



## Demographic change and active inclusion in Stockholm: ABC parental support programme



### Cities for Active Inclusion



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The nine observatories are coordinated by EUROCITIES, the network of major cities in Europe, and supported through Inclusive Cities for Europe, a partnership between the European Commission (DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion) and EUROCITIES.

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# 1. BACKGROUND

## 1.1 Current city data

Sweden has a population of some 9.5 million people, 9% of whom live in the capital city of Stockholm. This percentage has increased since 2000, when just over 8% of the country's population lived in Stockholm. By November 2011, there were about 863,000 people living in the city: 440,000 (51%) women and 423,000 (49%) men.<sup>1</sup>

In terms of age profile, by 2009, 16% of the population of Stockholm was under 15 years old, while 14% were aged 65 years or older. The proportion of people of working age (i.e. 15 to 64 years old) had increased from 64% in 1995 to 70% in 2009.<sup>2</sup>

In terms of ethnic mix, figures show that by the end of 2010, 22% of Stockholm's population had been born outside Sweden. Furthermore, almost one third (29%) of Stockholm's population had either themselves had been born outside Sweden or both their parents had been born outside Sweden. This indicates an increase in the ethnic mix of the population since 1995 when only 17% of Stockholm's population had been born in another country.<sup>3</sup>

## 1.2 Main demographic trends

For Sweden as a whole, as for much of Europe, the main demographic trend is an ageing population: life expectancy is rising and the proportion of people of working age will decrease in the coming years.

For the capital, Stockholm, one of the main demographic trends is population increase. This is partly due to more people moving into Stockholm than moving out. For example, in 2010 alone, there was a net inward migration of 10,750 people. Another factor is a positive natural population increase.<sup>4</sup> In that same year, 2010, almost 13,900 babies were born in Stockholm, more than in any year since the 1940s: this resulted in a natural population increase of 6,900 people. This baby boom is continuing and, furthermore, the parents of these young children are choosing to remain living in Stockholm to a large extent.<sup>5</sup>

Another obvious demographic trend for Stockholm is a more ethnically mixed population. This is the result of inward migration into Sweden from other countries, combined with the fact that quite a large percentage of immigrants moving into Sweden choose to live in Stockholm. In 2008, more than 14,000 people migrated into Sweden and settled in Stockholm, while only around 7,000 people emigrated.<sup>6</sup>

The population forecasts for the city of Stockholm indicate that the city will continue to grow: reaching 920,000 inhabitants in five years' time (in 2017), and 1 million inhabitants by 2025.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> SCB, *Befolkningsstatistik, Kommunfolk­mängd 2011-11-01*, [www.scb.se](http://www.scb.se).

<sup>2</sup> Stockholm Stads Utrednings- och Statistikkontor AB, *Population*, p 116. 2010-12-21.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p.133-138. 2010-12-21.

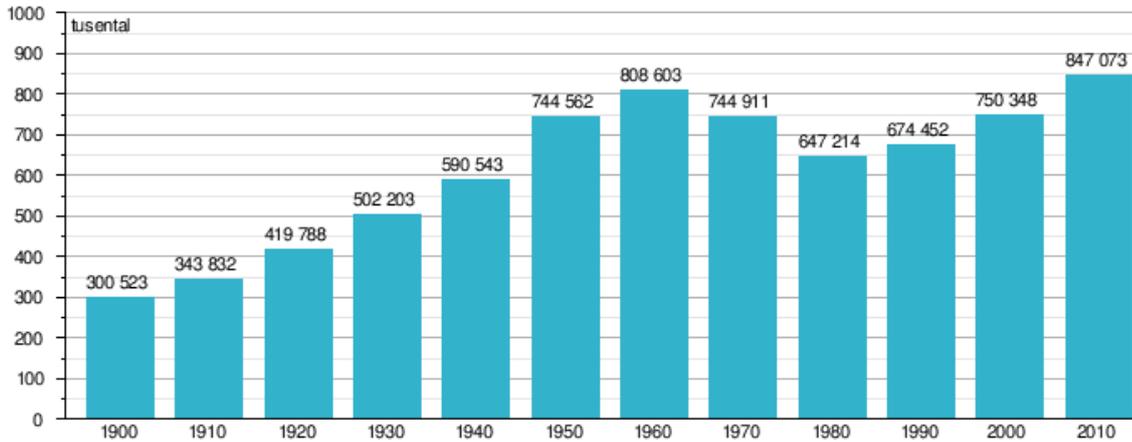
<sup>4</sup> Natural population increase: a higher number of births than deaths.

