable for law enforcement in individual cases because the convention is perceived to have vague content and provisions. Furthermore, people considered that Sweden already, by far, complies with CRC and that Sweden had nothing to gain from an incorporation of CRC (Åhman, Leviner & Zillén, 2020:34-36).

**2.2 Children as relatives**
Internationally, the term young carers are used for children who take, receive, are given or are required to take responsibility for care tasks. In Sweden, the term relative was first used only for adults who were relatives of a person with various difficulties. Today, the concept of children as relatives exists, this concept is needed so that the professions that focus on adults should also pay attention to the children they meet and see the children's need for information and support. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that the concept of relatives should not only be considered to primarily direct efforts to those close to them with problems. It is also important to discover when it is not enough for children as relatives to receive not only

information and pedagogical support measures, but also when efforts of protection, care and help are needed. Children as relatives are always in a more vulnerable home environment than adults as relatives (Alexanderson & Näsman, 2019:80-81). Many children grow up with parents / parent who struggle with serious problems. These problems can be domestic violence, mental illness, and underlying substance abuse problems. When a parent suffers from serious difficulties, it affects everyone in the family, the conditions for everyday life, parenthood and how the children feel. It is therefore important that the social services, health care and preschool / school always pay attention to the children's needs when they encounter adults with serious difficulties who are parents or live with children (Socialstyrelsen, 2019).

Many children are forced to live and grow up with violence between their caregivers or violence from one caregiver to another. The word caregiver will be used under this part, as it concerns adults around the child in its home, regardless of whether it is a biological parent, man, woman, etc. For many years, a discussion has taken place regarding whether violence against / between the child's caregiver should be defined as a form of neglect such as, for example, physical abuse or neglect. Yet there is no consensus regarding this area, some argue against equating this with neglect, while others include domestic violence as a form of neglect of children (Grip & Axberg, 2015:306). This different consensus may have to do with how violence is defined, who is asked, and whether the question only concerns whether the child has experienced violence recently, or whether the child has experienced domestic violence at some point during their entire upbringing. There are several negative consequences for the child's progress and health, when living in homes where violence exists. Children who have experienced violence between their caregivers are at greater risk of developing symptoms such as post-traumatic stress, anxiety, depression, behavioural problems, etc (Carpenter & Stacks 2009; Holt, Buckley & Whelan 2008; Hungerford, Wait, Fritz & Clements 2012).

Mental illness, such as depression, anxiety, bipolarity etc. is very common among the population of the World. According to the World Health Organization, an estimated 300 million people are affected by depression, about 60 million are affected by bipolar disorder (WHO, 2018). Not all adults that are suffering from mental illness have children, however, several international studies show that 25-30 percent of adults seeking care for their mental illness are guardians of minor children (Axberg, Priebe, Afzelius & Wirehang Nordh, 2019:14). Children who live / grow up with a guardian who has mental illness run a greater risk of developing various forms of mental illness themselves. Additionally, parenting ability

and parent-child relationship have been increasingly identified as some of the most important factors affecting a child's future health, and in particular their mental health and well-being. A guardian's care and ability to set boundaries, read a child's needs etc. is important for a child's upbringing (Axberg et al, 2019:17).

A person suffering from mental illness can start self-medication, which can lead to an addiction problem. International research shows that about 30-50 percent of those who seek help for their addiction or dependence have problems with mental illness, and conversely, about 20-30 percent of those who seek help for their mental illness also have an underlying addiction problem (Socialstyrelsen, 2009:15-16). It is difficult to say exactly how many children are relatives of guardians who have a substance abuse problem. As alcohol is socially accepted in Swedish society and about 90 percent of the adult population drinks, it makes it difficult to see where the line between use and abuse goes, regarding alcohol (Socialstyrelsen, 2009:13). Children as relatives of one or more guardians, who have a substance abuse problem or underlying substance abuse problems, are at greater risk of being exposed to neglect than other children. The reason for this may be that adults who have an addiction problem can lead to disturbances in the family's relationships and ways of functioning in everyday life (Socialstyrelsen, 2009:16). A parent with substance abuse problems may become less emotionally available, less responsive, perhaps dismissive, more inconsistent, and irritable. The parent may lack supervision and care and may not be able to get involved in the child's needs and activities. The child or young person may have to behave more extremely to get attention, which in turn can lead to negative reactions from the parents (Andershed & Andershed, 2005).

**2.3 Short term/ long term residential apartment housing within City of Gothenburg**
According to a survey conducted by the City of Gothenburg during the first half of 2021, it turned out that homelessness in the municipality continues to decrease. In this survey, figures show that 597 children live in homelessness in the municipality. This is a reduction of 30% from 2020, according to the municipality's survey (Göteborgs Stad Fastighetskontor, 2021:4). The definition of homelessness includes acute homelessness, persons who do not have housing after institutional stay, and/or persons who do not have their own accommodation. This also includes short-term housing with family, relatives or other private person and the secondary housing market. Notice, secondary housing means that the municipality is

responsible for the housing and rent it out second-hand to the person in need of housing (Socialstyrelsen, 2019).

In the city of Gothenburg, there are several housing activities for people living in homelessness. The housing is available both in collective form and in own apartments, some are only for women. The purpose of these housing units is for the person / persons to receive support and be motivated to reach a long-term and sustainable housing solution. The housing activities this thesis will have a focus on concern mostly women, with or without children, and families with children. The social workers who work within these housing activities are integrated with children directly and indirectly. Within these short-term and long-term apartment housing live people with substance abuse problems and / or other psychosocial problems such as mental illness and exposure to violence (Göteborgs Stad).

## 3. Literature review

This thesis focuses mainly on social workers experience of working with CRC in practice. However, as there is not much research on how social workers experience the implementation of CRC, this section will instead focus more on research of the implementation of CRC in social secretaries' practical professional practice, their acting space, and an insight into social childcare and CRC. It will also provide an insight into previous research on the implementation of CRC in Sweden. However, the current research on this is more done at the bachelor's and master's level, so previous research on the subjects will be limited to some extent by scientific articles / books. As a result, some reports will be used in this chapter. Furthermore, it will provide an overview of primarily Swedish studies, as this thesis examines CRC in a Swedish context, and children in Sweden's vulnerability in families, where both substance abuse problems, mental illness and domestic violence can occur.

### 3.1 Implementation and incorporation of CRC in Sweden

Actors such as the Children's Ombudsman, several municipalities, county councils, UNICEF Sweden, Save the Children Sweden, etc. all expressed the need for the incorporation of CRC. The reason for this is that the formal position of the convention is strengthened and that the work of transforming other legislation concerning the rights of the child is accelerated. Although Sweden has been bound by the convention since 1990, there are several shortcomings regarding the impact on children's rights. It appears in Government Bill 2017/18:186 that the child rights-based approach, which forms the core of the CRC and

means that every child should be seen as a bearer of rights, has not been sufficiently adopted in decision-making processes involving children (Regeringen, 2018:70-71).

Marie Lundin-Karphammar (2019) also highlight that even though CRC has been ratified since 1990 in Sweden, the Child Rights Inquiry believes that these rights have not had a sufficiently large impact on measures and decisions concerning children. Lundin-Karphammar (2019:15-16) provides a picture, in her book, of her own experiences of working with CRC in practice. The author does this by contributing basic knowledge and structures that should exist in a municipality, to provide the best conditions for an implementation of CRC. Reports show that children's rights are not always respected to the extent they should be, but rather are regarded as basic values. However, there are some other laws in Sweden that make the implementation of CRC more difficult to carry out in practice, and this is, as mentioned earlier, the Parental Code in Sweden. It can be problematic for an adult to regard a child as a legal entity, i.e., that the children own their rights. Moreover, after CRC becomes a law in Sweden, higher demands are placed on adults to satisfy children's rights. Additionally, it is the Swedish state that will ensure that CRC is implemented and complied with. However, what makes implementation more difficult is that the municipalities in Sweden are self-governing. This makes it difficult for the government to control how the convention is complied with in all municipalities (Lundin-Karphammar, 2019:27-30;36-36).

When Sweden ratified CRC, the Swedish Parliament considered that CRC was well-thought-out in Swedish legislation and that an incorporation was not necessary. Leviner (2018) discusses how the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child proposed that Sweden should incorporate the CRC when shortcomings were brought to attention in connection with, for example, custody disputes and the social services' care of children who are at risk of harm. The author further discusses that more priorities should be made when CRC becomes law in Sweden. That the four basic principles 2, 3, 6 and 12 should be followed more, as those that have gained the most importance in the Swedish implementation work are mainly Articles 3 and 12 (Leviner, 2018:292;304). Lundin-Karphammar (2019) discusses whether there will be any difference when CRC becomes law in Sweden, the author does not think there will be any difference for those who have worked with CRC since the ratification, but for those who have not, it will be a difference. Furthermore, the author hopes that Sweden will work more actively according to the four basic principles in the convention - Articles 2, 3, 6 and 12. Also that the rights of the convention as a law will be more visible and it will then become clearer

that the rights are connected and interpreted in relation to the other legislation Sweden has. The convention should thus no longer be seen as a policy or basic values document (Lundin-Karphammar, 2019:123-124).

