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# YOUNG ADULTS IN SHELTER

## STOCKHOLM

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### What was the objective of the project?

The project "Young Adults in Shelter" investigated the rise in the number of young adults in homeless shelters and proposed more appropriate actions for them. It also offered a *fast track* from the shelter to other living arrangements or services.

### Timeline

The project was carried out between February 2008 and May 2009.

### Background

Outreach workers in Stockholm's housing shelters witnessed an increase in the number of young people (aged between 20 -25) seeking accommodation with them and wanted to investigate the causes of this.



### Who was responsible for the project's implementation?

Stockholm City Council is responsible for social inclusion policies while the coordination of services for homeless people lies with the department of social welfare and labour market. The project was run jointly by three units at the administration: the Social Emergency office, the Outreach Unit and one of the emergency shelters.

### How did the project work?

Two outreach/shelter workers worked specifically with people under 25 years old who came to the shelter. Other emergency shelters that were not directly involved in the project alerted these outreach workers when someone from the target group showed up in their shelter. The outreach workers helped these people so that they could either avoid or reduce the amount of time spent at the shelter. This included placement in a supported housing scheme, getting substance abuse treatment, and/or contact with a social worker.

### What were the results of the project?

Around 100 young adults up to 25 years of age have been helped by the project.

The other aim of the project was to uncover why the amount of young people in need of emergency shelter increased and map out the characteristics of these young people. Information was obtained from 85 people. Of these, 58 were men and 27 were women. The largest group was 21-year-olds (20 people). The majority of them lacked an education and work experience. 47 people were born in Sweden, of which 20 had foreign descent. 38 people were born abroad and 29 of those still had foreign citizenship. 56 of the identified individuals had substance abuse problems, 27 of these had co-morbidity (mental disorders

and addiction problems). Six people had mental health problems but no substance abuse problems. Eight persons had no problem other than homelessness

To get a complete answer as to why there was an increase requires a larger study in which employment and housing policies are included. Nonetheless, the coordinators were able to identify that it was not only lack of housing or jobs that is a problem for this group. Several other factors played a role, such as substance abuse problem and weak or no social networks. Several clients without addiction problems indicated that they were thrown out from their parental home. Several of the young adults, mostly those with foreign backgrounds, had inadequate knowledge of how society and government system worked. They could be described as having severe problems manoeuvring in the system.

## Was the project evaluated and were there any follow-up activities?

The project's final report (May 2009) presented a number of proposals on what measures need to be taken to continue to support young homeless adults in more appropriate way than emergency shelters.

A political decision was taken to develop two social-service pilot projects to target young homeless adults in need of special assistance. Young people at risk of homelessness need to receive help and support as early as possible so that longer-term problems can be prevented.

The task of one of the follow up projects is to identify young adults aged between 18-25 years that are homeless or at risk of homelessness and encourage them to find longer term solutions. Once their needs are identified, they are guided into the relevant social service(s). They are followed throughout the process from the shelter to more permanent housing. This project employs four part time (50%) social workers from the local city districts with the largest amount of young adults in shelters and two full time social workers from the Central Administration. This project will run for two years.

The other project develops the experience of the MOOMIN project. This is a working method for cooperation between the police, health care services and social workers for young people up to 20 years of age. The development of this working method will see the target group age extended up to 25 years in order to prevent homelessness and serious on going long term problems. The idea is that through proactive social work and building on the experience of the previous project, young people will be less likely to become homeless or become addicted to dangerous substances. This project will be funded for two years and will employ three social workers.

## What lessons did you learn?

From the previous project "Young adults in shelter" it was clear that the problem of young people seeking shelter had to be overturned. Even more disturbing, the mapping of the project showed it would be people with a foreign background were most at risk. The project showed that specially designated staff working with young adults made it possible to offer other, and especially long term alternatives to shelters.

## What is the budget and resources dedicated to the project?

The first project 'Young Adults in Shelters' was funded by the national government targeting measures for young substance abusers. The two follow up projects are funded by the City of Stockholm budget for 2010-2011. The allocations to both of the projects are SEK 7.4 million for two years (approx. €740,000).

## Who are the contact persons for the project?

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If you have an example of a good practice that you would like to include in the database, please send an email to [caroline.greene@eurocities.eu](mailto:caroline.greene@eurocities.eu).