A part of your daily life
The County Council creates conditions for a good living environment in Norrbotten.
The Norrbotten County Council (NLL) serves the residents of Norrbotten. Via a general election every four years, it is governed by you and other Norrbotten residents.

The County Council provides healthcare and dental care, and supports research and education. The County Council also contributes to the development of Norrbotten, and works with culture, public transport and regional cooperation.
The County Council
– democracy at the regional level

The County Council is politically governed. If you are eligible to vote, you take part in deciding which 71 politicians will represent you in the County Council Assembly. This is where all of the important decisions are made. 15 of the members form the County Council Executive Board, which discusses and processes all issues raised before voting in the assembly. The Board also leads and coordinates Council activities. The politicians establish guidelines and frameworks for operations.

Political decisions are implemented by employees who are responsible for the County Council’s day-to-day operations. Most county council politicians also have other occupations and perform their political duties during their leisure time. Some, however, are full-time politicians and are county council commissioners. Most members of the Assembly sit on one of the six committees which are responsible for contacts with residents concerning various issues.

EASY ACCESS TO COUNTY COUNCIL ASSEMBLY MEETINGS

All assembly meetings are open to the public. Meetings are broadcast over local radio and can be seen via the internet, either live or recorded. It is also possible to listen to the meetings via smart-phone apps. The Assembly meets five times per year. On the web you can also see which issues will be discussed, as well as background information concerning these issues.

VARYING TASKS

The County Council is responsible for health and medical care, as well as dental care for the young. With the introduction of the Swedish cultural policy model the county council has also assumed the role of coordinating national cultural initiatives at the regional level. The County Council, together with the municipalities, is also responsible for public transit. In addition, it has also been decided that the Council should also work with regional development, education and culture at the county or regional level. The tasks of the County Council vary over time and between county councils, and are determined by the needs and wishes of residents. The County Council Plan is a document that controls all activities. It is posted on the internet.

County Councils, as we now know them, have existed since 1863. Tasks have varied. For example, the county councils did not assume overall responsibility for healthcare until 1982. Today, providing healthcare is their principle activity.
» A little more than ten years ago, as a newly trained dentist from Portugal, I arrived in exotic Sweden. We were several classmates from the dentistry programme and we saw an ad for job vacancies at Folkandvården, the public dental care unit in Norrbotten. Three of us moved here. I’m very happy here in Norrbotten, with the county council and the Swedish system; so much so that I have helped to attract several others. Today, about twenty Portuguese dentists are working for Folkandvården in the county.«

FERNANDO ALMEIDA
Dentist, Folkandvården Luleå
The County Council
– a part of your daily life

You often come in contact with the County Council's various activities, for example:
• when you commute to work or school in the morning with one of Länstrafiken’s buses;
• when you visit your district healthcare unit, take your child to the dentist or need to visit the hospital;
• when you visit Norrbottens museum;
• when you go to a Norrbottensmusiken concert or see one of Norrbottensteatern’s performances.

If you do not come in contact with the County Council, perhaps you know someone who works there. The County Council is the county’s biggest employer, with more than 7,000 employees. The largest group works with healthcare, but more than 100 different occupations are represented within the County Council.

HOW THE COUNTY COUNCIL SPENDS YOUR TAX MONEY

County council tax in Norrbotten is 10.4 percent. Tax revenues therefore amount to 4.7 billion kronor. The County Council also receives state subsidies and a share of funds that are redistributed among county councils, as well as revenues from, among other sources, patient fees. The budget for 2012 is 6.5 billion kronor.

The Norrbotten County Council spends slightly more per resident than the national average. This is because of the extra costs that arise due to the fact that county is so large and sparsely populated. Norbotten also has a larger proportion of elderly residents than the national average, which results in higher healthcare costs.

On average, each Norbotten resident receives county council services amounting to about 25,000 kronor per year. The greatest share, more than 90 percent of the budget, goes towards health and medical care.

