

Idéblad

Tryggare och Mänskligare Göteborg wants to emphasize different examples of security work being carried out in the city by private players, societies, enthusiasts and many others. The idea is to inspire people to new security-creating processes.

.....The City of Göteborg´s central crime prevention council.....



STRATEGIC MEDIA WORK WITHIN SOCIAL SERVICES



The City of Göteborg social services has since 2008 had its own media group consisting of five heads of individual and family care from as many city districts: In the front row: Lena Säljö (from city district Biskopsgården), Ingaliil Balheden (Kärra-Rödbo) and Kerstin Wadman (Frölunda). Back row: Arne Wiik (Centrum) and Juan Navas (Lärjedalen).

A PILOT PROJECT WHICH PROVIDES A MORE COMPLETE MEDIA IMAGE



The City of Göteborg social services has participated in a pilot project comprising training and methods development in order to be able to contribute towards a more balanced and more profound public image.

A conscious and structured piece of work on media issues has meant that social services in Göteborg are more often heard in the public dialogue. It has also improved citizens' opportunities of acquiring a more balanced and more profound image of reality.

Since social services in Göteborg began to work strategically on media issues they have become a more active and visible player in the local press, TV and radio news. Greater knowledge of the mechanisms of journalism, a clearer structure and more proactive manner of approaching the media has meant that a more complete image of their work is presented to citizens of Göteborg.

Because it was precisely there that the work of change began: in a feeling that there were great gaps in the media reporting of, for example, crime and social problems.

"There was a frustration that our picture of certain situations was never seen, whilst the perspective of other players, for example that of the police, was almost always included," says Ingalill Balheden, head of individual and family care in the city district of Kärra-Rödbo and a member of Göteborg social services media group.

This deficiency was also confirmed in the study carried out by Tryggare och Mänskligare Göteborg during 2006 and 2007. For a three-month period an analysis was carried out of what the local papers Göteborgs-Posten, Göteborgs-Tidningen and Metro, and the now defunct City Göteborg and Punkt SE wrote about young people and youth crime.

"We undertook the study to provide a documentary basis for a debate on media issues, and examined, for example, who reporters directed their questions at, and who the sender was behind what was reported. We saw that those players who actively work on media issues were better at getting across their image, whilst others in principle were not visible at all - among them social services. And this, of course, leads to a distorted description of reality when the media only use certain sources. Particularly if those senders who contribute information about news events are also responsible for the analysis explanatory models and proposals for change," says Sonny Mattisson, director of media and information at Tryggare och Mänskligare Göteborg.

This study formed the starting point for a pilot project directed at social services, which apart from Sonny Mattisson was also led by Jens Lisell at the Göteborg City Administrative Office. The aim was to disseminate knowledge on media issues and to arouse interest in working more deliberately with them. But also to find forms for a more systematic and continuous information process. The two pilot city administrative districts taking part were Kärra-Rödbo and Biskopsgården.

The project included, for example, training in how the media operate, how journalists work and where they get their information from, inventories of the media image of their own city district and discussions about such matters as seeing yourself as a sender and a media player. The next step was to find methods for efficient communication and for documenting and collating these forms of work into study and information materials which can also be used within other areas of work.

During the course of the project a need was observed for greater coordination and a clearer allocation of responsibility, so that important joint information projects would not fall between two stools - something that the participants considered there was otherwise a risk of, as social work in Göteborg is carried out in parallel within 21 different city district administrations.

For this reason in 2008 a media group was formed, consisting of the individual and family care managers from five geographically widely distributed city districts, which acted both as a contact resource for the local media and a joint informa-

tion channel for all of Göteborg social services. Jens Lisell and Sonny Mattisson contacted the Göteborg media to let them know of the existence of the group.

"We were immediately given a good reception and now the media get in touch quite often. It is clear that they regard this as an asset, and on our part it means that we can be seen and heard more than we used to. Thanks to the group we are not as vulnerable as private individuals but can when the need arises defend ourselves collectively in a different way. Hopefully this will also in the long run contribute towards a greater confidence in social services," says Lena Säljö, head of individual and family care in Biskopsgården and a member of the media group.

Proof of the fact that the group was both needed and functioned came when the magazine Faktum contrary to prevailing journalistic practice published the names of individual social workers about whose decisions they were critical. The media group could then, with support from the communication unit, present its picture through polemical articles and participation in radio debates.

The involvement in media issues has also been well received out in the city district administrations:

"We talk about it a lot in our city district. Media issues have been brought to the fore and have come up on the agenda in a completely different way," says Ingalill Balheden.