<sup>5</sup> Socialnämnden, *Underlag för budget 2012*.

<sup>6</sup> Stockholms Stads Utrednings- och Statistikkontor AB, *Population*, p. 147. 2010-12-21.

<sup>7</sup> [www.stockholm.se](http://www.stockholm.se) (source: SCB).

Chart: Population in the city of Stockholm: 1900 - 2010



Source: [Stockholms Stads Utrednings- och Statistikkontor AB: Rapporten befolkningen i Stockholm 1252-2005](#)

One important demographic to note is that around 40,000 Somali people currently live in Sweden: many of them arrived as refugees at the beginning of the 1990's. An imminent change in Swedish migration policy (starting from 1 July 2012) is likely to lead to an increase in Somali family reunification, with additional family members migrating to Sweden. Up to a thousand families have, until now, been separated because some of the Somali identity documents have not been recognised by Sweden.

A significant proportion of Sweden's Somali population lives in Stockholm's Järva area, in the north west of the city, comprising the districts of Spånga-Tensta and Rinkeby-Kista. It is therefore likely that the Järva area will receive a large proportion of the Somali family members arriving in Stockholm as a result of the reunification policy. With the arrival of thousands of additional Somali people, there will be a need to adapt social services provision in these districts. In particular, Somali people in Stockholm have found the parental support programme (described later in this report) very helpful.

### 1.3 Impact of demographic change

The demographic trends in Stockholm are expected to have an impact on various municipal responsibilities, including:

- **Spatial planning:** to avoid crowded public transport and increasing traffic congestion in the face of increasing population density and pressure on infrastructure and transport systems.
- **Housing services:** to meet increased housing needs.
- **Child welfare and educational services:** to alleviate anticipated pressure on child welfare and school places.
- **Active inclusion:** to help reverse the growing differences between city districts and the tendency towards increasing segregation.

## 1.4 Main strategies to deal with demographic change in Stockholm

As mentioned earlier, demographic change creates a number of challenges for the city of Stockholm. This report focuses on one instrument to promote social inclusion for the growing ethnic mix of people and the increasing numbers of children and young people.

Over the last two decades, the population has become more and more mixed in terms of ethnicity, due to migration. In addition, the population is relatively young as a result of high birth rates, as well as the fact that younger people of working age (20-34 years old) have been moving into the city.

Some districts in Stockholm are facing particular difficulties as a result of the negative consequences of demographic change, with a number of socially deprived neighbourhoods characterised by joblessness, social problems and a high concentration of poor households. Increasing segregation and social exclusion is a challenge for the city. There is a need to adapt local public services in order to actively include vulnerable people and to meet the requirements of the EU active inclusion strategy.

Various strategies have been developed to help reduce social segregation and social exclusion in Stockholm. In the north western Järva area, comprising Spånga-Tensta and Rinkeby-Kista, there is a long-term project known as Improving Järva (Järvalyftet), which aims to regenerate the high rise housing neighbourhoods. And in the southern suburbs of the city, there is the South Vision (Söderortsvisionen) regeneration project.<sup>8</sup>

Map of Stockholm's 14 city districts: Spånga-Tensta is in the north west of the city



## 2. HOW STOCKHOLM IS COPING

Parental support programmes can be an effective tool for cities to use in order to increase social inclusion. These programmes take a preventative approach by helping to improve conditions for children, which is particularly important in poor and segregated areas. The Spånga-Tensta district in Stockholm's Järva area has put considerable effort into supporting parents and children by providing a family centre, and by running a programme at this centre called ABC (Alla barn i centrum: All Children in Focus).

