

Final report

Able to Ride - experiences of equine related sports and leisure activities among persons with intellectual disabilities

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Part 1: Detailed summary

Projektet *Funka till häst - erfarenheter av hästrelaterade sport- och fritidsaktiviteter bland personer med intellektuella funktionsnedsättningar* påbörjades formellt i januari 2020.

Syftet med studien är att undersöka meningen med hästrelaterade aktiviteter i vardagslivet för personer (barn, unga och vuxna) med intellektuell/kognitiv funktionsnedsättning.

Frågeställningar: - Hur uppfattar/upplever deltagarna (såväl personer med intellektuell/kognitiv funktionsnedsättning som personal och närstående samt ev. hästar) aktiviteten de deltar i?

- Hur tar sig *självbestämmande* uttryck - hur upplevs och hur förhandlas självbestämmande mellan deltagarna i aktiviteten?

- Hur kan hästrelaterade aktiviteter, där personer med intellektuell/kognitiv funktionsnedsättning deltar beskrivas, kategoriseras och problematiseras i termer av delaktighet, självbestämmande och inklusion?

Studien grundar sig i ett intresse för hästars betydelse för personer med intellektuella/kognitiva funktionsnedsättningar och för vilka hästar är en viktig del i deras liv och vardag. Vi använder begreppet *hästrelaterade aktiviteter*, vilket vi valt för att fånga upp både aktiviteter som innebär fysisk kontakt med hästar, som ridning och skötsel av hästen, och aktiviteter som handlar om 'arbete' genererat av hästar och som inte involverar direktkontakt med hästen, men som bidrar till hästens omvårdnad och välfärd.

Att ha en *intellektuell funktionsnedsättning* innebär kognitiva svårighet av olika grad och begränsad förmåga att tolka och förstå vardagliga sammanhang. Diagnostiseringen är kopplad till IQ-nivå under 70 och utöver det krävs även nedsättning i vad som kallas *adaptiv* förmåga inom *praktisk, social och begreppsmässig domän* (APA, 2013). Svårigheter inom praktisk domän kan handla om exempelvis att förstå vad som är lämpliga kläder vid ett visst väder,

liksom tidsuppfattning. Inom den sociala domänen handlar det om svårigheter att tolka, förstå och fungera i vardagliga sociala sammanhang. Svårigheter att räkna, läsa och skriva handlar om rör begreppsmässig domän. Att ha en intellektuell funktionsnedsättning innebär att det kan vara svårt att planera framåt, liksom att förstå konsekvenser och bedöma olika handlingsalternativ (Söderman & Nordlund, 2019). Många med intellektuell/kognitiv funktionsnedsättning har rätt till olika former av stöd via *Lag om stöd och service till vissa funktionshindrade* (LSS, SFS 1993:387). Den vanligaste stödformen inom LSS är daglig verksamhet. De hästverksamheter som ingår i studien erbjuder båda daglig verksamhet och det blev därmed en viktig del av studien tillsammans med två tredagars "LSS-ridläger". Studien omfattar även andra ridgrupper för deltagare från målgruppen utöver lägren.

De metoder som använts för datainsamling är: etnografiskt fältarbete i form av deltagande observationer, semistrukturerade intervjuer och samtal, videospelningar samt metoden Photo Voice (Wang & Burris 1997), som vi på svenska kallar *Bildsamtal*. Fältanteckningar och transkriptioner från intervjuer och samtal har analyserats tematiskt med stöd och inspiration av framför allt Braun och Clarke (2006) och i analysen av videospelningarna har vi arbetat med utgångspunkt i ett multimodalt interaktionsanalytiskt perspektiv (Lundgren 2020). I analysarbetet läser vi materialet upprepade gånger för att upptäcka teman och mönster. Teman ges preliminära begrepp som initialt benämns med ord/namn som ligger nära data/texten. Begrepp, även preliminära, fungerar som "tankens ögon" för materialet. När ytterligare text sedan analyseras behöver ibland begreppen förändrats, delas upp eller slås samman. En annan möjlighet är att hämta från andras tidigare forskning, från etablerade teorier eller politiskt framskrivna mål och definitioner. I analysen tillämpar vi bland annat Goffmans (1959) dramaturgiska perspektiv och positioneringsteori (Harré & Van Langenhove 1991).

