

Guidelines for equal rights on **UMO.se**



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a youth friendly national clinic on the web **UMO**

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Background

The development of a web-based youth clinic is part of the government's bid to work towards gender equality and also part of the national IT strategy. From the mission statement:

"The youth clinic should include quality assured texts about, first and foremost, sexual and reproductive health, relationships, gender roles, physical development, stress, mental health, lifestyle related subjects as well as men's violence towards women including honour-related violence and oppression, and violence in same-sex relationships (...).

The overall aim with the service is to strengthen and support young women's and men's identity development and the possibility to develop healthy relationships with others, improve young women's and men's health through increased knowledge and offer reliable and readily accessible information in areas that can be considered sensitive or difficult to broach in regular contacts with the healthcare. All editorial material shall be embodied by a clear gender equality perspective (...). A youth panel shall be created as a reference group to the project." (IJ2007/2125/UNG)

UMO wants to contribute to equal opportunities for all young people between the ages of 13–25. Our aim is that all work is characterised by awareness of excluding structures and norms when it comes to gender, gender transgressive identity and expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief system, functional impairment, sexuality and age. We will be using an anti-oppressive or "norm-critical" perspective. This document includes guidelines for the perspective, as well as definitions of core concepts.

UMO's definition of health

UMO's purpose is to promote young people's health and strengthen young women and men in their identity development. This means that UMO offers information, support and advice to young people between the ages of 13–25 in questions relating to health, sex and relationships. The aim is to strengthen young people in their capability of making informed and constructive decisions in relation to themselves and their lives. UMO should also offer opportunities for identification and reflection.

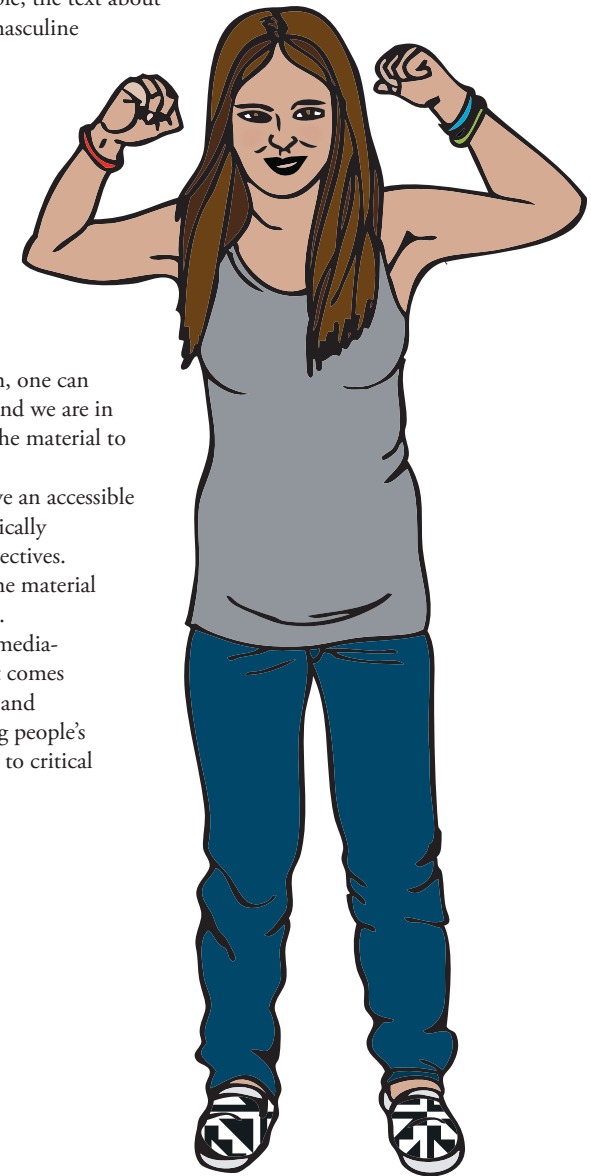
UMO's view on health is embodied by a holistic perspective where human beings are seen as part of their context. Our view includes both physical, mental, cultural, historical, social and economical perspectives. We consider that, apart from that, one needs to see health from a power perspective, both on a structural and individual level. The concept of empowerment is central to our work.

It is our belief that the degree of empowerment, power over our own lives, affects our health. It is our ambition that all material on the site will incorporate empowerment and that the user will feel strengthened by his/her encounter with UMO. Our norm-critical perspective is a further part in our ambition to strengthen young people and thereby contribute to a positive development to their health. Through avoiding to take things for granted when it comes to those issues/persons described, we aim to minimise the risk that people will feel subordinate, made invisible or described as a deviant or a problem. We also include the individual's self-esteem and his or her feeling of purposefulness and cohesion in his/her life, in the concept of health.

How is this made visible on the site?