Resources for healthcare have increased year-for-year. The budget of more than six billion kronor can be broken down per resident as follows:*<

Primary care accounts for 18.6 percent, or SEK 4,719.
Specialist care, usually hospital care, accounts for 48.9 percent, or SEK 12,388.
Specialist psychiatric care accounts for 7 percent, or SEK 1,778.
Prescription drugs account for 10.4 percent, or SEK 2,647.
Other health and medical care accounts for 8.3 percent, or SEK 2,116.
Dental care (for young people) accounts for 2.7 percent, or SEK 672.
Regional development, culture, public transit and more accounts for 4.1 percent, or SEK 1,038.

* based on outcome for 2011
ON AVERAGE, CHILDREN ARE BORN EACH DAY

6.7

6.7 children are born
7.7 people die
1,578 visits to doctors are made (of which about 900 at district healthcare centres)
2,447 visits are made to district healthcare centres
850 visits are made to dental clinics
100 surgical operations are performed
12,000 passengers travel by regional public transit
544 visits are made to Norrbottensteatern, the county museum or to a concert with länsmusiken

A day with Norrbotten County Council
Unhealthy habits give rise to considerable costs for society and are a strong contributing factor to the burden of illness in Sweden. Therefore, preventive care and public health work are central concerns for the County Council.

It’s a matter of making it easier for people to make healthier choices and to exercise in order to maintain the best possible health. It’s also a matter of providing knowledge.

Even though more and more people have sedentary occupations and obesity is on the rise, much has improved. Improved lifestyle habits and, particularly, a reduction in the number of smokers, have contributed to a reduction in the number of people who suffer from cardiovascular diseases.

Many groups contribute to better public health, including athletics associations, study organizations, schools and local authorities. Culture also has a demonstrably positive effect on health promotion. The County Council can provide health data to facilitate prioritization and to indicate where directed efforts need to be made. For example, the figures show that minorities and people with functional disabilities have poorer health.

Therefore, work to promote diversity and integration and to combat discrimination also contributes to better public health. The County Council also subsidizes various associations in order to reach more target groups.

The intention is to create the conditions for good health, regardless of gender, where people live, ethnicity or sexual orientation.

Public-health promotion is an integrated part of healthcare, and many district healthcare centres offer health counselling and assistance with smoking cessation. In connection with visits to child healthcare clinics, aspects of public health are also discussed.

SUCCESSFUL METHOD KEEPS YOUNG PEOPLE TOBACCO-FREE

Most people who start using tobacco do so in their early-teens. If young people refrain from trying tobacco, chances are, they will never start using it. The County Council has therefore adopted the “Tobacco-free duo” method, which is aimed specifically at this age group and has been very successful.

It starts when the Public Dental Service informs children of middle-school age about the dangers of tobacco and explains the Tobacco-free duo method. The student then signs a contract with an adult to certify that he or she will abstain from tobacco throughout the entire upper-school period. The adult is often a parent, a sibling or someone else over the age of 18 who is close to the student. Each year the student and adult will ensure that the individual has been completely tobacco-free. This assurance also constitutes a lottery ticket for a draw, for which the student is eligible upon graduation. Tobacco-free students are also entitled to various discounts and special offers.

The method, developed in Västerbotten, has spread. Scientific studies demonstrate that the method really works. In addition to information about tobacco reaching the school children, other success factors are peer pressure from classmates and the fact that adults are role models. An added bonus is that many adults have given up tobacco after signing a contract with their children.

In Norrbotten the County Council has refined the concept to include role models from areas such as athletics. Tobacco-free duo collaborates with Northland Basket and LF Basket, where young people can sign contracts with their athletic role models.

Right, Stina Engman, proponent of Tobacco-free duo, informs upper-school students in the county’s schools.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Prescriptions for physical activity During 2011, at county council district healthcare centres, 1,318 prescriptions for physical activity were written, more than twice as many as the previous year.
W
ith several thousand employees at five hospitals and more than thirty district healthcare centres, Norrbotten is well equipped to provide health and medical care.

In comparison with other county councils, Norrbotten ranks high when it comes to the quality of healthcare, patient satisfaction and waiting times for treatment and surgery.

The County Council is working towards the objective of helping Norrbotten residents to achieve Sweden’s best self-rated health status by 2020.

Norrbotten is large and, in many areas, sparsely populated. That places special demands on the capacity to offer good healthcare. To make healthcare accessible for all residents, there is at least one district healthcare centre in every municipality. The intention is that the district healthcare centres should be the first and natural point of contact.