Studien påverkades av Covid 19-pandemin på olika sätt, dels när det gällde tillträde till de miljöer vi ville studera, dels när det gällde de övriga uppgifter som vi forskare var involverade i parallellt med studien. Vi ansökte om och blev beviljade utökad tid för projektet. Vi behövde också dra ner ambitionerna att söka ytterligare platser för studien och koncentrerade oss på att samla fördjupad empiri vid de verksamheter som vi hade påbörjat kontakten med. Studien har också påverkats av personliga omständigheter, då en av forskarna i projektet, Charlotte Lundgren, på grund av sjukskrivning inte kunde delta i projektet i den utsträckning som planerades inledningsvis. I samband med Fjärde nordiska forskningsseminariet om hästunderstödda insatser 2022 kom projektledaren i kontakt med Susanne Larsson, en forskare med kunskap om och intresse för såväl målgrupp som hästrelaterade aktiviteter. I samband med fortsättningsansökan 2022 fick vi möjlighet att utöka forskargruppen med Susanne Larsson. Projektet har sedan fortlöpt som planerat utifrån fortsättningsansökan.

Studien som helhet har sin utgångspunkt i ett samhällsvetenskapligt vardagslivsperspektiv på hästar och personer med intellektuell/kognitiv funktionsnedsättningar. Vi försöker alltså *inte* studera effekten av eller nyttan med hästunderstödda insatser. I stället tar vi avstamp i FN:s konvention om rättigheter för personer med funktionsnedsättning (SÖ, 2008:26). Att anlägga ett rättighets- och delaktighetsperspektiv positionerar forskningen inom ramen för en social modell när det gäller förståelsen av funktionshinder till skillnad från en mer medicinskt orienterad modell (Lindqvist, 2022). Enligt den sociala modellen uppstår funktionshinder när funktionsnedsättningen möter omgivningen och omgivningens krav. Fokus för insatser handlar snare om samhället, om inkludering, sociala och politiska åtgärder. Ur ett medicinskt perspektiv, vilket är ett traditionellt starkt synsätt, ligger betoningen mer på funktionsnedsättning som problem hos individen och som ska lösas med behandling och

rehabilitering (Lindqvist, 2022). I praktiken behövs båda perspektiven, men för att ge rätt förväntningar på vad vår forskning bidrar med så är positioneringen av studien inom den sociala modellen betydelsefull – därav betoningen i frågeställningarna på begreppen *delaktighet*, *självbestämmande* och *inklusion*.

Vad studien framför allt kan bidra till är en ökad förståelse för meningen med hästrelaterade aktiviteter för personer med intellektuell/kognitiv funktionsnedsättning. Resultaten visar att hästarna spelar en viktig roll i konstruktionen av meningsfullhet när det gäller daglig verksamhet i verksamheter med hästar som genomförs inom ramen för LSS (SFS 1993:387). Hästarnas behov av omvårdnad fungerar både som imperativ för aktivitet och stimulerar engagemang, vilka är betydelsefulla aspekter för delaktighet och inklusion. Daglig verksamhet är inte i formell mening arbete, men konstrueras i verksamheterna som 'riktigt' och värdefullt arbete – deltagarna får möjlighet att 'göra skillnad' för levande varelser som är beroende av människans omvårdnad. I den delen av studien som bygger på bildsamtal ser vi hur deltagarna genom aktiviteterna ges möjlighet att positionera sig (Harré & Van Langenhove 1991) som något annat än personer med funktionsnedsättning – individen blir någon som 'vill och får vara i stallet och/eller rida', någon som 'kan och klarar av', någon som 'hör till och räknas med' och som får 'vara en som hjälper andra' – i det sistnämnda inkluderas även hästarna i begreppet *andra*.

Ett viktigt resultat är att även om hästarna är betydelsefulla, så är förekomsten av hästar inte en tillräcklig förutsättning för att stallmiljön/ridningen ska kunna konstrueras som meningsfull och inkluderande. Med utgångspunkt i Goffmans (1959) dramaturgiska perspektiv visar studien på betydelsen av den sociala miljön, vilket inkluderar den faktiska, vardagliga interaktionen mellan deltagare, personal, hästar och andra närvarande. De sociala interaktionerna i stallmiljön har potential att fungera stöttande och inkluderande för målgruppen, samtidigt som det finns en skörhet i interaktionerna och en utsatthet där upplevelsen av inkludering snabbt kan förändras till sin motsats. Det krävs därmed kompetens och medvetenhet hos den personal som arbetar med och tillsammans med målgruppen för att skapa en inkluderande och stöttande social miljö, både i stallet och vid ridning.

Resultaten av studien kan förhoppningsvis tjäna både som en utmaning och inspiration för hästnäringen och ridsporten att fortsätta sitt arbete med att inkludera personer med intellektuella/kognitiva funktionsnedsättningar. Målgruppen bör precis som andra ha rätt att ta del av givande och utvecklande aktiviteter som involverar hästar – något som dessutom har potential att ge känsla av sammanhang och värdefulla sociala relationer. Vi vill lyfta fram att ridsporten och hästnäringen har en uppgift att fylla när det handlar om att hävda rättigheter om delaktighet och jämlikhet för personer med olika typer av funktionsnedsättningar.