The aim of the ABC programme is to strengthen the child through support for the parents. The programme is universal: open to all parents who would like to attend.

<sup>8</sup> Special initiatives (both physical regeneration of these areas and social measures) to reduce major socioeconomic differences between city districts.

## 2.1 Demographics and social situation in Spånga-Tensta

Stockholm's Spånga-Tensta district has a population of some 38,000 people (37,675 at 31.12.2010). Half the district's population lives in Old Spånga with its individually designed houses of different sizes, styles and designs. The other half lives in apartments, built as part of Sweden's 'million programme' at the end of the 1960's and beginning of the 1970's. This saw a million apartments being built, to meet the urgent need for housing. The result was large-scale accommodation which was of good basic quality, but which offered little flexibility.

During the 2000s, in an effort to address some of the social issues, regeneration work in this area saw new construction and modifications which led to a greater mix of housing and tenures. However, the social problems in the million programme high-rise housing still remain, with high unemployment rates, high dependency on social financial assistance and various other social issues. Despite specific initiatives such as temporary local development programmes<sup>9</sup>, the negative trend has not been reversed, and residents continue to suffer from high rates of exclusion from the labour market and from society.<sup>10</sup>

By 2010, 56% of the people living in Stockholm's Spånga-Tensta district had either themselves been born in another country or both their parents had been born in another country. This is far higher than the average of 29% for the city as a whole.

Figures for 2009 show that only 62.5% of people of working age (20-64 years old) were employed, compared with the 75% for the city as a whole. In addition, the 2010 figures show that 10% of people in Spånga-Tensta were receiving social financial assistance, compared with only 3.8% for the city as a whole.<sup>11</sup> In terms of the changing demographics, one of the major challenges is to create more opportunities for the children and young people who are growing up in these areas of high social exclusion. In particular, one task is to reverse the trend of increasing school drop-out rates in these areas, which can result in high rates of excluded young people.

## 2.2 Solutions at district level

### 2.2.1. Family centres

Research indicates that neighbourhood characteristics can have a great impact on the future of the young population growing up in the area.<sup>12</sup> For example, in the Spånga-Tensta district, many children and young people grow up without any role models in the labour market: many do not know anyone who has a job, and this can make them more likely to accept long-term exclusion from the labour market and from the wider society. In Spånga-Tensta, one strategy is to promote social inclusion within the area by offering family support: working in a preventative way to ensure the active inclusion of children and parents.

At the heart of this approach is the Spånga-Tensta family centre, which is run by the city, in close cooperation with the county. The Spånga-Tensta family centre offers various kinds of support for children (aged 0-12 years old) and their parents. The approach is integrated: the centre addresses both physical health and social wellbeing.

<sup>9</sup> One example is *Storstadssatsningen 2000-2005*: in this programme, financial resources from the state were allocated to segregated areas with the aim of decreasing the negative effects of segregation. However, although individuals were helped, the overall social structure of the areas remained the same, with high levels of social exclusion.

<sup>10</sup> [www.stockholm.se](http://www.stockholm.se), source: Utrednings- och Statistikkontoret.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Roger Andersson, *Boendesegregation och grannskapseffekter*, 2009.

Family centres were originally piloted in several city districts, but when budgets were cut across the city, the Spånga-Tensta family centre was the one that remained open.

Through cooperation between the city and the county, the Spånga-Tensta family centre is able to offer a wide range of services, and therefore provides a good chance of being able to meet the specific individual needs of people in Spånga-Tensta. The Spånga-Tensta family centre provides the physical base for implementing the ABC programme in the district.

In Spånga-Tensta, although many parents from various ethnic backgrounds have sufficient confidence in their parental role when their children are very young, they feel worried about what will happen when their children get older. The ABC programme provides an effective support service, because it builds a firm foundation on which parents can more effectively handle potential parent-child conflict later on, for example, when trying to get their children to complete their homework or even to go to school.