Jens Lisell, adviser on communications and media questions in the City Administration Office and active as a trainer, support and media contact on the project, also stresses the importance of openness vis-à-vis the residents of Göteborg.

"It is a question of credibility. We have to be professional, impartial and objective and to report both what is working and what is not working. The social field is a difficult one, among other reasons because of confidentiality, but also because it involves complex issues which often provoke strong reactions. It is then even more important to be able to provide a complete overview. Constructive communication favours everyone, and this working method can form a model for other areas too, such as schools and care of the elderly.

THIS IS WHAT WE DID

- ▶ For three months at the end of 2006 and beginning of 2007 Sonny Mattisson, Zan Jankovski and Ann Hanbert at Tryggare och Mänskligare Göteborg conducted a study in which they analysed what the local newspapers Göteborgs-Posten, Göteborgs-Tidningen, Metro, City Göteborg and Punkt SE wrote about youth crime and young people.
- ▶ In this study it became clear, for example, that those players working actively with media issues – such as the police and the legal profession – often were able to get across their image of reality in the media, whilst others, such as social services, were scarcely visible at all.
- ▶ The study formed a starting point for a pilot project directed at Göteborg social services, led by Sonny Mattisson, director of media and information at Tryggare och Mänskligare Göteborg, and Jens Lisell, adviser on communication and media issues at the City Administrative Office. The aim was to acquire greater knowledge on media issues and to develop more conscious, systematic and continuous working methods and a clearer allocation of responsibility.
- ▶ Two of Göteborg's 21 city districts, Kärra-Rödbo and Biskopsgården, became pilot districts.
- ▶ Included in the project were among other things:
 - ▶ Training in how the media operate, how journalists work and where they get their information.
 - ▶ Inventories of the media image of their own city district.
 - ▶ Discussions about, for example, the importance of seeing yourself as a sender and media player.
 - ▶ The development of methods for efficiently functioning communication.
 - ▶ Documentation and collation of these models into a study of information material which can also be used in other areas of work.
- ▶ As a result of the work, in 2008 a joint media group was formed, to act as spokespersons for all of Göteborg social services and contacts for the local media. The group consists of five heads of individual and family care from five geographically widely distributed Göteborg city districts.

PROBLEMS

- ▶ It is difficult when competing with other strong players to take your place and get your image out into the media.

CONTACTS

- ▶ Ingalill Balheden, head of individual and family care at Kärra-Rödbo, a member of the Göteborg social services media group: +46 (0)736-66 98 10, ingalill.balheden@karra.goteborg.se
- ▶ Lena Säljö, head of individual and family care at Biskopsgården, a member of the Göteborg social services media group: +46 (0)703 de-93 66 11, lena.saljo@biskopsgarden.goteborg.se
- ▶ Jens Lisell, adviser on communication and media issues at the City Administrative Office: +46 (0)31-368 03 54, 0707-61 11 30, jens.lisell@stadshuset.goteborg.se
- ▶ Sonny Mattisson, director of media and information at Tryggare och Mänskligare Göteborg: +46 (0)31-368 05 20, sonny.mattisson@stadshuset.goteborg.se

- ▶ With an operation divided among 21 city districts, responsibility for joint information issues can easily fall between two stools.
- ▶ When the media have reported something negatively, it can be difficult to project a new positive image when changes and improvements have actually been made.
- ▶ Social services confidentiality means that certain issues are more difficult to deal with in the media than in other municipal activities, where most things are in the public domain.
- ▶ The news media often require everything to happen very quickly, and it is not always possible to set aside your everyday work to answer questions.

LESSONS

- ▶ Your working group should not be too large; ensure that it is a manageable size.
- ▶ Do not close your eyes to difficulties, problems and dilemmas. The aim of conscious media work is to modulate and supplement the image – not to embellish it! Ultimately it is a question of credibility.
- ▶ Do not say "It's not possible!" It is clearly possible!
- ▶ A clear structure and professional support provides good results. Just as social services buys in legal and financial competence, they can also make use of journalistic expertise.

TIPS

- ▶ Start from a study which can comprise a factual basis for discussion, so that you have something to work on.
- ▶ Have an open climate of dialogue, accept everyone's creativity and allow everyone's views to be heard.
- ▶ The work must be voluntary and based on personal commitment.
- ▶ Document methods and models so that they are available for future reference.
- ▶ Be well-prepared in your contacts with the media, so that you feel secure and avoid unpleasant surprises. In principle you cannot prepare to much.
- ▶ Help each other out and collaborate so that you provide mutual support. And get help from outside if necessary.