Vi ser positivt på framtida samarbete med representanter från ridsporten – om så önskas – kring att utveckla bland annat stödmaterial i form av självstudieguider och underlag för gruppdiskussioner att användas inför exempelvis organisering och uppstart av ridläger för målgruppen.

Part 2: Main report (max. 10 pages)

Introduction

The research project *Able to Ride - experiences of equine related sports and leisure activities among persons with intellectual disabilities* started in 2020. Unfortunately, the project was delayed due to the Covid pandemic, and due to personal circumstances and sickness absence within the research group. To compensate for the absence of Charlotte Lundgren, co-applicant, we applied for permission to involve another researcher in the project, PhD Susanne Larsson with experience from both equine assisted interventions and disability studies.

The background of the study is based in the project leader's keen interest in the lives of persons with intellectual or cognitive disabilities (Llewellyn & Gustavsson, 2010; Gustavsson & Starke, 2017) and in how the intentions of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, adopted in 2006 and ratified by Sweden in 2007) are realised in the everyday life of the target group. Especially article 30 (CRPD), which states that persons with disabilities have equal rights to participate in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sports lead us to focus on the equestrian society and -industry.

Sweden has one of the densest horse populations in Europe (Swedish Board of Agriculture 2022). In Sweden horses are important parts of the lives of many children, especially girls, as well as young and adults regardless of physical, sensory, or intellectual and cognitive abilities. According to figures from the Swedish Equestrian Federation (2021a) about one million people in are in some way engaged in activities within the realm of the equine industry. The Swedish equestrian society have a comparatively long tradition of including persons with disabilities in sports and leisure activities. Approximately 4000 persons with disabilities are involved in horse related activities through the federation, of which the largest group is persons with intellectual or cognitive disabilities. Activities aimed for persons with disabilities are offered at about half of all the riding schools in Sweden (Swedish Equestrian Federation 2021b).

During the last decades there has been an increasing interest in the role of the horse for human health (Håkansson et al. 2021; Silfverberg & Lerner 2020) and within the research field of interventions and therapy using horses (and/or other animals) much effort has been put into developing a range of taxonomies and corresponding concepts (IAHAIO 2018). Categorization and terminology have been something of a challenge, and an important part in the struggle for recognition for the organisation, OHI (www.ohi.nu), which in Sweden assembles practitioners using therapeutic, learning and other horse assisted interventions.

Thus, for many persons with intellectual/cognitive disabilities horses are an important part of their lives – as leisure or sport, as therapy or intervention or in the context of daily activities, which is one of the supports entitled by the *Swedish Act Concerning Support and Services for Certain Functional Impairments* (LSS Act, SFS 1993:387).

During the work with this study, and due to the exploratory approach, which is closely connected to ethnographic methodology (Van Maanen 2011) and to the study of naturally occurring situations and interactions, the aim of the study has been broadened and now encompass more than riding and leisure activities. This is also why we use the umbrella term *horse related activities* to cover all kinds of social activities related to, or including, horses – ranging from body-to-body interactions with horses (such as riding and grooming), to

The project has been financed by:

activities related to everyday sustenance such as mucking out stables, providing food and water, and other more general farm work.

Aim and research questions: The aim of this study is to investigate the meaning of horse related activities in the lives of persons (children, young and adults) with intellectual/cognitive disabilities. We are foremost interested in the horse related activity per se, and we aim to describe, analyse and problematise the complex interactions between the participants, including horses, involved in the activities, but we also have an interest in the wider meaning of participating in horse related activities in the lives of persons with ID.

Participation, self-determination and inclusion are concepts guiding the inquiry.

Based on this aim, the following three research questions have been defined:

1. How do the participants (persons with intellectual/cognitive disabilities, instructors, aides, and horses) perceive the horse related activities in which they engage?
2. How is self-determination expressed, perceived, and negotiated between the participants in the activities?
3. How can horse related activities, in which persons with intellectual/cognitive disabilities engage, be described, categorised and problematised in terms of participation, self-determination and inclusion?

By positioning the experiences of the persons with intellectual/cognitive disabilities at the core of the project and providing an opportunity to make their voices heard, we hope to make a substantial contribution to the knowledge of how horse related activities can be understood from an inclusive perspective.

