



# Cities on the frontline: local practices for active inclusion in Stockholm

Botorg project for homeless young adults

**Cities for Active Inclusion**

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## CITIES FOR ACTIVE INCLUSION

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The EUROCITIES Network of Local Authority Observatories on Active Inclusion (EUROCITIES-NLAO) is a dynamic network of nine European cities - Barcelona, Birmingham, Bologna, Brno, Copenhagen, Lille Métropole - Roubaix, Rotterdam, Sofia and Stockholm - each with a Local Authority Observatory (LAO) within its administration. Their aim is to share information, promote mutual learning and carry out research on the implementation of the active inclusion strategies at the local level.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Policy area

Homelessness as a policy area has been prioritised in the city of Stockholm for many years, and is still a priority. Although the number of homeless people in the city has decreased, one of the goals of the city's budgetary plan is to halve the number of people who are homeless. Homelessness remains high on the political agenda: homelessness is a key factor in the exclusion of people from the labour market, and in addition, it has been shown to be of major concern to the general public.

Stockholm is the capital of Sweden and has a population of 881 235 people<sup>1</sup>. In 2012, the total number of homeless people in the city was 2 866 (3.3% of the total population). This is the lowest number since data on the number of homeless people started being collected in 2004<sup>2</sup>. From 2004 to 2012, the population of homeless people in Stockholm decreased by 497 people (a 17.4% decrease). However, homelessness among some groups of people, including EU migrants and young adults, has increased over the last decade or so. As a result, over the past few years, Stockholm has introduced new services to help EU migrants, and an active inclusion approach to combat homelessness among young adults.

The city of Stockholm has what is known as a 'roof over your head' guarantee, which implies that no one should be forced to sleep rough. Acute housing, in the form of emergency night shelters, is available for homeless people over 20 years old. However, these shelters are not considered to be an adequate solution for young adults (aged under 25 years old), since the environment is characterised by clients with serious long-term addiction problems.

Between 2004 and 2007, the annual number of young adults aged 20 to 25 years old who stayed at least one night at Stockholm's night shelters increased from 80 to 100 unique individuals. Although these young adults normally stayed only a few nights on each occasion, there was clearly a growing problem for this age group.

So, in 2008, in order to prevent homelessness among young adults, the city of Stockholm launched a project called 'Young adults in shelters' (Unga vuxna på härbärke), funded by the Stockholm county administrative board<sup>3</sup>.

One of the aims of this project was to obtain more information about young adults who make use of emergency night shelters, through field research using an outreach approach.

Another aim of this project was to make contact with these young adults at the emergency night shelters, and redirect them to the appropriate social services in their city district, or to the city's central unit for homelessness. The goal was to find alternative housing solutions, as the shelters are not suitable environments for young adults. Most of the other clients in the emergency night shelters have serious substance abuse problems, and this is not a preventative environment for young adults: being in a substance-abuse environment can cause further problems for a young person.

Feedback from the 'Young adults in shelters' project showed that there was a need to provide information and counselling for young adults who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Three common characteristics for the young adults who had used emergency shelters were: firstly, a lack

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<sup>1</sup> Source: SCB, 31 December 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Stockholm defines a homeless person as someone without their own housing or a permanent home, who instead relies on temporary accommodation or sleeps rough: it includes people living in institutions or shelters with no permanent home to go to once they leave, and people staying temporarily with friends or relatives for more than 3 months.

<sup>3</sup> The Stockholm County Administrative Board is the regional represents of the national government and the coordinating body for state activities in Stockholm county.

of knowledge about the welfare system and how to apply for support; secondly, the total absence of a useful, positive network of friends and acquaintances; and thirdly, an existing network of friends and acquaintances who were, in general, a bad influence.

In 2010, a second project, based on experience from 'Young adults in shelters', was launched: this was the 'Young adults who are homeless or at risk of homelessness' project (Unga vuxna i hemlöshet eller i riskzon för hemlöshet). This follow-up project ran until the end of 2011. Its aim was to provide early interventions for young people aged 18 to 25 years old who were homeless or at risk of homelessness. The idea was to intervene at an early stage before the situation becomes acute, by linking the young person to different social support services.