## 3.2 Acting space for street-level bureaucrats

First and foremost, Lipsky uses the word discretion when discussing street-level bureaucrats. In this thesis, the word acting space will be used instead when Lipsky's theory is presented. The reason for this is because the word acting space falls more within the scope of its significance for the essay than discretion does.

The concept of acting space is something that is used and discussed by various researchers. The concept of acting space means that public servants, who work as bureaucrats at street-level and have direct contact with citizens and in their work represent the welfare state, have a certain amount of acting space in their work role. The term has been used more in research on how social secretaries experience their acting space in their execution, since street-level bureaucrats in their professional roles cannot fulfil their assignments if they do not have any kind of acting space (Lipsky, 1980:3). Illuminating the acting space for street-level bureaucracy officials provides an overview of the "real world", as people working at street level in social work most often have these professional roles as they want to help people. But in the real world, these public servants must follow daily practices and struggle against insufficient resources and vague political goals (Evans & Harris, 2004:872). Public servants in social work must make decisions in accordance with existing laws and procedures. However, Lipsky's analysis of acting space may open an understanding of how this concept works in contemporary social work (Evans & Harris, 2004:892).

Professionals in social work are in a professional sphere between the organisation's mission and the client's interest. It is in this sphere, in this acting space, the public servants must work with their knowledge, creativity and imagination, as well as their own consideration of what is right or wrong in the commission they have. This is what the authors Svensson, Johnsson & Laanements (2008) want to enlighten and explore, what the acting space looks like in social work and the general processes that are active in all practical social work. Svensson et al (2008) discuss dilemmas that can arise in a profession and its acting space. As an example, a client wants to become drug-free and asks for help at its social office, if the person themselves is to have access to society's resources and be admitted becoming drug-free, the social

secretary must assess how likely it is that the person is ready to become drug-free. If the person, who wants help, says that the chance is small that they can do it, the social secretary must consider whether the person is best suited there and then for an admission. From the organisation's point of view, this seems rational, but for the person seeking care, it does not seem rational. It is such examples that make the acting space for street-level bureaucrats complicated (2008:23-24).

### 3.3 Implementation of CRC in social secretaries' practical professional practice

Sweden is considered one of the best countries to grow up in, however, the conditions for getting off to a good start in life look different for different children. In Sweden, there are thousands of children who have contact with the social services, who need society's support to be able to grow up in a safe environment and gain access to their rights. UNICEF Sweden has produced a handbook to support social secretaries in the application of the CRC. This handbook provides clear information and practical tips on how CRC can be used in investigations regarding children's needs for protection and support. The aim of this handbook is to contribute to a deeper understanding of children's rights, and how these rights should permeate the investigation process (UNICEF, 2019). In this handbook, UNICEF reviews, first and foremost, the four basic principles of CRC. These are, as mentioned earlier, Articles 2, 3, 6 and 12. Furthermore, the responsibility of the social services falls specifically under Article 4 - that States Parties make full use of their available resources to realize the child's economic, social, and cultural rights, and Article 42 - The States Parties to the Convention undertake to make the provisions and principles of the convention commonly known to adults and children. Everyone who works in the social services has a responsibility to prioritise, protect, respect, and ensure the child's rights in their work. For this to work in practice, the social secretary needs to have the competence necessary to be able to implement the child's rights concretely and practically throughout the process, from prior assessment to decision (UNICEF, 2019).

In 2020, after the CRC became law in Sweden, the Ministry of Social Affairs carried out an investigation into the social services of the future. This inquiry was about submitting proposals that together create the conditions for a sustainable social service. The inquiry proposes that a new social services law should replace the current law, which should have the character of a framework law. It proposes, among other things, that a clarification of the child rights perspective be considered. Since Sweden ratified CRC in 1990, transformation as a

method for adapting Swedish law to the CRC has been incorporated into certain parts. However, in recent years, the Social Services Act has developed the child perspective in certain parts. For example, the child has the right to be heard, the child's best interests must be decided in decision-making efforts and that the social services now have a greater opportunity to carry out conversations with children without the guardian's consent (Regeringen, 2020:781-782). Nevertheless, there are certain measures the inquiry wants to see improved / clarified. For example, that the provision on the best interests of the child is adapted to the wording of the CRC, i.e., that everything concerning children must in the first instance be considered in what is the best interests of the child. The right to information must also be clarified in the Social Services Act. Children must have the right to information, it must be adapted to the child's age, maturity, and their individual circumstances. Here the importance is emphasised that the information provided by social secretaries must, as far as possible, ensure that the child has understood the information. Furthermore, that all documentation that takes place, concerning children, within these housing activities must be carefully documented. So other actors can take note of what information has been provided to the child, when and in what way the information has been provided, and the name and position or title of the person who provided the information. The same applies to the implementation and follow-up of interventions for children (Regeringen, 2020: 783-795).

### 3.3.1 Social childcare and CRC

Monica Larsson & Elin Hultman (2019) have in an article analysed existing research regarding children's right to participate in decision-making processes in social childcare. According to Article 12 of the CRC, the child has the right to express their opinion on all matters affecting them. When courts and authorities deal with cases concerning the child, the child must be heard, and the child's interest comes first. However, the interpretation of the meaning of the child's right to participation can vary and thus affect the extent of it in practice, and because of this give rise to a variety of positions. According to Larsson & Hultman, there has been an increase in contact and communication with children for social secretaries since Sweden ratified CRC. Here, research shows that it has become more common for social secretaries to have contact with the child when childcare investigations are carried out. Studies also show that children's participation in social investigative work has increased. However, previous research also shows that children's continued participation in decision-making processes varies. Larsson & Hultman discuss whether this participation can vary because social secretaries have different definitions of what children's rights are, as well

as different knowledge, organisational conditions, and have a great deal of room to interpret what participation means in practice (Larsson & Hultman, 2019:90-93).

Annika Rejmer & Ann-Sofie Bergman (2019) conducted a study aimed at examining how Articles 3 and 12 of the CRC relate to the Parental Code, regarding decision-making processes that affect children. Article 3 is about the best interests of the child being considered in all decisions concerning children, Article 12 is about, as mentioned earlier, that the child has the right to express their opinion on all matters affecting them. The authors have made a forensic sociological study, which means that the empirical material is partly collected from legal investigations, partly from qualitative, and to some extent quantitative, content analyses of documentation from the social services and courts, also material from interviews with parents are being used. According to Rejmer & Bergman, there are deficiencies in investigations that affect decision-making processes for children, such as that the child's best interests are not always a guiding factor in the decision to be made, and that the child's right to speak is not met. The study also shows that children who have a functional variation, are exposed to violence or are younger to a greater extent are not at all involved in decisions that affect them. According to Rejmer & Bergman, the reasons for the lack of children's right to participate, to be heard and informed are because the Parental Code does not enable the provisions of the CRC to be complied with. According to the authors, a reform of the Parental Code is required for children's participation to increase (Rejmer & Bergman, 2019:73-76;80-81).

The National Board of Health and Welfare (2021) has conducted an interview study of children placed in foster care. The purpose of the survey is to let the children speak and describe their situation during the current placement. The researchers who conducted the study have used the childhood sociology perspective to analyse their data, as this perspective focuses on children's situation during childhood, and has many points of contact with the children's convention's care and participation perspective. The study shows that the children's relationship with the social services and their social secretaries varies, some of the children perceive their relationship with the social secretaries as positive, while other children do not have a full-fledged relationship with the social services / social secretary. The reason for this, according to the study, is that these children do not feel involved in decisions that affect them, have been informed that they will be placed in a family home, or have received information about their own rights. Although there were some children in this survey who were positive

towards the social services and their social secretary, there was still a large group of children who experienced dissatisfaction. The researchers behind this study see children's right to participation and influence need to be further strengthened, and do not at all live up to the measures that must be taken now that CRC has become law in Sweden. However, they also highlight in the study that there is a need to improve organisational conditions in the social services, which enables social secretaries to better perform their work of giving children their right to participation and influence in decisions that affect them (Socialstyrelsen, 2021:7;21-25;46-47).

## 4. Theoretical framework

The following sections describe the theory and concepts used to answer the purpose and questions of this thesis. Care science concepts will be based on two researchers, Maud Karlsson and Lennart Fredriksson (2017). Michael Lipsky's (1980) theory of street-level bureaucracy will also be used and compared with professionals in these housing activities, i.e., social workers.