Material and methods

To investigate the meaning of horse related activities in the life of persons with intellectual/cognitive disabilities is a methodological challenge. To meet this challenge and to describe, analyse and problematise the complex interactions between the participants, including horses, we have triangulated different methods for data collection as well as methods for analysis. As the activities are complex, the data gathering methods had to be flexible enough to grasp various aspects of the studied activities as well as be adaptable to the differing cognitive and communicative abilities of the participants. We found the ethnographic approach with participating observations (Van Maanen 2011) to be useful, but we have also used semi-structured interviews and video recordings. Additionally, we have used the specific method of Photo Voice (Wang & Burris 1997) to “give voice” to the participants with intellectual/cognitive disabilities in order to foreground their experiences of the studied activities.

Locations for the study

The entire study was conducted at two establishments, which were strategically selected based on their reputation for being highly competent around both disability and riding. The reason for this choice is an ambition to focus on good examples, trying to move beyond the power asymmetries, inaccessibility, and lack of inclusion that are too often the findings of studies on interactions between persons with and without disabilities, especially those with intellectual/cognitive disabilities (Egard, Hansson & Wästerfors 2022).

- **Little Farm** is a small farmyard situated within walking distance from a small town of just above 10 000 inhabitants. Little farm provides offerings to children with and without disability in form of inclusive after school activities. Among other services it also provides daily activities in accordance with the *Swedish Act Concerning Support and Services for Certain Functional Impairments* (LSS Act, SFS 1993:387). The farm keeps a small number of

horses, but other farm animals, such as rabbits, hens, ducks, goats, and sheep are also an essential part of the activities offered. The establishment has existed for many years now and has developed from only providing after-school activities into what it is today. The establishment offer riding both at the farm and in collaboration with a nearby riding school.

- **Big Riding Centre** is a traditional Swedish “riding school” just outside a town of more than 100 000 citizens. The establishment keeps more than 40 horses, and offers riding lessons, individually or in groups, as its main function. In common with about half of all the riding schools in Sweden, it offers riding, individually or in adapted groups, for persons with different kinds of disabilities (the majority with intellectual/cognitive disabilities). The riding centre also provides daily activities in accordance with the Swedish LSS Act. The history of Big Riding Centre is not as long as Little Farm’s. Offering services to persons with disabilities, among others, was a requirement set by the municipality right from the planning stage of the establishment. Consequently, accessibility issues were considered when the stables were built, and the modern facilities that became the result are considered accessible for persons with various kinds of impairments.

Studying daily activities involving or related to horses

We have followed participants with intellectual/cognitive disabilities entitled to daily activities in accordance with the LSS Act (SFS 1993:387) as well as related staff in both settings. At Big Riding Centre several employees work exclusively with the target group, but the participants in the LSS activities also meet other members of the staff that are not responsible for or connected to the target group.

For those not familiar with *The Swedish Act Concerning Support and Services for Certain Functional Impairments* (LSS Act, SFS 1993:387) we would like to point out that the legislation provided a significant shift in support of persons with intellectual disability when it was introduced in the early 1990’s (Ineland, Molin & Sauer 2019). Persons with intellectual disability together with persons with autism form the largest group granted support by the LSS-Act (SFS 1993:387). The most common support granted by this Act is *daily activity* (The National Board of Health and Welfare 2024). The requirement is that one is in working age but not regularly employed or in education (1§ SFS 1993:387). There is a huge variety of daily activities offered either by the municipalities or by other approved providers. The intention in the legislation is that the offered activities are regarded as meaningful and adapted to the persons specific conditions and circumstances. Nature-based daily activities have previously been studied by Niemi (2010) and by Höglund (2020). In Results and discussion, we will elaborate on how the presence of horses enhances the experience of meaning in daily activities.

The main method of data collection in relation to daily activities has been participating observations, rendering field notes to analyse, but also semi-structured interviews with both participants and staff. Interviews have been transcribed.

Riding sessions and camps – riding and grooming

In the summer of 2021, Big Riding Centre hosted two riding camps, each lasting three days. The camps were aimed at youth and adults granted support by the LSS Act (SFS 1993:387), persons with intellectual/cognitive disabilities, some also in combination with physical impairments. The camp days included two riding sessions each day, as well as preparing the horse (grooming and saddling) for the riding and taking care of the horse afterwards. Except for the helpers, this might sound very much like any other riding camp. The camps were much

appreciated but provided interesting challenges for instructors as well as helpers and accompanying next of kin or personal assistants. The helpers were either connected to Big Riding Centre, with knowledge and experience of horses – or were connected to the municipality with more knowledge and experience on disability. Few of the helpers had knowledge on and experience of both disability and horses.

