
CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVE AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO FAMILIES

STOCKHOLM

Objectives of the project

The project aimed to identify:

- if local district authorities needed to change their working methods in order to better address children in families receiving long-term financial assistance;
- how families perceived a child's understanding and what their approach was;
- how families experienced the effect of long-term benefit dependency on children.

The project's focus was on families with children with long-term financial assistance needs. The project team contacted families who received assistance during a continuous period of at least 6 months prior to being interviewed. Most of the families had financial support intermittently for many years. The project team chose to interview children who were 12 years or older.

The project team looked at how children's perspective was documented in the decisions taken by social services concerning families.

Timeline

The project was launched in August 2008.

Background

Rinkeby-Kista is a neighbourhood in Stockholm which is characterised by a relatively young population. Many of these were not born in Sweden and there is a lot of in-and out-migration from the district. Educational levels are comparatively low and many have difficulty finding a job and a livelihood.

In 2007, 3.2% of the citizens of Rinkeby-Kista, aged 18-64 years, were registered as unemployed, compared with 2.4% of the entire city of Stockholm. In April 2008, 3,890 persons received income support, representing 8.5% of the population. Of these, 1735 were children.

The 'Children's perspective and financial assistance project' was launched to take children's perspective into account when allocating financial assistance to families. The project was above all a self-evaluation exercise for local district authorities in terms of keeping the children's perspective in its work with financial assistance.

Who is responsible for the project?

The project was coordinated by the City of Stockholm, Department for Social Welfare and Labour Market. The interviews were carried out by social workers working in the district.



How does the project work?

The interviews were carried out by the seven social workers who joined the "child perspective and financial assistance" project team. The Social workers interviewed families they had never worked with before. The families were free to choose whether the interview took place in their homes or in district administration premises. Parents and children were interviewed together. The interviews were carried out between January and April 2009.

What are the results of the project?

The interviews have been documented in a report, and analysed and followed by a conclusion. In addition, the conclusions were used in a handbook on how to maintain a children's perspective when deciding about eligibility for financial assistance.

The interviews revealed that it was common for the family members to protect each other. Children protected their parents by not asking them for money and parents protected their children by prioritising the children's needs. The interviews also showed the lack of choice in everyday life with regard to food and clothing. The choice was always determined by ongoing sales or reductions. The word 'refrain' was repeatedly mentioned by the families and appeared to be a key concept for the families.

The handbook is intended to be a practical guide in the daily work of social workers.

Was the project evaluated and followed up?

The results of the project were intended to be used internally to better address the children's needs in the city's financial assistance and labour market policies. This is being discussed within the administration.

The project leader is now disseminating the conclusions and is sharing the results in the handbook with other local districts.

What lessons did you learn?

The project team found it very useful to get the families' and children's views. There were initial objections to interviewing children but in the end the families were very pleased that someone asked them for their opinion.

What were the budget and resources for the project?

The project was carried out with the support from the regular city budget received by the district. The allocation amounted to approximately €43,000.

Who is the contact person 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.