### 4.1 Care science concepts

Lena Wiklund Gustin & Ingegerd Bergbom (2017) discuss in their book *care science concepts in theory and practice* that how we humans understand the world does not only depend on our experiences, but that also the language and the concepts we use to denote a phenomenon contribute to our understanding of the world. Which makes it possible for a person to convey this understanding to others. With this book, the authors want to shed light on some of these concepts and show how reflection on their meaning can contribute to shaping people's understanding of the world of caring. The concepts and theories discussed in the book are primarily aimed at healthcare professionals. However, two of these concepts, *care* by Maud Karlsson, and *caring communication* by Lennart Fredriksson, will contribute to get an understanding of how these social workers integrate with the children they meet indirectly in their work role affects the child's rights, such as the right to influence and participation. Also, how you as a social worker, who is primarily there for the adults, experience meeting these children. Further, the word client will from now on be used instead of patient, as the social worker refer to the word client regarding the people they meet in their work. A presentation of these two concepts will now be discussed.

### 4.1.1 Care, caring, care for

*Care* is a linguistic expression that occurs in people's everyday language, which is usually associated with care and consideration. In *care*, the concept occurs both in the natural and in the professional in the meeting between, in this case social worker and the children / parents, and often has a decisive meaning. With the term *care,* Karlsson (2017) wants to illuminate the meaning of care regardless of clinical context. Making the concept of *caring* noticeable helps to draw more attention to it, as it is expressed to be of importance to both the client and relatives. The meaning of the term, according to the author, touches on some of the personal commitment of a person that strives for the good of the other and thus protects against evil and harm. Furthermore, the author believes that *caring* exists within a person themself as an inner reproach, an inner touch that, at the moment, worries the staff, which means that the staff in their professional role deals with the client. Thus, *care* is a bearer of an inner ethical attitude, in the sense of being there for another human being (Karlsson, 2017:341-346). Additionally, *care* emerges as a way of being and living, where a person is in place as themselves for another human being. This concept has made it clear that one can clearly see the importance of the connection between theory and empiricism in practice. *Care* as a theoretical concept for this thesis will contribute to get an understanding about the good will these social workers has.

### 4.1.2 Caring communication

To communicate is one of the most important conditions for human beings to develop, as well as for the individual and as common human beings for culture and society. In practical care, communication and language are basic prerequisites for understanding the client's reality and experience of health and suffering. Fredriksson (2017) discusses that caring communication is visible in three different ways, and that communication in a care science perspective appears as a concept with three main meanings that are intimately connected to each other. These are *relational communication,* which means that a relationship / sympathy is created between the client and the staff and is characterised by touch, presence and listening. The second is *narrative communication*, which is expressed in the form of stories. Here, the client connects its story, both in the present and in the future, and through their story, the client communicates about the world they live in too the staff. The third and final is *ethical communication*, which means that there is a more basic relationship between the client and the staff when it comes to respect, the will to do good and show compassion. Here, the communication between the client and the staff becomes more visible in the mutual respect

that exists between people. Furthermore, Fredriksson discusses that communication is a concept that is not so easy to operationalise without some of its meaning content being lost. Communication can also create conflicts and friction, it is seen as double in the sense that when we refrain from communicating, it also communicates something. This can create conflicts and tensions between different perspectives the people have. Further, this actualises an aspect of power in communication, meaning this aspect of power is made visible by the client, or staff, losing some or all its ability to communicate (Fredriksson, 2017:415-419).

## 4.2 The street-level bureaucracy

Michael Lipsky presents in his book *Street-level bureaucracy - dilemmas of the individual in public service* (1980) the concept of street-level bureaucrats. According to Lipsky, a street-level bureaucrat is characterised by a professional who in its profession has direct contact with citizens while representing the welfare state and providing its resources, meaning these street-level bureaucrats are public servants who in their daily work encounter citizens in society and has in their work a certain degree of acting space (Lipsky, 1980:3). The social workers, who have been chosen for this essay, can be seen as street-level bureaucrats as they have direct contact with the citizens, in this case people who have underlying difficulties such as mental illness, substance abuse problems, etc., but also because these social workers have acting space in their daily profession. The acting space of a street-level bureaucrat can be understood by the fact that they must act in such circumstances where it is difficult to follow and apply rules set at higher levels. According to Lipsky, public servant workers have a lot of acting space in their work and they themselves decide how big this acting space should be. Furthermore, it is possible to discuss whether this can lead to ambiguity for these street-level bureaucrats, as they must follow the policies that are set, but to give the citizens the best conditions, they must go beyond the set rules and create their own acting space. For a citizen to be able to adapt to the organisation's formal requirements, the street-level bureaucrat must first adapt the citizen to the organisation's formal framework, meaning the organisation transforms the individual into a client, while the client sees themselves as an individual. For the client to receive help with the efforts the person needs, they must fall within the specialised work area in which the street-level bureaucrat works (Lipsky, 1980:4).

Street-level bureaucrats have a special role in their profession, as they must distribute resources to the citizens on behalf of the state. Since the human is a complex being, there are challenges in this, such as setting a clear framework for the work. Instead, the street-level

bureaucrat is given a responsibility to formulate individual decisions. The decisions street-level bureaucrats make, the routines they establish and the systems they invent to deal with citizens and their workload create public policy, according to Lipsky. Furthermore, this can lead to street-level bureaucrats favouring clients, which can influence which decisions are made and further lead to decisions made by different street-level bureaucrats also being different (Lipsky,1980:8-9).

### 4.2.1 Acting space

According to Lipsky (1980), people who work in street-level bureaucracy have a great deal of acting space, and it is they themselves who create how great this acting space is. Further, Lipsky believes that people who work in social work are about making decisions based on their own assessments of circumstances in individual cases, which requires a certain degree of acting space. This mainly applies to assessments that cannot be made routinely, but assessments that require thoughtfulness and sensitivity. Additionally, acting space is something that is fundamental in social work and inevitable in their professional practice (Lipsky, 1980:11). Lipsky's theory and its applicability to social work have been questioned by several different researchers. Howe (1991) is critical of how much acting space people have in social work, he points out that their opportunities to assess and make decisions are more complex, as street-level bureaucrats are guided and controlled by the organisation's policy, regulations, and other policies. Another approach to the acting space of street-level bureaucrats is Evans and Harris (2004), who discuss that the introduction of more rules may lead to increased acting space instead. They believe that the more policies and guidelines that street-level bureaucrats must apply, the more the possibilities for interpretation increase (Johansson, Dellgran & Höjer, 2015:202).

Svensson et al (2008) have interpreted Lipsky's theory. The authors believe that the street-level bureaucrat is a person who in their professional practice meets the citizen as a representative of the welfare society. Getting acquainted with people's life situations and together with them trying to find solutions and ways to go is a challenge, says Svensson et al (2008:23). It is this challenge that makes social work a living and creative activity, where the staff's actions are part of a larger overall picture. Lipsky (1980) emphasised that the dilemma of the street-bureaucrat is in a position between the citizen and the authority, and that the dilemma of one's acting space is built into both being a fellow human being and being an organisational representative. According to Svensson et al (2008), acting space means an

opportunity to choose how to act based on the space set by the organisation's mission. But according to the authors, it also means having a professional knowledge, it is in this knowledge that the opportunity lies to influence the organisation's given space. It is thus in the interaction between the organisation and the profession that the acting space is created. Furthermore, the authors discuss that acting space is not in itself good or bad, but that it is a necessary aspect in social work, as staff are often faced with varying needs and unpredictable events (Svensson et al, 2008:24-25).

## 5. Method

The following chapters will initially present the study's research approach and method. Also, the data analysis will be presented, ethical consideration, followed by methodological consideration and finish with a reliability/validity discussion.

### 5.1 Data collection

Since the purpose of this thesis is to explore social workers experience of working with CRC in practice, a qualitative research method is most suitable for me, as it aims to study reality from the individual's or individuals' point of view. Furthermore, qualitative research methods enable the creation of understanding for people subjective experiences and self-perceived experiences (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2019). Which in turn helps me as a researcher to understand the underlying factors to the social workers experience / challenge to work with CRC in practice. Thereof, in this section the methods of the data collection will be discussed, also the challenges that were presented through using the chosen methods.

### 5.1.1 Semi-structured interviews

Since I am interested in social workers experience of working with CRC in practice, and what challenges they may face, the best way to achieve this is by talking to them, as it is through conversations you can get the knowledge, experience, and feelings they possess (Kvale, Brinkmann, 2019). When you as a researcher choose to use interviews as a method, there will be a need to compile an interview guide. Since I have chosen to do a semi-structured interview, I had to prepare an interview guide (Dalen, 2007). This means that I designed direct questions about established themes, based on social workers experience of working with CRC in practice. Semi-structured interviews also give me, as a researcher, room for flexibility, both on the part of the researcher and the informant. Since semi-structured

interviews allow for flexibility, I as a researcher can, if necessary, deviate from one's interview content and follow up on something that the informant expresses and which I, as a researcher, consider interesting for the study (Kvale, Brinkmann, 2017).