During the six camp days we documented the interaction between participants, horses, helpers, instructors and others, in the stable and the arena as well as during trail riding and other activities using handheld video cameras. The video recordings thus fill the double function of digital field notes and audiovisual material for the interactional analysis.

Apart from the camps, there have been data gathered from riding sessions for the target group at Big Riding Centre. And also, at the weekly *Riding group* at Little Farm. Every Friday there was a group of persons with intellectual/cognitive disabilities (someone with additional physical impairment) who went to a nearby riding school for a riding session lead by the manager of Little Farm. These sessions (including taking care of the horses before and after), were documented by field notes and on several occasions video recorded.

Giving voice to experiences – Photo Voice

The part of the study inspired by Photo Voice (Wang & Burris 1997) seeks to “enable people to record and reflect their communities’ strengths and concerns” (ibid. p 369). As the name of the method implies, it results in material in the form of the photos/pictures but also the conversations around the pictures which the individual participant chooses to talk about. Pictures have the potential to enable and facilitate conversations in studies aimed at exploring the meaning making from an inside perspective (Wernesjö, Gustavsson & Dahlstedt 2020). Photo Voice is a flexible method that can be adjusted to different target groups. We reconned that pictures could be the common ground where researcher and participant could meet on more equal terms and give voice to the lived experience of persons with intellectual/cognitive disabilities (Williamson, Heumen & Schwartz 2020). The participants either took their own pictures or got help from staff or next of kin to take pictures of things or situations in the stable or connected to the horses. This method is in principle inherently inclusive with a high level of self-determination. In relation to this particular target group there is much to reflect on concerning issues of inclusion (Larsson & Gustavsson work in progress). The conversations around the chosen pictures were recorded and transcribed.

Data analysis

As described above there have been different kinds of data gathered. Fieldnotes and transcriptions of interviews have been read and re-read repeatedly. The data has been categorised as well as thematically sorted with inspiration from Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault (2016) and Braun and Clark (2006). In a thematic analysis the researchers are considered to be active participants and with their previous experiences work together with the material to add and construct meaning rather than just reveal themes (Braun & Clarke 2012). Working with themes in the analysis also means branching against theory and reflecting on deviant cases. Video recordings have been analysed from a multimodal interaction perspective (Lundgren 2020).

Ethical considerations

The study has received ethical approval from the Swedish Ethical Review Authority (Dnr: 2020-05955) and follows established ethical guidelines (Swedish Research council 2017). Working with participants with intellectual/cognitive disabilities demands for additional

ethical considerations. Information about the study has been given on several occasions and in different forms, both verbally and written in easy-to-read Swedish. Before entering the field, the management and staff at the establishments were informed about the study. The involvement of management and staff was crucial for the process of giving information to the participants and retaining consent. Staff supported the research project in explaining the purpose of study to the participants with intellectual disabilities. Support from staff has been valuable considering their knowledge of the different participants' special needs in communication and need for adapted information.

Results and discussion

In this section we present and discuss findings from the project as a whole, seeking to expand the meaning of horses in the lives of persons with intellectual/cognitive disabilities.

Horses enhance the meaningfulness of daily activities

The findings from the part of the study focusing on the daily activities (support in accordance with the LSS Act, 1993:387) at the two establishments have given us material for reflection and new insights to the meaning of horses in the lives of persons with intellectual/cognitive disabilities. Even if the horses were not always present, they played an important part in framing the activities as a “proper job” and *meaningful work* (Gustavsson & Lundgren 2026). In this article we discuss how participation and inclusion for persons with intellectual/cognitive disabilities can be constructed, negotiated, and experienced during daily activities in the social context of horse-related activities. Participation and inclusion are core values of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as well as the Swedish LSS Act, which also emphasise that the offered activities should be regarded as meaningful. Formally, the daily activities granted by the LSS legislation (SFS 1993:387) are not equivalent to paid labour. But the daily activities at Little Farm and Big Riding Centre, are framed as work. By applying Goffman's (1959) *dramaturgical perspective* and Hochschild's (2012) development of it into socio-emotional work, we highlight how inclusion can be successfully *staged*, but also how carefully constructed scenes of inclusion can be threatened or disrupted. The concepts of “staging” for inclusion and “staging” for competence might be somewhat provocative to someone who does not understand how the metaphor of the theatre (Goffman 1959) can be deployed as a theoretical lens. We thus wish to stress that the daily activities and the work carried out by the participants are real and make a real difference to both people and horses. The emphasis on *real work* and the fact that the work makes a *real* difference to the horses, as well as to other members of staff, is at the core of the successful staging. What is important is the meaning-making in the daily activities and the socio-emotional practices involved in setting a scene, which will be continuously rearranged and micro-monitored.