### 2.2.2 The ABC programme

The ABC programme (All children in focus: Alla Barn i Centrum) was originally a government project, set up by the Swedish National Institute of Public Health, with the aim of designing and developing a programme that would support families in the most effective way.

The ABC programme was developed through cooperation between many different stakeholders: the National Institute of Public Health; the Karolinska Institute (one of Europe's largest medical universities); STAD (Stockholm Prevents Alcohol and Drug Problems); Stockholm's PLUS unit for training and research, which coordinates the ABC programme;<sup>13</sup> the Södertälje municipality; the Spånga-Tensta district; and eleven other municipalities and city districts.



The design of the ABC programme took into account the views of those who would be using the service. A total of 4,000 interviews were conducted with a wide range of parents aiming to establish two key aspects: firstly, the key issues that parents would like to discuss in terms of their parental role; and secondly, the way in which they would ideally like to discuss these issues. Focusing on what parents actually need and desire is in line with the EU active inclusion strategy: one of the three pillars of this strategy is to provide quality services which are designed to meet users' needs.

So, the starting point for the design of the ABC programme was a combination of scientific research, children's perspectives, parents' stated needs, and requests from the city districts and municipalities. The overall aim of ABC is to promote positive development for each child through a strengthened, more positive, relationship between the parents and the child.

The ABC programme provides four meetings for parents to attend, with the option for a fifth follow-up meeting, as listed below:

- Meeting 1: Show your love;
- Meeting 2: Take part;

<sup>13</sup> The PLUS unit focuses on methods, training and research within the Family support, Social Affairs Administration, City of Stockholm.

- Meeting 3: Show the way;
- Meeting 4: Choose your battles;
- Meeting 5 (optional): Follow-up.

Each meeting lasts 2.5 hours, with up to 16 parents in each group. The structure is the same for every meeting: starting with research-based information, then going on to discussions, and finally watching a film or taking part in role-play.

At the first meeting, parents discuss the type of parents they want to be, and also how to build a positive relationship with their child or children which will provide the foundation for being an effective parent. The meetings include information on how to make relationships work, the influence each person has on everyday life, how to prevent conflicts, how to be a good role model, how stress influences family relationships, and how to reduce stress and anger.

The ABC programme is inclusive: it is for all parents living in the Spånga-Tensta district with children aged 3-12 years. It is deliberately designed to offer a universal prevention service, open to all, rather than a selective service just for those considered to be at risk. If ABC participants have other problems and are in need of more advice and assistance, ABC programme leaders can also refer them to other services and programmes.

### 2.2.3 The ABC programme in Spånga-Tensta

The ABC programme in Spånga-Tensta started as a local district project that received extra funding from the National Institute of Public Health. In addition to the involvement of the family centre staff themselves, many other organisations were also involved, including: local kindergartens and local schools; the Swedish For Immigrants (SFI) language service; members of a Somali NGO; and Verdandi (a social inclusion NGO). This helped to ensure a coordinated approach.

Following a request from some of the Somali parents who participated, each meeting group now includes parents from a cross-section of backgrounds, including parents from the Somali community and parents with a Swedish background. In addition, ABC programme meetings are now run not only in the family centre, but also in kindergartens and schools, in order to have more mixed groups.

Another organisation, the Swedish For Immigrants (SFI) language service, also runs ABC programme meetings. Originally these followed the basic ABC model, but the concept has been extended to embrace not just parenthood but also health. An additional benefit of the SFI's ABC sessions for parents is that participants tend to develop their language skills more quickly than on other SFI language programmes, since they are very engaged in the topic of positive parenting.

The reason why so many parents have been interested in taking part in the ABC programmes being run by the Swedish For Immigrants language service is mainly their desire to know more about accepted ways of parenting in Sweden. This high level of interest in Swedish parenting approaches is what originally prompted the SFI organisation to host ABC family support meetings: an example of a truly integrated approach.

The numerous satisfied ABC programme participants have spread the word about the programme and have given it a good reputation, and today, the ABC programme even has a waiting list.

## 2.2.4 The ABC programme in other districts

Only three other Stockholm city districts were able to offer the ABC family support programme in 2011. This was mainly due to problems in recruiting participants in other areas (see 2.4).