Conclusions drawn from the 'Young adults who are homeless or at risk of homelessness' project included the following:

- it is important to ensure that the necessary social support services are available
- in Stockholm there is a lack of suitable 'dry' (drug-free and alcohol-free) housing that offers individual support for young adults
- more effective methods are needed to identify young adults at risk of homelessness in each of the city districts
- better internal cooperation among the relevant city departments and agencies is needed<sup>4</sup>
- As a result of this second project and the above conclusions, the city launched project Botorg (see Section 2 below).

## 1.2 Target group of homeless young adults

Homeless young adults form a very heterogeneous group. There are many different reasons for young adults being homeless or at risk of homelessness. In addition, many suffer from multiple disadvantages, for example, particular family situations, alcohol dependency, disabilities, and/or mental health issues.

But although young homeless adults may face many different issues, in general, most homeless young people experience one or more of the following problems: mental illness; addiction, most often to cannabis, which can lead to criminality to fund the addiction; low educational attainment e.g. due to dropping out of school; no contact with the labour market; and a lack of a useful positive network of friends and acquaintances.

In a study undertaken by the 'Young adults who are homeless or at risk of homelessness' project, around 40% of the young adults who were interviewed said that they had been thrown out of home. Some of them were thrown out because of addiction problems; others were thrown out simply because they were considered to be adults when they reached 18 years old, and were told by their parents that if they did not contribute to the family finances, they had to leave home. According to a recent study conducted by Sweden's national health and welfare department, one third (33 %) of young adults who were homeless said that family related problems were a cause of their homelessness, compared to only 19% of all the homeless people interviewed across all age groups<sup>5</sup>.

Although the situation for many homeless people is very complicated, and many lack the motivation to try and solve their complex problems, experience has shown that young adults who are homeless are generally very motivated to create change. Usually, only a small amount of support is needed: this can be very effective in contributing to positive changes in young adults' lives.

<sup>4</sup> Source: Elisabet Karlsson Rådelius och Håkan Källmén: Utvärdering av Botorg för unga vuxna, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Source: Elisabet Karlsson Rådelius och Håkan Källmén: Utvärdering av Botorg för unga vuxna, 2013.

### 1.3 Trends in homelessness in Stockholm

As mentioned earlier, although the total number of homeless people living in Stockholm is declining, homelessness among EU-migrants<sup>6</sup> and among young adults is increasing. Furthermore, there is a very slight increase in the proportion, and number, of homeless women: in 2012, 27% of homeless people were female, whereas in 2010, the figure was 26%. Also, the data shows that the homeless women tend to be younger than the homeless men. In the 'Young adults who are homeless or at risk of homelessness' project, 36% per cent of the homeless young adults who took part in the project were women.

As in many other cities across Europe, a long term trend in Stockholm is that young adults are finding it increasingly difficult to enter the housing market. Many apartments that were formerly rented out<sup>7</sup> have been sold to owner-occupiers; and very few affordable rental apartments are available. To become independently housed with a tenancy contract, in Stockholm's municipal rented housing system, young adults can register to join the waiting list. But it takes many years for most people to receive their own tenancy contract: the waiting list is open and non-means-tested, and there is no priority for special groups such as homeless young adults or families. In addition, over the last few decades, private landlords have become stricter when choosing new tenants. For example, a potential new tenant who is in debt will generally not be accepted. Sometimes, the city has to act as the guarantor for the rent: the city guarantees to pay the rent if the tenant fails to do so.

## 2. CASE STUDY: THE BOTORG PROJECT FOR HOMELESS YOUNG ADULTS: HOUSING-RELATED INFORMATION, ADVICE AND COUNSELLING

One example of an initiative that Stockholm is using to promote the active inclusion of young adults with a housing problem is the Botorg project (known as 'Botorget' in Swedish, which means 'a housing meeting place'). Stockholm's Botorg project offers integrated information, advice and counselling services to young adults aged 18 and 25 years old who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Based in premises in the southern inner city district of Sodermalm, Botorg was launched on 1 March 2012.

As well as providing advice and counselling, the project also aims to develop new and even more effective methods to help vulnerable young adults avoid homelessness. The Botorg project is therefore working in close cooperation with the Stockholm's social affairs administration and all 14 city districts. The Botorg team currently consists of a project manager and three counsellors: a fourth counsellor is to join the team soon. Around 40% of those using the services are women.