Framing of the work carried out by the participants *as vital for the wellbeing of the horses* is essential for the staging of inclusion, thus accentuating the meaningfulness of the daily activities, in line with the intentions of the LSS Act. Another prerequisite for the staging of inclusion for persons with varied abilities in the stable is that they *work side by side* with coaches and other staff. This opens the possibility for everyone, regardless of level of ability, to contribute at their own pace and capability. If the person with disabilities cannot achieve an entire task on their own, the staff can support them by preparing or finishing the work in collaboration. Gustavsson (2001) writes about being capable with support from others. Working side by side brings the opportunity to provide support in an unintrusive manner. It is not important for the work to be done in the most efficient way. For each participant, there is

work to be done and time to be spent – and the staff will adjust the level of activity to match the time that needs to be filled with activity.

This staging of inclusion is what allows the participants to experience doing real meaningful work and making a difference, as opposed to being a client for whom a daily activity is organised. The tasks are adapted to the individuals taking part and their individual capabilities, and perhaps the most important thing is to enhance the feeling of being needed and belonging to the community of the stable. The manager of Little Farm puts this eloquently: ‘Everyone has a right to be needed’. We believe that this quotation captures the idea of setting the scene for the daily activities and the role performed by staff at both establishments. The horses play an important role in this scene due to their dependence on human care. Filling the time with tasks that seem to be meaningful provides the opportunity to enhance the feeling of being capable and contributing something of value.

Lessons from riding camps and -sessions

From the data on the “LSS riding camps” and other riding sessions there has been one publication focusing on reflections on the specific arrangements of a riding camp for persons with intellectual/cognitive disabilities eventually combined with additional physical impairments (Gustavsson & Lundgren 2024). Yet there are work going on analysing data and writing an article focusing on the social interactions during riding (Lundgren & Gustavsson work in progress).

The empirical data from the riding camps has also been used for writing a chapter on social rights for persons with intellectual disabilities emphasising leisure time activities (Gustavsson & Alfredsson Ågren 2023). This chapter is a bit on the side from the research project, but we still wish to mention it because it will be read by students in social work, occupational therapy and other professions working with the target group and hence will spread information about the project.

Regarding the riding camp we wish to point out the value of the camp for the participants. For several of the participants this camp is no doubt the most valued days of the summer, having your ‘own’ horse to care for and ride during these days. The municipality engaged in arranging these camps aimed for persons with support from the LSS Act. This is totally in line with what is emphasised in the Convention on the Rights for Persons with Disabilities (UN 2006), especially article 30. The responsibility for the municipality to make culture and leisure time activities known and accessible to persons granted support from the LSS Act.

The findings from the riding camps are, in our interpretation, arguments for a disability rights perspective. To be able to spend time in a stable and to be around horses does not have to be framed as an intervention, rehabilitation or training, something that often is the case for persons with intellectual/cognitive disabilities (compare with Armila et al. 2018). Persons with disabilities have the right to take part in fulfilling activities involving horses –sense of coherence and valuable social relationships are aspects which hopefully follow – and the equine society and the industry are important actors in the fulfilment of inclusive and accessible environments.

The riding camps were much appreciated, still there are lessons to be learned and possible developments to be made in the future. First of all, there need to be an awareness of the vast variations of abilities and functionality within the ‘LSS-group’ leading to a demand for a

sufficient amount of ‘helpers’/support, preferably with a basic knowledge on both horses and disability. We also want to point to the benefits of:

- Taking a standpoint in *universal design* (UD). The idea behind UD is useful for everyone and crucial for some (Frolli et al. 2020). There are specific requires which need to be handled with specially designed solutions but sometimes the step between ‘ordinary’ and ‘adjusted for accessibility’ does not have to be immense.
- Reinforcing information with *pictures*. This is commonly used in some areas, but this could be developed further and more consciously included in conversations and preparations before introducing activities.
- Working towards a higher level of knowledge for ‘helpers’ about horses and/or disability depending on the background of the individual.

To develop materials for self-study or group discussions to be used before setting up a riding camp for young and/or adults with disabilities could be a further task for the researchers from this research project in collaboration with the representatives from the Swedish Equestrian Federation.