In addition to Spånga-Tensta, the three other city districts offering the ABC programme meetings in 2011 were Hässelby-Vällingby, Farsta and Skärholmen. As the ABC programme was only introduced in 2011 and is therefore quite a new initiative, it is possible that more districts will offer the ABC programme in the future.

At the moment, ABC is only being used in areas where a large percentage of people have ethnic minority backgrounds. These districts tend to have a more urgent need to support children and young people.

Some schools in these areas have shown a significant interest in the ABC programme. According to Gerd Lundquist, project manager for the ABC programme at the Spånga-Tensta family centre, schools are now taking an interest in the role of parenting: "I think they (the schools) feel a need to communicate with the parents about the importance of good parenting in a positive way."

Of course, parents attending ABC programmes that are carried out in schools often end up discussing the school situation and the role of parents in their children's achievements. As a result, there is a hope that the school-based ABC programmes will deliver a positive impact on the schools' results. According to teachers in the schools using the ABC programme, the pupils are very proud of their school and are also proud of their parents.

To ensure there are enough people able to run the ABC meetings, instructors have trained new leaders within different organisations. So far, some 20 ABC leaders are now qualified to run ABC meetings in the Spånga-Tensta district. In addition, regular networking, training and mentoring activities and events are put on for these ABC leaders. For 2012, funding has been allocated in Stockholm's city budget to pay for a part-time ABC programme coordinator and is also providing €7,000 to fund ABC activities.



## 2.3 Key successes

### 2.3.1 Increasing active inclusion and reducing risks

According to research<sup>14</sup> the content of ABC programme is effective in promoting positive development in children of ABC participants. The research has also shown that the essence of the ABC programme is that it enhances the safety of these children: it reduces the risk of criminality, dropping out of school, mental illness and other social problems. By working in this preventative way, and by offering the parents the support they need in bringing up their children in such difficult circumstances, the ABC parenting programme ensures the active inclusion of young people in Spånga-Tensta.

<sup>14</sup> Matthew R. Sanders, Carol Markie-Dadds and Karen M.T. Turner, *Triple P - Positive Parenting Program*. Patricia Moran, Deborah Gbate and Amelia van der Merwe, *What Works in Parenting Support?*

### 2.3.2 Achieving participation

The most important and effective message that the ABC parenting programme uses to recruit participants is: 'You have the best children in the world - so give them the best parent!'

Some city districts often find it difficult to attract parents to the various types of family support programmes they offer. In fact, some city districts are unsuccessful in carrying out planned measures and initiatives due to a lack of participants. Even though three other districts offer the ABC programme, it is Spånga-Tensta that stands out for its ability to attract a high number of participants.

In 2011, Spånga-Tensta ran 19 ABC programmes, with a total of 130 parents participating: this compares to with a total of 230 parents participating across the city, so only 100 took part in the other three districts offering the ABC programme. One explanation for the success of the ABC programme in Spånga-Tensta could be that it was a special project with extra funding from the National Institute of Public Health. The high level of participation is definitely a key success for the district. One reason why Spånga-Tensta recruited so many participants is probably the fact that the ABC programme is not only offered within the family centre but is also offered through the kindergartens, the schools and the Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) language service.

A further reason for Spånga-Tensta's success has been having a good structure in place for cooperation between the various organisations: the Samtidigt Först network<sup>15</sup>, within the district, has enabled a variety of different organisations to be fully involved in the development of the ABC programme.

An additional reason for the success in recruiting participants could be that some ABC programmes in Spånga-Tensta have been held by leaders who speak Somali and Arabic: these leaders still run their sessions in Swedish but can translate into Somali or Arabic when necessary.

In addition, although the published ABC information and materials have not been translated into different languages, nevertheless the training material used in Spånga-Tensta has been designed to be easily understood: it is illustrated with many images that are supplemented by text in basic Swedish, and also with space to write. As Gerd Lundquist, project manager at the Spånga-Tensta family centre, points out: "I think it's an advantage to give the parents a vocabulary related to this (positive parenting) theme in Swedish."