However, being flexible in your approach is not always risk-free. It can contribute that I, as an interviewer, divide up questions and adapt them to my own inevitable preconceived ideas about the subject (Bryman, 2015). However, as I want to highlight the social workers experience of working with CRC in practice, my interpretation of having a flexible approach, which a semi-structured interview contributes with, is appropriate to best ensure that their opinions are in focus. This made it possible for the informants to reason freely about the follow-up questions that were asked.

### 5.1.2 Selection of participants

Within the City of Gothenburg, there are three housing activities that fall within my research area, these three housing activities are spread over different parts of the city. I started early in the process of contacting these three housing activities to see if there was any interest in participating in the study. I informed what the study would be about and received both good and less good response. I personally think it was a bit diffuse for them what it was I wanted to illuminate with my research. The reason may be that these housing activities do not directly work with the children they meet but are there for the adults. I then explained that this is exactly what I want to analyse, how social worker, who are there for the adults, experience working with the CRC as they meet the children more indirectly. A few weeks later, I emailed out the information letter. One of the housing activities responded very quickly and the staff there started booking interviews.

Five respondents were the conclusion of this thesis. The selection method that has been used is a purposive selection, it is a selection method where, I as a researcher, do not intend to make a random selection. I have rather selected participants in a strategic way so that they are relevant to the research purpose of this study (Yin, 2011). However, from the beginning I had the idea that I wanted respondents from the three different housing activities. Nonetheless, there have only been respondents from one of these housing activities. During the process, I have contacted the other housing activities but have not received feedback from any of the staff that they were interested in participating in an interview.

### 5.1.3 Interview process

I started every interview with presenting myself and the purpose with the interview, I asked if they were okey with me recording the interview, everyone said yes, and if they had any questions before we started. Four out of the five interviews took place at their working place, the last interview took place over Microsoft Teams because the respondent had a hard time finding a time to meet in person. The interviews lasted between 20 – 35 minutes. In my information letter I stated that the interviews can take between 45 – 60 minutes. However, I noticed after two interviews that it would not take longer than 45 minutes so I emailed the other two housing activities, that had not responded, that the interviews will now take between 30 – 45 minutes. Nonetheless, none of the social worker at those housing activities showed any interest in being interviewed. After each interview was finished, we small-talked for a bit about the subject and these conversations I wrote done after we said goodbye because some of the things that came up were useful for my material.

### 5.2 Data analysis

In qualitative research, the researcher must define a data analysis as a method for producing linguistic patterns in a text to then be able to analyse the text. I have chosen to use content analysis as a method for analysing this thesis material. This method helps me as a researcher to create an understanding of my material and capture the respondent's own opinion, in this case their experience of working with CRC in practice. But first, a presentation of the transcript and translation will be made before a deeper explanation of my chosen analysis method is presented.

### 5.2.1 Transcription and translation

After each interview, I transcribed the material, as structuring my interview conversations to a text form helps me as a researcher to analyse my material more easily (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2019:220). I always transcribed after each interview, so that I did not forget important details, such as the feeling you could get from the interviewee when they talked, the environment, etc. This is to prefer due to that the interviews and your own reflection are still fresh, and thus increase credibility. During the interviews I used a computer program that wrote down our conversations in text directly on the computer, and always recorded the interviews with the mobile phone. I then listened through the recorded interviews while I went through the written text adding who was speaking, as well as correction words and sentences etc. Furthermore, during the results / analysis part I will name my respondents - Respondent 1,

Respondent 2 etc. I will also use the word *they* when I talk about a respondent, this as I want to deidentify my respondents as much as possible. All my interviews were done in Swedish, however, I write my thesis in English. This can cause the translated quotes during the results / analysis chapter to lose some of their meaning as the words in a translation literally do not become their own words anymore (Van Nes, Abma & Jonsson, 2010:316). I have, as far as possible, translated my Swedish material as verbatim as possible into English under my quotes.

### 5.2.2 Content analysis

A qualitative content analysis means that the researcher, in their process of analysing their material, identifies, codes, and categorizes patterns or themes in their empirical material. Qualitative content analysis thus places greater focus on the interpretation of texts. Within the qualitative content analysis, there are three different perspectives to divide it into, these are *conventional content analysis*, *directed content analysis*, and *summative content analysis* (Hsiu-Fang & Shannon, 2005). My content analysis has a more directed content analysis as I have a more structured process in my coding.

Further, I began the analysis process by reading through the transcribed material several times, this to get a holistic sense of the collecting empiric. When this had been done, each interview material was read through more accurately and separately, during this process smaller markings were made in the text. These markings formed in themselves supporting words and / or emphasising words. Sentences and phrases were also formed that were relevant to the purpose of this study. These words, sentences and phrases were then selected to be coded and eventually categorised. To capture the essential content of the interviews, the categorisations were thematised. Through this process, the interviews are broken down one by one and will in the end provide material that I can answer my purposes and research questions (Yin, 2011; Bergström & Boréus, 2005). The codes were mainly just words or short sentences and / or phrases that could mainly describe what the informants said and gave feedback on. The codes were then categorised, these categories consisted of reasoning and / or phenomena that arose in the interviews. During the last step, the categories became themes, and these themes became *ambiguity, good will, participation,* and *acting space*. It is these themes that will be presented and discussed during the results / analysis chapter.

## 5.3 Ethical considerations

When conducting some form of social-science research, ethical considerations must be mapped and located. The Swedish Research Council describes 4 broad ethical considerations that a researcher should consider, these are information requirements, consent requirements, confidentiality requirements and utilization requirements (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017:40-42).

The information requirement means that I, as a researcher, am obliged to inform all relevant participants about what the purpose of this study is (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017). The managers in turn emailed out the information letter to their staff, who then contacted me via email if they were interested. I received an email of interest quickly and the interview took place at the respondent's workplace. Before the interview with each respondent, I informed about the purpose of the study, that their contribution was voluntary and that they could stop anytime, also during the interviews they could themselves decide not to answer question they did not want to answer. The consent requirement describes that all participants have the right to decide for themselves whether they want to participate in the study or not (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017).

To ensure the respondent's confidentiality, I did not ask for a name or place of work during the interview. The requirement for confidentiality for the participant means that all participants must be given the greatest possible confidentiality during the study and in the final result (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017). However, all interviews have been conducted at their workplace, this has meant that the staff who worked these days have seen who participated in the interview. I let my respondents decide the time, day, and place of the interview, and all the respondents chose their workplace. It can be discussed if this gives the greatest possible confidentiality for the respondents. Additionally, all staff had received the information letter by email and knew to some extent what the survey was about and therefore perhaps felt that it did not matter to them personally if their colleagues knew that they were showing up for an interview.

The last one, utilisation requirement, means that the collected data is only allowed to be used in research purpose (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017). This has been met in this study, due to that the only material that is open to the public is the conclusive and de-identity version, where the data cannot be deduced to specific participants.

## 5.4 Methodological reflections

The study's ontological, epistemological, and points of departure are permeated by a combination of a phenomenological and hermeneutic research approach. Phenomenology means that the researcher seeks to understand a certain phenomenon, or a certain process based on people's self-perceived understandings and experiences, and hermeneutic studies are about how texts are interpreted and to understand the meaning of texts (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2019). Additionally, ontology refers to the questioning of what reality is, while epistemology refers to how one can gain knowledge of this reality. These two exist within realistic or constructivist perceptions of reality, which means that social reality is created through human interactions and actions (David & Sutton, 2016; Humphries, 2008). This combination as a research approach makes it possible to understand, interpret and account for social workers experience of working with CRC in practice. On the one hand, the interviewees interpret their own experience, and on the other hand, transcripts of the interviewees' descriptions are interpreted, which means several steps of interpretation. Thus, it is not the interviewees' described experiences that are the subject of interpretation, but the transcripts of these.

This thesis has a more inductive approach as I as a researcher start from the empirical data material to analyse concepts to use during my analysis. This process takes place through a coding process, as mentioned above, to look for similarities and differences within the material that ultimately, in my case, form themes (Dalen, 2007). An inductive approach more observes a phenomenon to say something more general about the phenomenon, while a deductive approach derives more from establishing testable hypotheses from general theories. As I want to study how social worker experience working with CRC in practice, I believe as a researcher that I do not miss anything significant in my empirical data material if I let the data lead me to the selected themes for the analysis (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2019).

### 5.4.1 Situating myself

As a researcher in qualitative research, it is generally acknowledged that the researcher is involved in the creation of the material, from his own perception of the subject to data collection, the analysis parts and finally the discussion of the result. Therefore, it is important that I, as a researcher, am transparent during the research process to increase the reliability of the results and conclusions drawn (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2019). My own prior knowledge of this subject is through the governing documents I read at the City of Gothenburg, and the shortcomings that exist in working with CRC in the municipality. I am also well versed in

CRC as I am personally passionate about children's rights. Apart from this, I have no previous knowledge of how people in companies, where they meet children, work with CRC after it became Swedish law.