Photo Voice – lived experiences from the stables

One ambition with the research project was to position the experiences of the persons with intellectual/cognitive disabilities at the core of the project and provide opportunity to make their voices heard. The third researcher, Susanne Larsson (who joined the project to compensate for the partial absence of Charlotte Lundgren), has with some adaptations conducted Photo Voice (Wang & Burris 1997) together with participants from both establishments. The results will be presented in Larsson and Gustavsson (a manuscript which has once been submitted, but is now a work in progress aimed for *Socialvetenskaplig tidskrift*). The working title is “You grow a little as a person”, which is a quote from one of the participants and points to the value of these activities for the individual. From previous research and mapping of living conditions (National Board of Health and Welfare 2022; Melbøe & Ytterhus 2017; Tideman & Strandberg 2018) we know that persons with intellectual/cognitive disabilities often live their lives under conditioned circumstances although the policy documents like the CRPD (UN 2006) and the Swedish LSS Act (1993:387) proclaim inclusion and self-determination.

The analysis of the conversations based on pictures, sometimes complemented by observational data, resulted in four themes: *the desire to be in the stable* (and/or to ride), *being able and coping*, *belonging and be counted for* and last *to be someone who can help others* (including horses). These themes comprise the meaning of horse related activities for the participants with intellectual/cognitive disabilities at the two establishments of the study.

Conclusions

The conclusions we draw on the Able to Ride research project are:

- Horse related activities have potential for enhancing participation and inclusion for persons with intellectual and/or cognitive disabilities. By using the concept of horse related activities, we wish to widen the understanding of what the equine society and industry can offer persons with disability. A prerequisite for this is to embrace a disability rights perspective on inclusion which we identify as a more compelling argument than the traditional search for (medically oriented) evidence as the foundation for why persons with disabilities should take part in activities involving horses.

- The horses play an important role in making daily activities at establishments offering support in accordance with the LSS legislation (SFS 1993:387) meaningful. Activities which are related to the care of the horse function as imperatives for action and engagement because the horse need human care to survive and thrive. This means that the work is valued, and the individual participant's contribution is important – and considered making a real difference. In all the different forms we studied horse related activities they seem to be much appreciated by the participants in the study and have intrinsic value for the individuals.
- The horses per se, is not enough to make horse related activities an inclusive practice. We have applied the theoretical lens of Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical perspective on daily activities (LSS). This highlights both the potential of a supportive and including social environment as well as the fragile aspects of the social interaction in question. To offer inclusive horse related activities to persons with intellectual/cognitive disabilities the social environment is crucial and demands conscious staff with knowledge on how to create a supportive social environment for the participants.
- The horses play an important role due to their dependence on human care, thus adding another layer in the understanding of disability and animality (Jenkins et al. 2020).

Relevance for the practical horse sector incl. recommendations

We hope the publications from the Able to Ride research project will provide useful knowledge on persons with intellectual/cognitive disabilities in different kind of horse related activities and inspiration on how offers from the Swedish equine society to persons with intellectual/cognitive disabilities may be improved.

Establishments, who intend to develop riding camps to better match the wide variety of the target group, may find food for thoughts. First on the benefits of working with universal design – including the use of pictures in relation to information. But also, on how to work with preparing helpers (read more in Gustavsson & Lungren 2024). We would appreciate a future collaboration with representatives from the horse sector to develop self-study guides and material for group discussions on how to encounter persons with intellectual disabilities and to meet the expectations from both participants and next of kin when arranging riding camps for persons with intellectual/cognitive disabilities.

The study confirms the value for individuals with intellectual/cognitive disabilities who take part in different kind of horse related activities and will hopefully serve as inspiration to businesses who want to develop such offers. The conformation of value can be used as an argument to policy and decision-making bodies. Recognising the value of work generated by horses as a possibility for example daily activities in accordance with the LSS Act (SFS 1993:387) might be inspiration for others within the equine industry to develop combinations of social enterprises. Qualified staff and permits are required to meet such ambitions.

The publications may hopefully also bring input to the education provided by the Swedish Equestrian Association thus contributing to the competence amongst staff at the many different facilities offering horse related activities.

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Part 3: Result dissemination

State all result dissemination from the financed project into the appropriate section, including information as indicated in each section. Additional rows can be added to the table.