UMO's integrated health perspective is visible in many ways. Our ambition to contribute to increased knowledge, understanding and agency within all young people, is shown through, for example, how we give:

- Impartial information. We offer quality assured, up-dated and reliable facts about diverse matters concerning sex, health and relationships.
- The way the text and pictures address the users. We use an easy language, accessible to as many as possible, and an inclusive tone, where we question norms and avoid reproducing them, as well as emphasise differences in prerequisites where relevant.
- Information about rights and legislation relevant to the target group. Always refer to other sources of help and support if we see the need.
- We describe structural differences in society where relevant, issues relating to equal rights and gender equality. For example, the text about ideas concerning what is masculine and feminine, and the text about gender equality. Gender equality shall embody all our material, where our ambition is equal rights.
- Our purpose is that the material is easily accessible and can be accessed in many ways. For example, there is a text-to-speech function, one can adjust the size of the text and we are in the process of translating the material to other languages.
- The texts are short and have an accessible language, they are also critically reviewed from many perspectives. The users can also access the material through pictures and films.
- We encourage and raise a media-critical perspective when it comes to issues relating to health and bodies, to encourage young people's own reflections and ability to critical thinking.



Gender equality and equal rights

Gender equality means that women and men have the same opportunities, rights and obligations within life's all arenas. For example when it comes to power and influence, financial independence, entrepreneurship, work, work conditions, education and development, responsibility for home and children, and non-exposure to honour-related violence. Part of working for gender equality is to acknowledge power structures and unequal relationships, and try to promote change.

Equal rights is about all human beings equal value. We follow Regeringsformen (the Swedish Constitution), which states that "the public domain shall work against discrimination of people on the basis of sex, colour of skin, nationality or ethnicity, linguistic or religious belonging, functional impairment, sexual orientation, age or other circumstances regarding the individual as a person."

Empowerment

Another perspective we use is empowerment. It is a concept that also assumes inequality and that lack of or access to power influences the individual's agency, subjectively as well as objectively.

Young people as a group has, just by their age, already limited options of participating in the development of society and this might lead to young people not trusting adults and feeling dejected when it comes to the possibility of influencing their own life situations and that of the society.

Empowerment focuses on developing methods and creating possibilities for young people to participate and act within areas relevant to them. In an empowerment process, the aim is that young people "further their feeling of ownership over their lives", and also to participate in social change. What we define as parts of an empowerment process are, for example, increased self-esteem, raised awareness of power structures, increased belief in one's own possibility of having an influence in regards to specific matters /social change and actually act to bring about change.

Norm-critical perspective

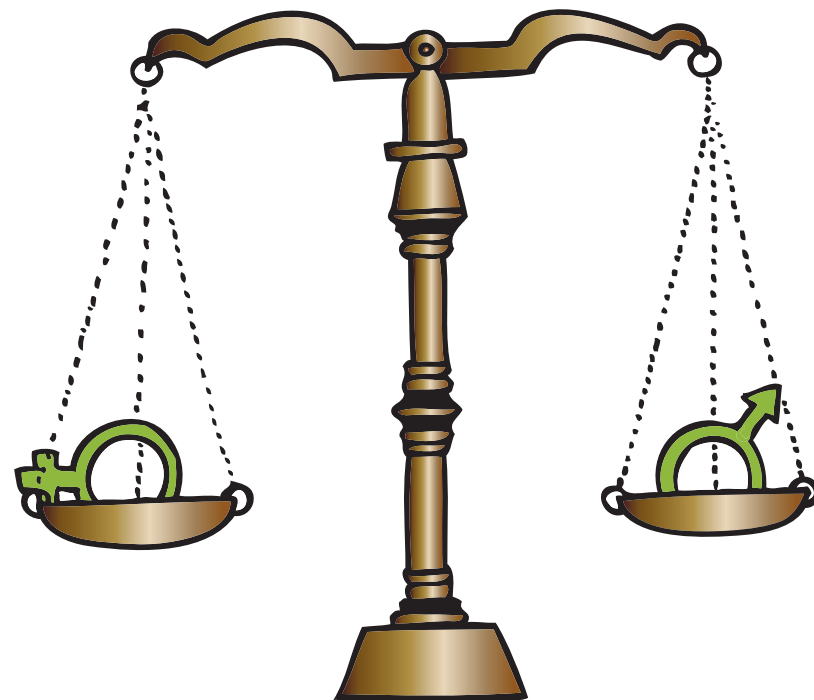
The work with a norm-critical perspective starts with the seven grounds for discrimination recognised by the Swedish law:

- ▶ sex
- ▶ transgressive sexual identity or expression
- ▶ ethnicity
- ▶ religion or other belief system
- ▶ functional impairment
- ▶ sexuality
- ▶ age

The perspective means to illuminate and question norms taken for granted, norms that affect individuals' access to power at different levels. Power is complex and something that is created by groups or individuals in relation to existing power structures – with differing results depending on the social context and the point of intersection between different positions. Resistance against existing power relationships can be raised, and the effect depends on other positions such as, for example, class or level of education. For example, a group of boys can have less power than a group of girls in one specific context (for example in the classroom), at the same time as the same group of girls can have a subordinate position to the boys in a different context (for example during break time or PE-class).