Most needs can be met there, while the more serious cases are referred to one of the county hospitals. To maintain a high level of care, the different hospitals specialize in different areas of medicine. This means that an operation may not necessarily be performed at the closest hospital, but where we have gathered the necessary resources in the form of personnel and equipment. Common types of treatment, such as dialysis, are provided at all county hospitals, so that patients needn’t travel unnecessarily long distances.

NEW FINDINGS IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE

There is no template for optimal organization of healthcare provision. Since needs and conditions are always changing, objectives must be reconsidered on an ongoing basis.

Today, we are able to diagnose and treat many conditions for which little could be done just a few years ago. And new drugs that improve the quality of life for patients are always being introduced. Ambulance care is another good example.

Formerly, ambulances were principally a means of transport; now, however, ambulance personnel are often the first link in the chain of healthcare provision. New technologies also present new possibilities for healthcare. This partly has to do with new medical equipment and devices, the possibility to consult specialists at a distance and contacts between patients and caregivers.

Much progress has been made in the field of psychiatry and our perception of psychiatry has changed. The relation between mental and physical illness is now well known.

The Norrbotten County Council works hard to offer good healthcare, but preventive care is just as important. There is a clear connection between our dietary and lifestyle habits and our health. Therefore, the public health perspective is an integrated part of healthcare. Although we must be able to provide the best possible healthcare for those who need it, good health is always preferable from the start.
Here are district healthcare centres in every municipality; they are the foundation of the healthcare system. All residents are registered with a district healthcare centre. Those who have not actively registered with a district healthcare centre are assigned to the nearest one. Unless you are acutely ill, this is the first place you turn for medical assistance.

The district healthcare centres minister to a broad range of needs. Here, registered nurses, certified nursing assistants and physicians provide medical consultation and treatment. The district centres also work with preventive care, such as tobacco and alcohol counselling, and information and advice concerning diet and physical exercise. Child health clinics and maternity clinics are also linked to the district healthcare centres.

District healthcare centres sometimes also have CBT (cognitive behavioural therapy) therapists, as well as some palliative care (care for those living with chronic diseases, as well as patients who are nearing the end of life).

The district healthcare centres are also linked to the National Healthcare Advisory Service help line. When you ring 1177 you are usually connected to your district healthcare centre.

All district healthcare centres are county-council funded, but they are not always operated by the County Council. As a resident, you can also register with a private healthcare centre in locations where these exist.

**District Healthcare Centres are Mini Hospitals, Thanks to Extra Resources.**

Owing to the great distances in Norrbotten, it is sometimes far to the nearest hospital and the district healthcare centre might be able to give all the help that is needed. Therefore, several district healthcare centres throughout the county have been equipped with extra resources. Unlike normal district healthcare centres, here, there are a number of hospital beds for those who do not need hospital care but are not ready to return home.

There is also a degree of emergency preparedness and there are ambulances.

**Hospitals Take Care of the More Complicated Cases**

Norrbotten has five hospitals. Sunderby Hospital, between Boden and Luleå, is the county’s largest and many of the county’s joint resources are concentrated here. There are also hospitals in Kiruna, Gällivare, Kalix and Piteå. The hospitals provide the next level of care when district healthcare centres lack the necessary expertise or technical resources. All hospitals can provide good emergency care, but emergency surgery is normally performed at the hospitals in Gällivare and Sunderbyn.

In the case of highly specialized medical care, the County Council collaborates with other hospitals throughout Sweden. Our closest cooperation is with Norrlands Universitetssjukhus in Umeå (Umeå University Hospital), for example, in the case of brain surgery and certain cancer treatments. For transplants, we rely on assistance from Sahlgrenska Universitetssjukhuset (Sahlgrenska University Hospital) in Gothenburg. Akademiska Sjukhuset in Uppsala (Uppsala University Hospital) is specialized in the treatment of severe burn injuries. In the event of major disasters, within the Barents region there is also well established transnational collaboration.
» I am very happy working as a district nurse in Jokkmokk. I’m quite free and I’m able to make many decisions myself. The atmosphere is fantastic. Some think one has to work for the county council to be able to remain living here. But I enjoy my work, and that’s why I want to live in Jokkmokk.«

GUDDRUN SPIIK
District nurse in Jokkmokk

» Based on their needs, Norrbotten residents will be given the right treatment, at the right time, at the right level. «

[ COUNTY COUNCIL PLAN ]
Psychiatry – an integrated part of healthcare

In the event of mental illness, initial contact is usually with one of the district healthcare centres. Here, an assessment is made to determine the most appropriate type of care and treatment. Within psychiatry, to meet the patients’ different needs, multi-professional teams are often used. These include, for example, psychologists, psychiatrists and counsellors, but may also include occupational therapists, nurses or physiotherapists.