Scientific publications, published	<i>Author(s), year, title, journal, Vol, No, pp., doi-link</i>
	Gustavsson, Marie & Lundgren Charlotte (2026). "Everyone Has a Right to Be Needed": Inclusion and Participation in Horse-Related Activities for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities." <i>Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research</i> 28(1): 187–199. DOI: https://doi.org/10.16993/sjdr.1337
	Gustavsson, Marie & Alfredsson Ågren, Kristin (2023). Intellektuell funktionsnedsättning och rätt till fritid. I: Dahlstedt, M., Lundberg, A. & Michailakis, D. (red.) <i>De sociala rättigheternas politik</i> . Gleerups.
Gustavsson, Marie & Lundgren, Charlotte (2024). Häst och människa tillsammans – lärande under aktivitet riktad till personer med intellektuell funktionsnedsättning. I: Henrik Lerner, Henrika Jormfeldt & Gunilla Silfverberg (red.) <i>Häst och lärande - ett område under utveckling: Bidrag från fjärde nordiska forskningsseminariet om hästunderstödda insatser 16-17 september 2022</i> . Marie Cederschiöld Högskola Arbetsrapportserie Nr 113: 41-58.	
Scientific publications, submitted	<i>Author(s), title</i>
	Gustavsson, Marie & Larsson, Susanne "Bildsamtal för delaktighet i forskning: Erfarenheter från forskning med personer med intellektuell eller kognitiv funktionsnedsättning" (antologi, Linköpings universitet)
Scientific publications, manuscript	<i>Author(s), title</i>
	Larsson, Susanne & Gustavsson, Marie. "Man växer lite som person": Personer med intellektuell eller kognitiv funktionsnedsättning och hästrelaterade aktiviteter".
Conference publications/presentations	<i>Author(s), year, title, conference name, location and date, (link if applicable)</i>
	Gustavsson, Marie & Lundgren, Charlotte (2021), <i>Able to Ride – a study on horses, inclusion and persons with cognitive/intellectual disabilities</i> . Equine Cultures in Transition, 22-24 June 2021, Sweden, online conference.
	Gustavsson, Marie & Lundgren, Charlotte (2022). <i>Häst och människa tillsammans – lärande under aktivitet riktad till personer med intellektuell funktionsnedsättning</i> . Fjärde nordiska forskningsseminariet om hästunderstödda insatser 16-17 september 2022, Stall Kungsgården, Drottningholm.
	Gustavsson, Marie (2022). <i>Horses and farm-based daily activities – staging for inclusion?</i> , Nationella nätverket, SNHF, tvådagarsseminarium 19-20 maj 2022 med fokus på svensk funktionshinderforskning. Malmö Universitet.
	Larsson, Susanne (2023) <i>Bildsamtal om betydelsen av hästrelaterade aktiviteter/sysselsättning för personer med intellektuell funktionsnedsättning</i> . CKVO Konferens: Jämlik hälsa i en osäker

	<p>värld, 11-12 maj 2023, Stockholms universitet. (CKVO, Centrum för kompetensutveckling inom vård och omsorg).</p> <p>Gustavsson, Marie & Lundgren, Charlotte (2023). <i>Farm-based daily activities and horses – staging for inclusion</i>. The 16th Nordic Network on Disability Research Conference, 10-12 May 2023, Reykjavik, Iceland.</p> <p>Larsson, Susanne (2023) ”Jag är jätligt stolt... det är det bästa som finns”: <i>Personer med IF eller kognitiv funktionsnedsättning och hästrelaterade aktiviteter</i>. NaPSa 2024: 2024 års nationella paperkonferens i socialt arbete, 20–21 mars 2024, Mittuniversitetet Campus Östersund.</p> <p>Gustavsson, Marie & Larsson, Susanne. (2024) <i>Participation and inclusion for persons with intellectual disabilities in horse related activities</i>. The 5th Nordic conference in Equine assisted services 2024: “Equine-assisted interventions for sustainable health, performance and participation.”, 12–13 September 2024, Halmstad University.</p>
Other publications, media etc.	<p><i>Title, year/date, place of publication (link if applicable)</i></p> <p>OHI Nytt, Nummer 4, 2022. (Medlemsblad för Organisationen för Hästunderstödda insatser). Marie Gustavsson & Charlotte Lundgren. Rättighetsperspektiv eller evidens för att öka tillgängligheten till HUI.</p> <p>Gilla häst-podden: Kvartsamtal med Funka-till-häst-forskaren Marie Gustavsson - del 5. (September 2022) https://poddtoppen.se/podcast/1548196313/gilla-hast-podden/kvartsamtal-med-funka-till-hast-forskaren-marie-gustavsson-del-5</p>
Oral communication, to horse sector, students etc.	<p><i>Title, year/date, group presented to (link if applicable)</i></p> <p>Able to Ride, Seminar for reference group and stakeholders, 20 April 2022. Stall Kungsgården, Drottningholm.</p> <p>Able to Ride, Seminar for reference group and stakeholders, 4 October 2023. Smedstad Ridsportcenter, Linköping.</p> <p>Oral presentation of results with focus on Photo Voice. For participants with ID who took part in the study. 6 December 2023.</p>
Student theses	<p><i>Author/Student, co-authors/supervisors, year, title, type of thesis (doi/link if applicable)</i></p>
Other	