The study describes how adult people with learning difficulties participate in everyday life and in research from a citizenship and user perspective. The study contributes with new knowledge about obstacles and possibilities for participation in care context and in research. The purpose is to anchor the experience from the research in the increase of customer orientation in practice.

Citizenship is used as an umbrella concept for participation, empowerment and autonomy. I use the definition of participation in ICF (International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health) as an operative theoretical viewpoint.

The study is a qualitative research inspired by the hermeneutic phenomenological approach and with participatory methods. A group of people with learning difficulties participate in the research as advisory group. The group members have given their experiences of participation and have chosen the informants and the questions to be asked. They have also given to a certain extent their interpretation of the interviews. The data material consists of theme interviews with five users of services. Two of the group members have done eleven interviews with users applying standard questions. The interviews are analysed using the method of content-based analysis.

The study shows that within the organization there are formal structures for participation such as an advisory board of users, individual planning and individual regular discussions between users and professionals. The challenge is to strengthen these structures. Participation is a political issue about democracy and human rights. People with learning difficulties need to get information in an easily available way about their rights and obligations and about their impairments. The study shows concrete measures that facilitate the participation in everyday life. The professionals have the responsibility the make a dialog possible when decisions concerning users’ everyday life are being made. Increased awareness and information are two of the keys for participation. When users have the opportunity to express their opinions a new awareness of themselves and their relation to the environment is possible. Participation is an interactive process between the users and the environment. Most of all participation is a common learning process for the professionals and for the users.

### Keywords
- participation
- citizenship
- participatory research
- learning difficulties