In all of the county’s municipalities most psychiatric care is given in the form of outpatient care.

There are psychiatric clinics at three of the hospitals (Sunderbyn, Piteå and Gällivare). Round-the-clock psychiatric emergency services are also offered at the hospitals in Sunderbyn and Gällivare. The county’s forensic psychiatric care unit is located in Öjebyn, outside Piteå. In Öjebyn, long-term mental illness is also treated in accordance with the Compulsory Mental Care Act.

Since the 1990s, the prevalence of mental illness among young adults has increased markedly, particularly among women. The number of patients with severe mental illnesses such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder remains relatively constant, while the incidence of anxiety, depression and self-injurious behaviour is increasing.
The County Council provides dental care for children and youths up to the age of 19. Throughout the county there are now some 30 dental care units with about 150 general dentists and dental specialists and more than 300 dental nurses, dental technicians and hygienists.

With only minor variations, dental health among young people in the county is generally very good.

The public dental care service (Folktandvården) opened its first clinic in Norrbotten in 1940, in Korpilombolo. Since then, the public dental care service has grown extensively. Virtually all young people and about 70 percent of adults in Norrbotten are treated by the public dental care service. The cost for adult dental care is covered by patient fees and subsidies from the Swedish Social Insurance Agency.

The public dental care service in Norrbotten offers comprehensive specialist dental care with a high degree of competence. Many private dental practitioners refer patients to the dental care service. Specialists also regularly visit the more sparsely populated communities, providing good dental care regardless of where people live.
Since January 2011, medical students have been practising at Sunderby Hospital. This is part of a national programme to create more places for medical students and a means of helping Norrbotten to improve its recruitment position. A large part of medical studies is based on practice, and an impediment to training more doctors has long been the lack of places for student internships at the university hospitals. Umeå University has therefore regionalized its medical degree programme, such that after five terms of theoretical study, ten students per term come to Sunderby Hospital, where they complete their final six terms.

Among medical students there is a great interest in completing studies in Luleå. Many are originally from Norrbotten and now have the opportunity to complete their studies here in the county. Sunderbyn has a large modern hospital, a low teacher-to-student ratio and good access to supervisors and mentors, making it attractive for students. Another asset is the close proximity to the nursing sciences and specialist programmes at Luleå University of Technology.

For the County Council the regionalized medical studies programme is part of a long-term recruitment strategy.

“There’s a fantastic atmosphere here at Sunderby Hospital. Everywhere, I’ve met only committed, knowledgeable colleagues. Since we are only a small group of students here, we have more time with both supervisors and patients. And, since I’m from the town of Boden, it’s a bonus for me to be able to complete my studies close to home.”

JOEL WEINMAR
Medical student
In recent years the Norrbotten County Council has raised the level of ambition with regard to research and development. The County Council is largely a knowledge-based organization. To ensure good, modern healthcare, research must be an integrated part of our day-to-day operations, since new diagnostic techniques and methods of treatment are being introduced at an ever increasing rate. Therefore, the County Council must foster an academic climate in which new knowledge can quickly be assimilated into healthcare provision to the benefit of patients, as well as to be able to contribute to the creation of new knowledge. Within health and medical care, the County Council’s task is threefold: care, education, and research and development.

Thanks to a recently adopted research and development strategy (R&D) and the regionalized medical degree programme, research has taken a giant leap forward. In various ways, the County Council wishes to support co-workers who pursue graduate studies and research, so that they will remain within the organization. This is accomplished by encouraging collaboration between county councils and universities, and by giving co-workers who are engaged in doctoral studies the opportunity to combine clinical work and research.