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<sup>6</sup> Migrants coming mainly from Romania and other countries in eastern Europe. The proportion of third country citizens, many originating from north Africa and with residence in another EU country (e.g. Italy, Spain, France) has increased: they now account for around 50% of homeless EU-migrants in Stockholm (2013).

<sup>7</sup> In the municipal housing system (housing companies owned by the city), the rent level is decided in negotiations between the housing organisations and the union of tenants; this does not apply to social housing.

## 2.1 Overview of the Botorg project

The Botorg project offers individually designed support in order to meet the personal needs and problems of each homeless young adult, as effectively as possible. The idea is to offer different levels of support based on the client's individual needs. The aim is to empower each young adult: by having individual case management support, clients are empowered to take action to change their situation for the better. This approach contains elements of cognitive behavioural therapy<sup>8</sup>.

The overall objective of the project is to eliminate homelessness among young adults in the city of Stockholm. An expected result is that clients will know more about their housing options in Stockholm, which will give them better opportunities to move into stable long-term accommodation. Access to the Botorg services is completely voluntary and unconditional: participation is not mandatory. This contrasts with some other municipal active inclusion programmes, such as the job centres<sup>9</sup>, which people receiving social welfare benefits are required to attend<sup>10</sup>. The city's district administrations can advise their clients to contact Botorg, but they cannot force them to do so.

The Botorg project consists of three elements:

- **a counselling service:** based at the Botorg centre
- **housing advice service:** also based at the Botorg centre
- **outreach work:** including daily monitoring visits to the emergency night shelters.

Botorg provides clients with: advice regarding housing issues; information and support on social matters, such as their right to financial support and benefits, and how to obtain further information; how to contact the relevant authorities; and how to look for housing in a structured way. In addition, an important role for the Botorg project team is to direct these disadvantaged young adults to other appropriate services, such as treatment for drug abuse, or medical services that specialise in treating mental issues or disabilities.

The Botorg centre operates a drop-in service each weekday afternoon (1pm to 3pm): during this time, clients can ask for help and advice without an appointment. At other times, advice and assistance is by appointment: during normal business hours each weekday. In addition, a telephone service is open during office hours, both to support young adults who need assistance, and to advise other professionals working with young adults who are homeless or near-homeless.

In terms of the counselling provided to clients by Botorg, an important method used is motivational interviewing (MI). This is an evidence-based conversation approach which aims to help people recognise their own need for behavioural change. Motivational interviewing originated in work to address alcohol abuse. It uses a collaborative style: it emphasises the client's autonomy, explores how the client views their situation, and encourages the client's self-motivation by affirming their own ideas, beliefs and goals. All members of the Botorg team are trained in motivational interviewing.

As part of the practical housing advice given to homeless young adults, one of the solutions offered by the Botorg team is to suggest that clients look for accommodation in other Swedish towns and cities. It is often much easier to find an apartment in other areas of the country, and the Botorg centre has a list of municipalities with available apartments. However, although a few clients do consider moving to another part of the country, most of them want to stay in Stockholm.

<sup>8</sup> Cognitive behavioural therapy is based on the assumption that a person's problems originate in how they see themselves: changing their patterns of thinking and behavior helps them to solve their problems.

<sup>9</sup> Jobbtorg.

<sup>10</sup> People receiving social welfare benefits in Sweden are required to attend the Jobbtorg (job centre) i.e. they must be actively searching for a job.