Furthermore, what is also important to highlight and discuss is my integrity as a researcher, my empathy and sensitivity during the meeting with my respondents. Two of the respondents I have interviewed I have worked with in other companies. This can lead to these two people feeling more secure and / or more insecure about answering certain questions. As a researcher, however, I have gone in with the honesty that this is a new topic for me, and I do not go in with critical eyes on the staff but want to understand their challenges / non-challenges in working with CRC in practice. I have talked about various things with my respondents before and after the interview is finished, this so that they will feel that I am there to listen to their experiences, as well as answer any questions they have to me regarding the subject. Nevertheless, as I am passionate about child rights and could sometimes get answers to my questions that concerned me, it may have created a tension between my professional self and compassion.

## 5.5 Validity and reliability

To increase a better understanding of the quality and critical review of a study, validity and reliability is a concept used (Bergström & Boréus, 2005). Nevertheless, validity and reliability are concepts used more in a quantitative study than in a qualitative study. However, validity and reliability can be adapted to a qualitative study, and I will use it to discuss this study consistency. Validity refers more to how the methods chosen for this thesis are correct to the truth and correctness in relation to fulfilling the research purpose. Examines this method what it is supposed to examine. This view of validity is applicable to qualitative research. However, there is another part of validity that relates more to the generalisability of the study to the wider population. This view of validity is not as applicable to qualitative research as this method is not interested in measuring larger populations (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2019). Reliability refers more to the extent to which the consistency and reliability are in a research report, meaning that the research results can be reproduced at other times and by other researchers if the same study were to be carried out again (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2019).

In previous paragraphs, I have openly discussed and reflected on how my choices and attitudes may have affected the result. As mentioned, two of the respondents have worked

with me before, however I personally do not think it has affected the consistency of this thesis. Since the answers from the respondents probably had looked more or less the same regardless of who asked the questions. However, one can reflect on whether the answers would have looked different if it had been asked 6 months ago, or 6 months ahead, given the space these social workers have had to work with CRC in practice. From the transparency I as a researcher have had throughout my work, and the reflection of my own position in this research, it is possible to see this thesis as credible.

## 6. Research findings and analysis

The following chapter will present the results of this study, and the layout of the presentation has been chosen based upon the central themes that have been drawn up from the material. These are *ambiguity, good will, participation,* and *acting space*. This section also contains an analysis, each theme is therefore analysed in direct connection with the empirical report, where the theoretical framework is applied to the results of the interviews. As has been pointed out under the method section all the participants names are de-coded and the ones used in this paper are respondents 1, 2 etc, however, the quotes that are used to exemplify the theme and reasoning are personal. Additionally, material that were said and written down before or after the interviews will be used, but not quoted. Some of the themes can sometimes interweave with each other.

### 6.1 Ambiguity

After analysing the empirical material, it became quite clear that all respondents found a certain ambiguity in their work role based on CRC. Deficiency of knowledge was a strong ambiguity that could be seen as a major reason for these social workers insecurity to work with CRC in practice. Deficiency of communication between work management teams, managers and staff can be seen as a reason why staff experience a deficiency of ambiguity in their working methods with CRC. As communication is one of the most important conditions for humans to develop and learn deficiency of it can lead to more ambiguity. Furthermore, the deficiency of communication can lead to friction in a working group and a balance of power over access to knowledge may occur (Fredriksson, 2017).

*Me - CRC became a Swedish law 2 years ago. Do you experience a change in your way of working since it became a law?*

*Not directly [...] I think it has been very confusing on how we should work as an organisation based*

*on CRC, but then also what parameters we should relate to as we do not work directly with the*
*children. (Respondent 2)*

When discussing with respondent 1 it became clear that this person experienced different kinds of ambiguity. This type of ambiguity can be discussed if it may have to do with the staff acting space. As Svensson et al (2008) discuss, to act based on the space that is set by the organisation one need to have professional knowledge, as it is in this knowledge that the possibilities lie in influencing the organisation´s space.

*We make summaries every three months, under a heading called CRC. There, it is unclear both to me*
*and to my colleagues what the idea is to write. [...] very stupid that we go in and judge something*
*about the children because that is not our job. [...] very fuzzy with how we actually do, and I do not*
*think there is any assembling in "this is how we do". [...] there should be routines, such as through the*
*City of Gothenburg, but it is probably not adapted to housing activities, but more in social services.*
*(Respondent 1)*

Respondent 5 had the same feeling as respondent 1, that it is unclear what these social workers should write in their document about CRC. It can be discussed whether the lack of communication between the staff and the manager may be the reason why all respondents seem to experience a lack of clarity. In addition, because these social workers are seen as street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky, 1980) they have a special role to play in their profession. Then they must act in circumstances that can be difficult to follow and apply as these are established at higher levels. And if there is not a caring communication between these different levels, ambiguity arises.

*[...] such summaries that were sent to the social services then, which placed families or people in our*
*apartments. [...] but what we probably tried to understand better about what we should write under*
*that heading and develop it in some way... (Respondent 5)*

Furthermore, after my interview with respondent 3 the person told me that they wished for more education about CRC early in their employment. As this person did not feel comfortable with how one should work with CRC in practice and the interaction with the children they may meet, as they are there for the adults. Being new to this job and perhaps not having worked with CRC before, and not receiving training on the convention and how to apply it in your work, means that a balance of power regarding knowledge can arise between colleagues.

*Yes, but it may be a little to get more knowledge about this with the care of children. How to behave to the children. (Respondent 3)*

It can be discussed if the deficiency of acting space makes it more difficult for these social workers to work with CRC in practice, as they are there for the adults, that this ambiguity and deficiency of space means that they do not feel comfortable enough to interact with the children once they meet them. However, one respondent mention they found it easier to interact with children that have another background.

*[...] I must say very honestly that it is easier with the children who have a different background really, because they are used to it ... they are a little more used to extra aunts and uncles. (Respondent 4)*

One can discuss if this respondent found it easier interacting with children with another background as a cultural thing, and that a *relational communication* is more established in that sense that this social worker and these families have another type of relationship between each other (Fredriksson, 2017).

**6.2 Good will**

Regardless of whether the respondents seem to experience a certain ambiguity in their work role, regarding CRC in practice and the interaction with the children, the results show that the respondents have a goodwill in the work with CRC and interaction with the children, and that they care about the children they can meet in their professional role. Nonetheless, as they are there for the adults, they may have difficulty mapping the children's wellbeing as they do not meet them more than once a week and the children who go to school they meet even less. It can be discussed if their acting space, in terms of the insufficiency these social workers have, find it difficult and unclear in how they should work and respond to the children based on CRC when they do not meet these children often.

*[…] but as I have said, it is a bit difficult to actually map the children's situation based on our working methods as well, once a week, one hour to half an hour. It's very difficult indeed. (Respondent 4)*

*And I cannot really express myself about the children if I just meet the children ... or let's say half an hour a month. It is very difficult ... (Respondent 2)*

To be cared about is an important part of a person's wellbeing. As Karlsson (2017) states, that care exists within every human being, and that this care can grow into concern for another

fellow human being, in this case the client's family. This means that regardless of whether you do not work directly with these accompanying children, the care from these social workers is important for both the child and the parent.

*[…] it´s very stupid that we go in and judge something about the children because that is not our job. But on the other hand, maybe you can focus more on this; Do they have the right conditions – at home? Have we offered them the right apartment and so … so that they can have the opportunity to develop at home with school homework and such. (Respondent 1)*

*We have become more attentive, how is the child really with us? in our apartments? (Respondent 4)*

*I have a client who has many teenage children at home and who lives on financial assistance. The children are at home the whole school holiday in the summer and I see that no but the money is not enough, so what I can do is help the people to get in touch like this and get membership on the dish and call together for financial assistance and so host to that but… so, it needs a little more so you can grant monthly passes for these children because they are in Gothenburg all summer and have nothing to do, ca not get anywhere because they do not have money to ride the tram like this… Yes, but then there will be such mini things that you can try to do, just in some way inform the parent about what rights there are, what opportunities there are that encourage contact with authorities. (Respondent 5)*

It can be seen as the relationship between the client and the staff is what Fredriksson (2017) called *ethical communication*, that their relationship is based on wanting to do good and show compassion. That the communication between them is a mutual respect. However, one can also discuss if the staff have any acting space when it comes to estimating how the child is doing in their home. As Howe (1991) critically pointed out, people working in social work do not have much acting space as these people are guided and controlled by the organisation's policy, regulations, and policies, and hence do not have opportunities to assess and make decisions. This can make it a bit complicated as these social workers are obligated to work accordingly to CRC when interacting with the children. Additionally, one respondent experienced that when expressing how they perceived the children in their documentation they were told they cannot express that, as the staff is not there to make an own opinion about the children.