To belong to one or several norms, the "common" and unquestioned, means advantages, which are only highlighted when someone or something breaks the norm. For example, a white, heterosexual woman without functional impairment usually, but not always, finds it easier to make her voice heard than a homosexual woman from a non-Swedish background. The latter will in several situations be defined by her belonging to certain categories and have limited possibility to define herself and influence the agenda in different environments.

Norm-critical work is to illuminate and question norms, and discuss and problemize what the advantages are of belonging to them. It starts by critically revising one's own position and attitudes. For example, why do I think the way I do in certain questions, or if I ever have had to defend my belief system – or worry about other people's negative reactions to it. Or whether one can access public space, with public transport and into public buildings, and if one has access to public information through language and the way it is presented.



Important goals to UMO.se

- ▶ Increase young men's and women's knowledge of their rights and obligations, gender equality and equal rights.
- ▶ Increase availability of information (and access to advise) to young people about sexual and reproductive health, respectful relationships, self-esteem, one's own body, drugs etc.
- ▶ General availability, through a clear and easy language as well as an availability adjustment.
- ▶ Equal and quality assured information.
- ▶ An inclusive perspective; all young people are offered a point of reference and recognition.
- ▶ Broad representation within the material.
- ▶ Content that problemize norms and inequality.
- ▶ An empowerment perspective.
- ▶ The target group to be involved in the development of the material.
- ▶ Collaboration with and openness towards youth clinics and others that work with the same topics as UMO.
- ▶ In time, offer information in a wider range of languages.

Integrated norm-critical perspective

The awareness of norms should not just be shown in external material (the website UMO.se), but be part of the over-all work. We have defined five areas that should be reviewed from a norm-critical perspective:

Content

Texts, pictures, films, animations, answers to target group questions etc.

Example of norm-critical rewordings:

1. There have been instances where users of steroids have hit friends, or girlfriends or innocent passers-by without reason.
 - There have been instances where users of steroids have hit friends, boyfriends or girlfriends or innocent passers-by without reason. (The sex or sexuality of the substance user is not taken for granted)
2. To protect oneself from chlamydia one should use a condom, also when practising oral sex.
 - To protect oneself from chlamydia one should use a condom both when practising vaginal and anal sex. When practising oral sex with a boy one should use condom and with a girl a lick patch. (Not take for granted that condoms always can be used in sex. Make the girls visible)
3. Does the parents need to know that you have been to a youth clinic?
 - Do parents or any other adult need to know that you have been to a youth clinic? (All children and young people do not live with both parents, and many live with other carers.)

"Not take for granted that condoms always can be used in sex. Make the girls visible"

Information structure and inter-active design

How topics are prioritised, how the users are expected to search and find things on the website etc.

Example: The website is arranged with a clear user perspective, tested by the target group.

External communication

Who do we choose to communicate with, in what way, where and how is the information material displayed?

Example: Contact/collaboration with other public services, school, school health, youth clinics, CSOs. But no collaboration with commercial companies (such as the pharmaceutical industry) and only display named products on the site in very specific instances.

Collaboration

Who do we choose to collaborate with, commission for assignments, whose knowledge and perspective is prioritised.

Example: Collaborations with those individuals and organisations that back our perspectives and guidelines. In topics where there are many contesting views, for example honour-related norms, we have chosen to enter into dialogue/review about how the information is presented on the site.

The staff group

Whether some within the staff group are allowed to take more space or make more decisions than others, and what allows this to happen.

Example: Agreements on how to work, internal communication, common goals, clear roles, encouraging climate.

How is this noticeable on the page?

UMO.se

- does not reproduce norms

Example: Pictures of people on the site are diverse and varied to avoid repeating stereotypical pictures of girls, boys and transsexual people. Information about sexuality highlights the importance of mutuality and equal terms and does not assume essential differences between the sexes.

- questions norms

Example: The sexual expectations on girls and boys respectively, assumed heterosexuality.

- makes individuals both inside and outside the norm visible, inclusive without focusing on problems or deviations.

Example: Jocke is living with HIV, becoming parent.

- raises differences in expectations between different groups, where relevant.

Example: Racism, homophobia, sexual expectations on girls and boys respectively, what is honour, discrimination.

- always has a rights-based perspective.

Example: Gender equality, the Convention of the Rights of the Child, the law against discrimination, matrimony and registered partnership.

- is made by people who are aware of the power of specific groups and the lack of power of other groups.