Staff can apply for different forms of support to help them get started with their graduate studies. Among other things, employees may be given the opportunity, during a period of several weeks, to write a research plan during normal working hours. The County Council can also assume salary costs for about 11 weeks while the employee is writing his or her thesis.

The County Council has established a graduate school in collaboration with the various health sciences programmes at Luleå University of Technology whereby students conduct research during 80 percent of their time and do clinical work during the remaining 20 percent.

Sweden’s four northernmost county councils are collaborating to form a broader base of patients for research, and clinical research centres are being established in Luleå, Umeå, Östersund and Sundsvall.

**INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENT**
The Norrbotten County Council is very active in two internationally acknowledged studies. One is the Monica study, which has been under way since 1985 and is aimed at investigating trends in coronary disease and strokes. This is being done together with Umeå University. Over a 25-year period 18,000 heart attack events and 21,000 stroke cases have been studied. The study has provided data for a large number of doctoral theses. It began as an international study which was concluded in 1994, when Norrbotten and Västerbotten decided to continue on their own.

The other project is the Olin study, which was initiated in Norrbotten and concerns respiratory diseases. This study has been under way since 1985 and has won international recognition. More than 50,000 individuals have participated and the study has provided data for ten doctoral theses.

In dental care, research and development have also assumed a greater role, especially within specialist dental care. The number of graduate doctors of dentistry is growing, as is the number of doctoral students of dentistry who work at Folk­tandvården and are engaged in large research projects.
High cultural ambitions in Norrbotten

DID YOU KNOW...
- Norrbottensteatern, Sweden’s oldest regional theatre, was established in 1967.
- Föreningen Norrbottens museum (which formed the basis for today’s Norrbottens museum) was founded in 1886.
- Filmpool Nord is Sweden’s second-largest regional centre for film and TV production.
- Norrbottensmusiken gives more than 400 concerts and performances annually, and reaches an audience of some 60,000, of which half are children and youths.
Culture is also an important factor for health promotion and rehabilitation. Culture, in its many manifestations, is a significant component of regional development and is therefore a growth factor. A rich and developmental cultural life has major importance for a comprehensive image of Norrbotten in Sweden and Europe.

The County Council’s objective is to make culture of high quality available in all of the county’s municipalities. Norrbotten has long had high ambitions where culture is concerned. These ambitions are realized partly via a 100-million-kronor budget and partly through the County Council’s administration of state funds via the so-called model of cultural cooperation.

In all, via the County Council, more than 200 million kronor is invested annually in culture. The basis for culture work is Norrbotten’s culture plan. Thanks to close cooperation and collaboration among institutions, municipalities and independent culture workers and producers, the yield on investment in culture in Norrbotten is high.

The institutions constitute a framework for cultural work. These are: Norrbottens museum, Norrbottensmusiken, Norrbottensteatern and Länsbiblioteket.

Norrbottensmusiken consists of several orchestras and choirs; among others, Norrbotten Big Band, and chamber ensemble Norrbotten NEO, which tour within the county and farther afield. Länsbiblioteket coordinates the municipal public libraries and provides county-wide services such as the Children’s Polar Library.

In addition to its own activities in the realm of culture, the County Council also supports many culture projects financially and awards grants.

Via county consultants, the County Council coordinates and initiates projects and events in, among other areas, the visual arts, theatre and dance.

The County Council participates in several large culture projects. Art and dance are priority areas in the county’s culture plan. Together with the Municipality of Piteå, the County Council is responsible for Dans i Nord.
Regional development – is about creating a daily life in a place you like.

Regional development is not something for which the County Council can assume sole responsibility or realize on its own. But as the only popularly elected body at the regional level, it has a clearly defined role in the progress of the entire county and in managing issues that transcend municipal boundaries.

Together with the County Administrative Board, the municipalities, companies and organizations, the County Council contributes to creating the conditions for regional development. For example, the County Council collaborates with the County Administrative Board to produce development plans, statistics and forecasts.

The County Council is part owner and co-financier of different companies that are actively involved in regional development. Examples include Filmpool Nord, Almi, Norrbottniaban, IT Norrbotten and BD Pop.