*Sometimes in the documentation I have written a little too much about children and my experience, and it is a little ... and it is not so good ... (Respondent 2)*

Thus, the good will is there but makes it ambiguating as to what extent the staff should care and look after, regarding the children´s wellbeing.

## 6.3 Participation

According to Article 12 of the CRC, all children shall have the right to participate and influence in matters which concern them. The results shows that the children these social workers meet are not involved in what concerns them directly, but more indirectly, in the sense that these social workers have the best interests of the child in mind when making decisions that affect families with children in their apartments. Furthermore, staff participation also proved to be deficient in terms of gaining access to knowledge exchange and participation in collaboration with other authorities, such as the social services.

*Me - Do you feel that the children you meet in your job are involved in what concerns them, both passively and actively?*
*No. (Respondent 2)*
*Me - why not, do you think?*
*The decisions that are made are never considered by any children, they are asked almost nothing to them. I have never heard that we should ask a child about something [...] but indirectly ... yes, because in all decisions we usually think based on CRC. (Respondent 2)*

When asking respondent 1 about their experience regarding if the children they meet are involved in what concerns them they answered as following:

*We meet ... or I have reflected that there are so many children we meet, who must wonder "what kind of person is this who comes every other week?" So ... I think we're bad at talking about who we are for the child. [...] I have not talked to the children or explained who I am, and I do not know if the parents have done it, and I have not talked to the parents either about how we talk together about who I am and why I am here towards the child. (Respondent 1)*

One can discuss if the absence of communication and ambiguity is what makes it difficult for the staff to know how to interact with the children they may meet, as the staff are primarily there for the adults/parents. As Fredriksson (2017) pointed out, communication is a concept that is not so easy to operationalise without some of its meaning being lost. When these social workers find it difficult and unclear as to how they should interact with the children that also say something, as refraining from communicating also communicates something. Additionally, this can actualise an aspect of power, in that sense that the child does not feel

participated, and that the adult around the child has an upper hand when it comes to how much the child should be involved.

Respondent 5's reflection regarding why the children are not involved in what concerns them is because the placements in these housing activities, in which these social workers work, are placed with them via the adult unit at the social services.

*No, but… Now it was… Now it is still the case that our placements come via the adult unit then and most often it also means that they have nothing to do with the children. Then there were a lot of cases where it was the case that there might be something… either a social child or a child, who lived in the apartment with the family, or with the mother usually then, so… there was a case of children and young people as well. And then there was the opportunity for us, as performers, to participate in those contacts, only if the client wanted it themselves. (Respondent 5)*

It can be discussed if the staff at these housing activities have a bit of a dilemma when it comes to how much acting space they have, regarding involving the children. As Lipsky (1980) pointed out, street-level bureaucrats are in a position between both the citizen, in this case their clients, and the authorities, in this case the social services. For the staff to be able to participate in meetings, that concern both the adults and/or the children they need an approval from the client. One can then reflect on whether the staffs acting space decreases in this, regarding that they end up a bit in a quandary between both wanting to be a good fellow human but at the same time be representatives of the organisation. Furthermore, it seems like the staff wants to have more acting space, in the sense that they seem to care a lot about their clients and/or the children they may meet. However, the given space set by the organisation seems to make it a bit difficult for them. Additionally, one can discuss if acting space is more suitable for only some kind of social work, say social services, and not for the staff that works in these housing activities where they may meet people who they are not primary there for, e.g., the children in this case.

Some of the results showed that the staff experienced shortcomings in gaining access to knowledge exchange, which made it more difficult for some of them to participate in the interaction with the children, and that the discussion about CRC articles was not always a priority during staff meetings. Some of that information came up after the interviews were done, but respondents 2 and 5 mentioned it during our interview.

*I think everyone has different commitments and everyone has different ... knowledge exchange is not something we have at work ... so I think there are very many of us who have quite a lot of knowledge about different issues, but which we do not share so much of. I think it has been very good for the business that we could have had that opportunity to be able to ... we work for the clients and that they should have the best. (Respondent 2)*

*I've studied human rights, so I have quite a lot of knowledge in it since before, so it's a bit difficult to say this; But how much of that knowledge do I have...from work. [...] now that I think like this that if I had not had it or had I not had any prior knowledge at all, I probably feel that it became very thin with knowledge that I got through work then during that time. And that there is a lot at the individual level like this, but how much do I want to think about this or address this? Or how much should I write in documentation and somehow try to lift that perspective and it is very much up to the individual employee... (Respondent 5)*

Svensson et al (2008) pointed out that it is in the professional knowledge the opportunity lies to influence the organisations given space, meaning one can create acting space through the interaction between the organisation and one's professional knowledge. It can be discussed yet again if these social workers given acting space is limited because of absence of knowledge about CRC and how to implement the convention into their working tasks. Nonetheless, it can be seen as absence of communication between the staff is also a reason as to why there may be a deficiency regarding how to work with CRC in practice (Fredriksson, 2017). Not having a forum where the staff can exchange knowledge with each other about, in this case CRC and how to work with implementing it, can bring on a power balance between them. This can create tensions between perspectives the staff have and thus lead to lose more acting space when it comes to how to best integrate with the children they may meet and make these children involved.

Respondent 5's stated that when the CRC became a law, they talked about how to implement the convention in their tasks, some of the staff had to go through a little training about the convention and what its articles meant. However, respondent 5 noticed that the dialogue about CRC at staff meetings or planning days was no longer as priority.

*I probably felt that it might be easy... so if you are not interested or there may not be resources or time, so it is quite easy to tick off the point from... Like this... boss or yes management said this we must talk about, this we must address... So then maybe... this is the point that is prioritized away when*

*there is much else to address during meetings like this, but we should ... we... we would need to talk about this. (Respondent 5)*

It can be discussed if not priority how to work with CRC in practice and give their staff the knowledge they need to know how to interact with children and make these children involved, shows how little acting space and participation the staff are given. To be able to increase their acting space the staff need more knowledge and clearness about how to work with CRC in practice.

**6.4 Acting space**

As already been discussed above, there seem to be an absence of acting space because of lack of knowledge and ambiguity, regarding how the staff should work with the CRC in practice. Furthermore, the results also showed that there may be less acting space for these social workers due to lack of collaboration with other participants, mainly the social services in this case. This is complicated as Sweden has different laws and each unit within the social services, e.g., the adult unit, children and young people, financial assistance, have their own routines to follow.

The lack of acting space and clarity for how the staff should work with CRC in practice and integrate with the children seems to be based primarily on lack of routines and communication, but also because the staff seems to feel inadequate and concerned about how much initiative they should take outside their work tasks.

*[...] it's very fuzzy with how we actually do, and I do not think there is any summary in "this is how we do it and this is exactly how we work with it", so it's very fuzzy. I know that there should be routines, such as through the city, but it is probably not adapted to ... housing activities. (Respondent 1)*

*[...] yes, but then there will be such mini things that you can try like this just in some way inform the parent about what rights there are, what opportunities there are that encourage contact with authorities. So, there will be more such things that the performers can do. If there is, then that it is also very much up to the individual employee, what is there for… Yes, but want to get knowledge… Yes… (Respondent 5)*

Respondent 1 expressed that they found it very fuzzy regarding how they should work with CRC. One can discuss if this unclarity is because of these housing activities seems to not have fully being able to take part of the routines that the City of Gothenburg have established.

Respondent 1 also reflected over how they think the implementation of CRC has become more focused in the social services.

*I think they have worked very hard on it in the social services, but maybe not so much on the performer part. (Respondent 1)*

As Lipsky (1980) pointed out a street-level bureaucrat is someone who in their professions has direct contact with the citizens and representing the welfare state. These social workers seem to be little in the grey zone because these staff, when taking a point of departure through Lipsky´s idea of what a street-level bureaucrat is, seems to not have the same outcome as other street-level bureaucrats, such as social secretaries. Nonetheless, it can be discussed whether the staff, when they get more access to routines and knowledge, then also get more acting space. As Evans and Harris (2004) discussed, for street-level bureaucrats to have more acting space, they need more policies and guidelines to follow, only then do the possibilities for interpretation increase. However, as respondent 5 mentioned, there always seems to be ways to help the parent or child and create your own acting space. But that it is usually up to the individual staff how much of their own initiative they want to take, as well as learn and gain knowledge about how to work with CRC and integrate with the children. Nevertheless, this can lead to the fact that depending on the staff the client receives, it may look different for the clients regarding how much help they receive (Lipsky, 1980).