Example: The staff group is trained in gender equality, gender, honour, norm-critical perspective, empowerment. Discussions are regularly held when compiling new material in relation to norms. We invite experts on topics that we do not have a good command of and follow developments in the world.

- promotes active equal treatment through a respectful attitude towards the target group.

Example: The functions Choose word for genitals, Conceal pictures with nude and sexual content, The “Panic button”, accessibility adjustments, for example, captions, listen, adjust page, animations. Ask UMO gives medically correct and norm-aware answers on anonymous questions.

- gives space to other types of sources and knowledge than the traditional scientific knowledge, like personal experiences, everyday knowledge.

Example: stories and interviews with people with differing experiences, publish the target group’s own stories.

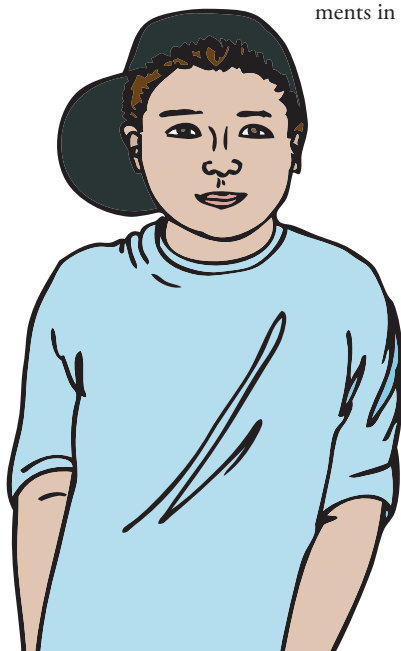
- explains the perspective and shows openness through encouraging users to help out by sending criticisms and views on the site’s content.

- an inclusive perspective, that all young people are offered the possibility of recognition and identification.

Example: “Is there a hymen”, “things I want to do but ain’t allowed to do”, “things I have to do, but don’t want to do”, “Jocke lives with HIV”, “Sibel got married when she was 13 years old”, own stories.

Reference groups

Most of the material on UMO.se is also reviewed by the target group, through focus groups, user polls and the panel, which is tied directly to the staff group. UMO always works with references to assure the quality of the norm-critical perspective. In the editorial advise board, which approves all material, there are representatives who have knowledge of all the different grounds for discrimination. UMO also collaborates with public authority, CSOs and resarchers.



Check list for the collaborators of UMO

CONTENT

- Is it normative in any way? Are there situations, relationships or identities that are presented as more desirable?
 - Is the material inclusive or exclusive? Are there for example several alternatives for different groups?
 - Is it presented as important if someone is a girl or a boy, has a specific background, follows certain traditions or looks a certain way? If it does, what importance is it given?
- Are ideas of differences between groups reproduced? For example, of boys as active, technical, with an aggressive sexuality and difficulty of showing feelings?

LANGUAGE

- Are there difficult words that the user is expected to know?
- Are there words that could be interpreted in several ways?
- Are there metaphorical expressions or synonyms that could be difficult to understand?
- What words are used in the description of different groups? Can they be judgemental?

USERS

- Whose point of view is presented as “normal” in the material?
- Room for interpretation; is everything given or is it possible to interpret a text in several ways?

- Opportunity for recognition; whose experience is described?
- Opportunity for shaping identities; can people and situations pictured inspire users in their own expressions and behaviour?

SOURCES AND REFERENCES

- What type of sources are used and why?
- Who is behind the facts presented, someone young or old, woman or man, historians, religious, professionals, researchers?
- Who is given the right of interpreting and deciding what is valid knowledge?
- Who am I, producing the text/picture? What are my frameworks and what position am I in; do I belong to the norm in society when it comes to the specific topic?
- How are the pictures produced, what were the instructions?
- Multitude in the reference material? Equality?
- Is there gender- or minority research on the topic?

PICTURES

- Can the pictures seem normative, for example that the situations, relationships or characteristics are portrayed as desirable?
- How is multitude presented in the imagery?
- How is the representation, of boys, girls, sexuality, age, functionality, ethnicity etc.?

And what are the different people in the pictures doing?

- Activities and emotions; who is active and who is passive, does someone seem stronger or weaker than others? Body language?

ARE THERE DIFFERENCES IN CONDITIONS AND PREREQUISITES?

UMO.se should have an inclusive content. Most of the time that means mainstreaming, that is, treat everyone equally and not differentiate or value experiences differently. However, one needs to be aware of differences in conditions and prerequisites and how they are related to power structures.

To ask oneself what the differences really are about, and what needs there might be within certain groups. In a text, picture or film the needs or questions can be met without the problem or the specific group being mentioned as such.

A text about a gynaecological examination, for example, contains information about there not being a hymen that can be “pierced”. Links to material about rights, gender, equality, discrimination or honour should always be in place where relevant.