The County Council is able to initiate and manage regional development projects that no other single organization or municipality can manage on its own. Invest in Norrbotten, for example, is an organization that promotes investment in the county, and Innovationssluss Norr is a project that seeks to find structures whereby innovative ideas in health and healthcare can best be realized in the form of finished products and solutions. In many cases, the projects result in viable businesses and are managed by the County Council or some other principal.

At the EU level, the County Council is the obvious partner for collaboration in regional development. Here, examples include e-health and issues concerning the effects of an ageing population.

A DRIVE TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF NORRBOTTEN RESIDENTS

Increasing the population is of central importance for progress of the region. That is the basis for growth and welfare. It’s a matter of creating an attractive region in which people want to live and work.

Therefore, the County Council started “Kraftsamling 2011-2015”. The aim is to activate more people in addition to those who normally work with regional growth and development. The expressed ambition is to gather valuable thoughts and ideas from unconventional sources and to realize them. Kraftsamling began in 2011 and will continue until 2015, with two large conferences per year. During this period the ideas that are collected will be assessed to determine whether they can be applied in practice. All who want Norrbotten to grow are invited to participate in the process.

Kraftsamling 2011-2015 was initiated by the County Council, but the content and results will be determined by the commitment of the people who are involved.
Sanna Kalla and Rebecka Digervall, The Magnettes, at Kraftsamling, Kulturens hus, Luleå, 8 June 2011.
The County Council has been working with e-health and telemedicine for many years and international comparison shows that Norrbotten is well advanced in this field. Now, after determined efforts to build up the necessary conditions and infrastructure, the investment is paying off.

For example, both the municipalities and the County Council can use a common, online system for health records. The infrastructure has also been expanded and all district healthcare centres are linked with high-speed network capacity. An information security system with encryption and identification is also in place.

E-health is a broad term. With telemedicine services, district healthcare centres further inland can maintain contact with specialists at Sunderby Hospital, and hospitals can collaborate more closely with one another. It’s about moving the knowledge instead of the patients. The e-health solutions has helped to facilitate contact with patients. For example, patients suffering from long-term or chronic illnesses can monitor and report values to their district healthcare centres or, via video calls, receive help with physiotherapy or ‘meet’ specialists for consultation.

E-HEALTH FOR EASIER CONTACT

The county residents have acquired great computer proficiency, they have greater expectations with respect to contact with healthcare providers. Many appreciate the fact that they are able to access healthcare information on the web and can log in to ask questions at their district healthcare centre. This also eliminates some of the need for telephone consultation. Those who have frequent contact with the healthcare service also benefit from “My healthcare contacts” on the web. Here, for example, they can renew prescriptions or book and change appointments. In the field of e-health the Norrbotten County Council participates in several EU-sponsored projects and collaborates with the university. For the County Council, this is an area of strategic development that helps to improve quality, relieves the burden on the care system and frees resources.
Public transport and agricultural colleges

Via the regional public transport authority, municipalities are responsible for public transport in the county. The authority is not a bus company. Instead, it works with needs analysis. All public transportation is included, even ferries, for example. In Norrbotten, however, bus companies provide most of the public transport services.

The regional transport authority was introduced in 2012. Previously, this task was managed by Länstrafiken, which earlier was owned jointly by the County Council and the municipalities. The regional public transport authority has commissioned to Länstrafiken to procure and contract the actual public transport services.

The Norrbotten County Council, together with the counties of Västerbotten, Jämtland and Västernorrland, operates the jointly owned company Norrtåg, which provides inter-county rail services across the boundaries of Sweden’s four northernmost counties. Here, too, the company manages planning and procurement, while carriers provide the actual rail service.

**TWO COUNTY AGRICULTURAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Most of the county’s secondary schools are managed by the municipalities, but the County Council is responsible for two agricultural secondary schools: Grans Naturbruksgymnasium in Öjebyn, near Piteå, and Kalix Naturbruksgymnasium.

These are county-wide schools; therefore, they are managed by the County Council. However, the students’ respective municipalities assume the costs for education.

Grans Naturbruksgymnasium offers programmes in animal husbandry, while Kalix Naturbruksgymnasium specializes in forestry and nature tourism. Both schools are boarding schools and there are several hundred students.

PASSengers TRAVEL DAILY WITH LÄNSTRAFIKEN.