The lack of collaboration with the social services, and some other authorities, seems to be a reason why some of the staff may feel inadequate and worried about how much initiative they should take outside their work tasks. It seemed that the feeling of wanting to cooperate is there, but the responses from some certain staff in the social services more indicated that these social workers should be able to perform their tasks on their own. However, there are some obstacles that can make the collaboration difficult, as respondent 4 mentioned,

*The social services are a little more difficult really, because as you know we have no secrecy against the social services, but the social services have secrecy against us. [...] we always ask if there is anything extra about the children that we need to know. Most of them are silent ... they do not say much ... because they think that yes ... the secrecy against us still exists. (Respondent 4)*

One can see that the care for these children is there, as Karlsson (2017) indicated caring is something that exists within a person themselves, that it is an inner ethical attitude. Thus, one

can discuss if wanting to have more knowledge about the children is a way for the staff to feel more secured when communicating/interacting with the children.

*My general feeling in this is that children and young people ... or ... the actors who touch the children, they want to stay on their side, they do not want to ... they are completely different islands. (Respondent 2)*

*[...] but based on what I have heard from the client, adult counsellors have not had any contact with their children at all. So then... what becomes more from that perspective, that is, like this in my work, it became like this - "No, but what can I do if I see a need" (Respondent 5)*

It can be seen as, what respondent 2 and 5 mentioned above, that the collaboration between its various actors that these social workers deal with also seems to be lacking. The fact that collaboration between all its actors who are involved in what affects both the adult / parent and the children does not seem to work fully can make everyone's acting space look very different. This can lead to a negative spiral then, as mentioned above, depending on which staff the client receives and how much this staff takes their own initiatives, there can be an uneven distribution of support and help. Additionally, respondent 1 also reflected over how they experience that themselves more want to collaborate then the social secretaries,

*I think we want to collaborate more than the social services want. We are very inclined to hear from us. Very much to the social services to consult, "how do you think now?" "what do you want to do now?" and has a very strong will to collaborate. (Respondent 1)*

Furthermore, respondent 1 also reflect on how they felt more disadvantaged due to their professional role as social workers, regarding other authorities placing more responsibility on them, that they should be able to do this. While the staff themselves showed that they wanted a dialogue, a good cooperation with these authorities.

*[...] I have got the impression that many of my colleagues feel a little ... "I'm just a fjutt, I'm just a social worker". Because you have been given other tasks that do not correspond to what a social worker is, it becomes a huge responsibility. It requires a certain education, a certain competence. [...] "yes but you can do this yourself, you should now know this stuff". While it is not good that you do not have a dialogue, it must be the same in both directions ... that you can still have a dialogue between each other. (Respondent 1)*

One can discuss whether this willingness to cooperate these social workers has is that they should feel secure in creating more acting space. Lipsky (1980) argued that people who work in social work must be able to make their own decisions based on their own assessments in individual cases. But if these social workers do not have the skills and security to go beyond the routines and thus create more acting space for themselves, the ability for all staff to make assessments based on care and sensitivity that Lipsky discusses is fundamental to any street-level bureaucrats. Thus, as Howe (1991) argued, bureaucrats at the street-level are governed by the organisation's policies, rules, and policies. Therefore, in this case, these social workers seem more controlled by the social secretaries, regarding how much information and participation they should receive.

## 7. Discussion

The results show that there seems to be an ambiguity with how to work with CRC after it has become a Swedish law, the lack of knowledge about the convention and guidelines from the management seems to be some of the reasons why these social workers seem to express working with CRC in practice is difficult. Furthermore, the results also showed that most of the staff took matters into their own hands and learned about the convention on their own. Thus, the staff acquired their own conditions to be able to work better with CRC in practice. The reason for this may be because of the lack of structure and knowledge within the City of Gothenburg on how to work with CRC in practice. As Lundin-Karphammar (2019) discussed, all municipalities in Sweden are self-governing. As such, this makes it difficult for the government to control how all municipalities work with CRC in practice. Thus, one can discuss if this makes it even more difficult for staff, who work in accordance with CRC, to know how to work with the implementation of CRC. As not even all municipalities in Sweden seem to have sufficient knowledge and conditions for the work with CRC in practice. Additionally, Lundin-Karphammar (2019) also highlight that she hopes the rights of the convention as a law will be more visible and it will then become clearer that the rights are connected and interpreted in relation to other legislation Sweden has. It can be discussed if this has become the case, as these social workers, who are working accordingly to CRC, are founding it a bit challenging working with CRC in practice. Reason for this can be because it has not become clearer how the convention should be interpreted in relation to other legislation, as some of the respondents mentioned, collaboration between the various actors involving the work with the children are insufficient. This in itself may show that the work of strengthening the convention in relation to other legislation has not worked. If you want to

work for the best interests of the children, all co-partners must have the same conditions and the legislation must be reviewed to a greater extent. One can further discuss whether the ambiguity about how to work with CRC in practice for these social workers is because they are precisely social workers. Research on the social secretaries' experience of working with CRC has been more studied and seems to have access to more resources and knowledge on how to now implement CRC in their work tasks. The lack of qualification for all staff, who will now work according to CRC, may be a reason why certain staff experience a difficulty in working with CRC in practice. Challenges within the City of Gothenburg for staff are the lack of too little time to familiarise themselves with decision-making processes, which means that their ability to work / make decisions with a child right perspective in mind is affected (Göteborgs Stad, 2019).

The analysis showed that caring and communication are important aspects to consider in dealing with children and child rights to participate, as well as important within the staff group and from the management. CRC has now been a law in Sweden for a little over two years, the lack of clear directives from, in this case, the City of Gothenburg and the management team for these housing activities may be the reason why these social workers do not have the same conditions for acting space in interaction with the children they may meet, as, for example, the social secretaries have. The uncertainty seems to be mostly because the staff is first and foremost there for the adults. But now that CRC has become a law, they have been given more directives in their duties that they must work according to CRC in the cases children are involved in. Additionally, other reason for uncertainty may be because of the interpretation of the convention, and children´s rights to participate can vary, and thus affect the extent of it in practice (Larsson & Hultman, 2019). Before CRC became a law in Sweden, the City of Gothenburg conducted a survey regarding how the city works with children's rights. The survey showed that working with children's rights was a challenge in some areas but worked excellently in other areas (Göteborgs Stad, 2019). Once again, one can discuss whether the City of Gothenburg has failed to prepare the municipality for CRC to become law in Sweden. Further, the survey also showed that some administrations mentioned that working with children's rights were not always transparent and not handled within structural framework. Thus, one can further discuss whether this has been able to contribute to these social workers having difficulty in how to interact / communicate with the children. Nonetheless, the analysis also shows that these social workers have a good will and to the extent that there is for them to interact / communicate with the children does so. However,

this can be seen more as the children then not becoming directly involved in what concerns them, and as they now have the right to be. But are more indirectly involved as these social workers more support the parent in their parenting and life situation.

The stories of these social workers indicate that those who have acting space in their work tasks are those who themselves feel secure in going beyond the routines. As street-level bureaucrats, who in their work represent the welfare state, have a certain amount of acting space in their work role, in this case these social workers (Lipsky, 1980). The staff who give themselves more acting space seem to be those who have more knowledge about CRC, worked for a while at this workplace and feel safe in their actions. However, the staff who do not seem to have any acting space expressed that the lack of knowledge about the convention, cooperation with their colleagues and other actors, as well as guidance and support from the management are the reasons why they do not feel safe to go outside the routines. One must discuss again whether the work before CRC would become law in Sweden was not sufficiently prepared. Nonetheless, it is possible to discuss whether some of these social workers lack the security to give themselves more acting space may also have to do with the fact that existing knowledge tools, regarding how to work with CRC in practice, have been developed more into social secretaries' tasks, then for these social workers. As UNICEF Sweden produced, a handbook to support social secretaries in the application of the CRC (UNICEF, 2019). Jobs that involve supporting and helping people in their everyday lives always require that you can give yourself some extent of acting space. If then not all staff have the same access to knowledge, guidance, and security in how they in this case should work with CRC in practice, it can lead to children's participation can look different depending on which staff they meet. The survey conducted by the City of Gothenburg regarding the work with children's rights within the city also indicates that there is a lack of competence and lack of comprehensive information regarding how to work with CRC in practice now that it has become Swedish law (Göteborgs Stad, 2019). The staff's own experience of the lack of their own acting space is then not so surprising. It can be discussed whether the City of Gothenburg, in this case, has been too confident in the question of its work with children's rights in the municipality, and started too late to analyse what opportunities there are, in all activities involving children, to work with CRC in practice.