### 2.3.3 Evaluation

The levels of satisfaction from participants, together with their opinions of the ABC programme, are collected in ongoing follow-ups with participants. This feedback has been used to refine and adjust the content and structure of the ABC meetings. Generally the participants are very satisfied with the opportunity and advice that the ABC programme has given them to strengthen their parenting skills.

Statistics about the participants have been collected and will be entered into a database by PLUS.<sup>16</sup> The majority of participants are women who have children from 2 to 6 years old. Although male ABC leaders have succeeded in recruiting fathers to the programme, fathers are still in the minority, and account for only some 25% of participants.

The effects of the ABC programme have not yet been evaluated. However, Stockholm's medical

<sup>15</sup> A network as a model for cooperation around young people at risk.

<sup>16</sup> The unit responsible for methods, training and research within the Family support, Social Affairs Administration, City of Stockholm

university, the Karolinska Institute, is conducting a randomised controlled trial of ABC on a national level, and the Spånga-Tensta district is taking part in a pilot study. The main research results will be published in 2014, but it is hoped that some early results will be available before then.

The Karolinska Institute's research study contains a very broad set of questions and will involve approximately 800 parents. Children over ten years will also be interviewed, to assess how their situation has changed after their parents have participated in the programme. It is hoped that the results will show that parental participation in the ABC programme results in children having better physical and mental health, better school results, more enjoyable leisure time and better access to social services.

The research study will cover a wide range of topics, as the issues addressed by the ABC programme are very wide-ranging. As Kajsa Lönn Rhodin, a psychologist at the PLUS unit, explains: "We are expecting small benefits for many people."

If funding can be found, the researchers would like to undertake a follow-up randomised research into outcomes for the children over a longer period of time, in order to assess the long-term benefits of the programme.

## 2.4 Challenges for ABC in Spånga-Tensta

Local public sector organisations and managers were identified as a key target group for the successful implementation of the ABC programme. A major challenge for the project, was to convince managers in Spånga-Tensta to invest in the ABC programme. It can always be a challenge to get organisations and executives to invest in new methods and new strategies that require time and resources. However, after local public sector managers were given the opportunity to attend a first ABC programme meeting, they then gave the ABC programme their full support.

Recruiting enough parents to participate was initially a challenge in Spånga-Tensta, and this continues to be difficult in other city districts where implementation is still in its early stages. It is probably partly a question of reaching a critical mass of parents who have taken part in the programme, to ensure it builds awareness and a good reputation: recruiting participants is then no longer a problem.

## 2.5 Future plans and dissemination

The 2012 Stockholm city budget contains a directive to provide more parental support, as a preventative measure to ensure social inclusion for all young people in Stockholm. This policy area has therefore received additional financial resources. The extensive evaluation of ABC by the Karolinska Institute will help to clarify whether or not to roll out the ABC programme. However, it is already apparent that ABC roll out should be made an urgent priority, to meet the major political commitment in the city's budget to implement parental support programmes. The inclusive ABC programme has been successfully tested in the Spånga-Tensta district, and has been shown to play an important role in the active inclusion of vulnerable young children and their parents. It is therefore ready to be implemented on a larger scale.

## 2.6 Additional Information

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## ANNEX.

### Websites

[www.stockholm.se](http://www.stockholm.se)

[www.uskaab.se](http://www.uskaab.se)

[www.scb.se](http://www.scb.se)

[www.allabarnicentrum.se](http://www.allabarnicentrum.se)

[www.stockholm.se/foraldrkraft-spanga-tensta](http://www.stockholm.se/foraldrkraft-spanga-tensta)

### Interviews

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Kajsa Lönn - Rhodin, PLUS, Social Affairs Administration, City of Stockholm (6<sup>th</sup> March 2012).

### Published research

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### Statistics

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Stockholms Stads Utrednings- och Statistikkontor AB, Population, 2010-12-21

Stockholms Stads Utrednings- och Statistikkontor AB, Befolkningen i Stockholm 1252-2005, 2005



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