When reflecting on this result, one can see quite clearly that, in this case, the City of Gothenburg is lacking in its work with CRC. This can show that Sweden in general should

review its work with CRC and other laws in general. Then mainly the Parental Code in consideration. As Rejmer & Bergman (2019) discussed, the reason as to why children´s rights to participate, be heard and informed deficiencies is due to the Parental Code, this law does not enable the provisions of the CRC to be complied with. How can Sweden be sure that all children have their rights met if there are no common laws and approaches in the work with CRC in all municipalities? Being able to take part in these social workers, who are first and foremost there for their adult clients who have some underlying problems, experience of working with CRC in practice has contributed to the fact that you can clearly see that Sweden has not come far in its work for children's rights. More concrete routines, policies, changing of existing laws, and knowledge of the convention are needed to strengthen children's rights. Finally, the argument that Sweden already before CRC became law works diligently with children's rights is something that should not be discussed anymore, but the discussion should instead be how we reach all children in all areas and meet their rights.

## 8. Conclusion

This thesis aimed to increase the understanding of social workers´ experiences and acting space when working with the Convention on the Rights of the Child in practice. The research findings showed that most of the social workers, as street-level bureaucrats, seem to experience ambiguity in how they should work with CRC in practice. The lack of sufficient education for skills development about the convention, or instructions how they should treat the children, as well as clear directives from the manager / management are the main reasons attributed by the respondents to their experience of certain lack of clarity from their employers. Same ambiguity seemed to lead some of the staff to learn about the convention for themselves, as they wish, to be able to feel safe in meeting the children and working in accordance with the convention.

Social workers' own experience regarding interacting and caring communication is perceived to be positive. However, as they are primarily there for the adults and only can meet children who are accompanying them, the research findings showed that there is a great goodwill among the staff, regarding interacting and communicating with the children. Nevertheless, it seems to be another kind of ambiguity here, about how much they should involve the children through communicating with them. Since the main responsibility for these children are under the local social services, there seems to be a lack of a clear framework in the cooperation between these housing activities and the social services regarding how much these social

workers should interact with the children. Nonetheless, the findings also show that all actors involved do their utmost to meet children's rights to the best of their ability. Even though they work according to different laws and routines.

Finally, this study revealed that the social workers' own experience of acting space, when they work with CRC in practice, as street-level bureaucrats, is perceived to be limited. However, it seems that those who have more knowledge of the convention, and feel secure in their work role, create themselves more acting space. As they interact more with the children, support the parent more closely, and take their own initiatives to make it as good as possible for the child / children. Those who do not feel as secure about going beyond their duties and routines seem to act under uncertainty about the convention and how they should interact with the child / children. This could also be because they had previously expressed too much about their own opinion of the child's well-being in the documentation, which is not the task of these social workers to assess. This seems to lead, consequently, to some in the staff group feeling a lack of ambiguity and uncertainty about how they should then interact and communicate with the children.

In conclusion, there is a need for clearer frameworks and routines for these social workers from the City of Gothenburg. To be able to meet the children's rights, the cooperation between all the actors involved needs to be reviewed.

## 8.1 Suggestions for further research

Since this thesis was carried out on a small scale and for a short time, one of the proposals for further research would be to deepen the knowledge of the localised strategies for how municipalities work with CRC now that it has become Swedish law. Furthermore, a comparative study of how government organisations versus NGO organisations work with CRC in practice after it became a law would have been interesting to investigate. Here too, municipalities compare with each other as all municipalities have their own working methods and how they work with CRC. Finally, as the results showed very strongly that the collaboration with the various actors, schools, social services, etc. is lacking, would an investigation into how its collaboration looks more in-depth, and how to best collaborate to meet children's rights would contribute to gain more knowledge about what needs to change in practice.

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# 10. Appendix

## 10.1 Appendix 1: Informationsbrevet



## Informationsbrev och förfrågan om medverkan i studie om behandlingsassistenters upplevelse kring att jobba med barnkonventionen.

Jag heter Emelie Ekbrand och jag är student i Masterprogrammet i mänskliga rättigheter vid institutionen för globala studier, Göteborgs universitet. Under utbildningen ingår att göra en studie som kommer att presenteras i en skriftlig masteruppsats.

Min studie syftar till att undersöka hur barnkonventionen, efter att ha varit svensk lag i två år, fungerar i praktiken. Detta vill jag göra genom att undersöka behandlingsassistenters erfarenhet/upplevelse kring att jobba med barnkonventionen, som arbetar inom korttids-/långtidsbostadsbostäder inom Göteborgs Stad.

Jag söker personer som utifrån sitt arbete har erfarenhet av att jobba med barnkonventionen som metod (både pågående och avslutad tjänst) som kan ställa upp för en intervju. Intervjun kommer hållas på svenska, ta cirka 30-45 minuter och kan kommas att spelas in. Allt material som samlas in behandlas konfidentiellt och kommer att förstöras efter 2 år, efter avslutat projekt enligt Vetenskapsrådet forskningsregler. Och all relevant data som skulle kunna användas för direkt eller indirekt identifiering av respondenterna kommer att anonymiseras.

Om du accepterar att medverka i studien kommer du att kontaktas via e-mail eller telefon för att boka in en tid för en intervju. Du är också varmt välkommen att kontakta mig vid anmälan av intresse eller frågor. Du kan också kontakta min handledare som svarar på institutionella och vetenskapliga frågor om mitt uppsatsarbete, [maria.medina@globalastudier.gu.se](mailto:maria.medina@globalastudier.gu.se)

Tack för din uppmärksamhet,
Med Vänliga Hälsningar,

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**10.2 Appendix 2: Intervjufrågor**

**Inledning:**
Mitt namn är Emelie Ekbrand och är en student som läser master i mänskliga rättigheter på Göteborgs universitet. Denna intervju görs som en del av mitt examensarbete.

Min studie syftar till att undersöka hur barnkonventionen, efter att ha varit svensk lag i två år, fungerar i praktiken. Detta vill jag göra genom att undersöka behandlingsassistenters erfarenhet/upplevelse kring att jobba med barnkonventionen, som arbetar inom korttids-/långtidsbostadsbostäder inom Göteborgs Stad.

**Etiska riktlinjer:**
Deltagandet i studien innebär att en intervju kommer genomföras personligt. Hela intervjun kommer att spelas in. intervjuerna kommer behandlas konfidentiellt, vilket betyder att intervjuerna kommer avidentifieras och behandlas i riktlinje med bestämmelser enligt Vetenskapsrådet etikregler. Din medverkan är frivillig och du kan när som helst avbryta intervjun.

Jag beräknar att intervjun kommer ta ca 45–60 min. Intervjun kommer spelas in, anledningen är för att jag inte ska missa något du säger. Därav kommer jag behöva ditt godkännande att spela in samtalet innan intervjun börjar. Är detta något du godkänner kommer jag fråga om det i början av intervjun.

**Bakgrund:**
- Kan du berätta lite kort om dig själv, ålder och arbetstitel?

**Intervjufrågor:**
- Hur länge har du arbetat på den/denna arbetsplats?

- Hur jobbar ni, i er verksamhet, med barnkonventionen? (styrdokument, strukturer gällande barns rättigheter, handlingsplan)

- Barnkonventionen blev svensk lag för två år sedan, upplever du en förändring i ditt arbetssätt sedan det blev en lag?
    - Om ja: på vilket sätt?
    - Om nej: varför inte tror du?

Följdfråga om ja: upplever du att pandemin har påverkat ditt sätt att arbeta med BK?
    - Om ja: på vilket sätt?

- Vad är din egen erfarenhet av att jobba med BK i praktiken? (menas om/när ni möter barn i era verksamheter, dokumentation osv)

- För att kunna tillgodose barnets rättigheter enligt BK underlättar det givetvis att man har kunskap om BKs artiklar och hur de ska användas. Upplever du att du själv har fått tillräcklig med kunskap om detta? (utbildningar, handledning, material osv)
  - Om ja: vad har du fått?
  - Om nej: vad saknar du för att kunna jobba mer effektivt med BK?
- Upplever du att barnen du möter i den verksamheten du jobbar/jobbat i är delaktiga i det som berör dem? (både passivt och aktivt)
  - Om ja: kan du nämna något exempel?
  - Om nej: varför inte tror du?
- Upplever du att barnen du möter i den verksamheten du jobbar/jobbat i har ett inflytande på hur deras rättigheter tillgodoses?
  - Om ja: kan du nämna något exempel?
  - Om nej: varför inte tror du?
- Samarbetar ni, inom er verksamhet, med andra aktörer? (Socialtjänsten, skolan, sjukvården..)
- Vilka är dessa aktörer? (namn, vad baseras samverkan på? aktiviteter etc.)
- Hur är din egen upplevelse kring samverkan med andra aktörer ni möter i er verksamhet, när det kommer till arbetet kring BK i praktiken?
  - Om bra: vad är det som funkar bra enligt dig? Och varför?
  - Om mindre bra: vad är det som brister enligt dig? Och varför?

**Avslutning:** Finns det någonting som jag inte har frågat om som du skulle vilja tillägga eller utveckla?