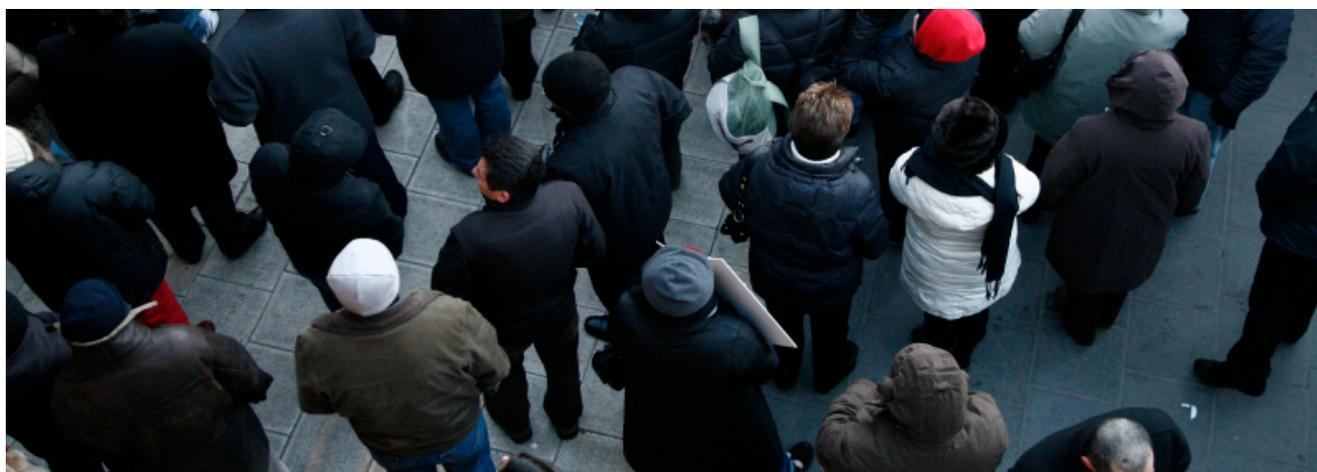
To meet immediate housing requirements for crisis situations, the Botorg centre has a number of suitable emergency and short term housing possibilities that they can offer to young adults. These include six private rooms at the Botorg centre itself. Here, six clients can be accommodated temporarily; and there is a shared kitchen, and a shared sitting room for relaxing and watching TV. Clients staying at the Botorg centre must agree to abide by a number of rules. For example, no illegal drugs are allowed in the building. In addition, the Botorg team can refer clients to other short-term housing possibilities in other premises.

As a result of the close cooperation between Botorg and the municipal and district authorities, the outlook for most young homeless adults who visit the Botorg centre is positive: the team can offer various opportunities to help them move into supported accommodation and eventually into independent housing.

Outreach work is the third element of the Botorg project. On a daily basis, one of the Botorg team is responsible for monitoring whether any young adult has been staying overnight at one of Stockholm's emergency night shelters. On average, every week there is at least one adult under 26 years old who has been staying at one of the shelters. The aim is to intervene as early as possible, to direct the young adult to the relevant services if these are needed, and to help the person find more appropriate housing.

Young adults who end up staying overnight at one of the city's night shelters often have an addiction problem. This makes it harder to find a housing solution, as many of the housing options offered by the city are 'dry' (alcohol- and drug-free). An additional reason for daily monitoring of young adults staying at night shelters is to provide the city with accurate statistics. This helps the city to assess the scale of the problem, and the effectiveness of the services provided, and helps in developing new solutions.

To increase the supply of appropriate housing for homeless young adults in Stockholm, one successful approach that project Botorg has been using is to encourage all the various stakeholders to work together more closely. Organisations that are now cooperating to find further suitable housing solutions include: the city's outreach unit; Stockholm's acute services for young people and acute social services<sup>11</sup>; the homelessness unit; night shelters and other emergency accommodation; NGOs; probation care; police; and social workers in the city districts. This cooperation is not formalised in an agreement; instead, it is maintained informally, by keeping in touch and through frequent ad hoc discussions and meetings.



<sup>11</sup> Acute services for young people and acute social services both provide support services outside normal office hours, when the ordinary administration is closed.

## 2.2 Key successes

The Botorg centre team has worked with many young adults since the start of the project. In 2012, the open information and advice service had 493 interventions: 298 men and 195 women. Of these contacts, 348 visited the Botorg centre in person, while 126 used the telephone service. The remaining 19 people received other help: for example, they were accompanied and supported at meetings with the city district administration, or with other authorities such as the public employment service, or the social insurance agency.

The Botorg project has developed a system to collaborate with the city's supported housing schemes, so that young adults can use these rooms when there are vacancies. In particular, Botorg has created a cooperation agreement with six drug-free and alcohol-free supported housing facilities: Bandhagshemmen (two facilities), Lönner, Syrenena (two facilities for women only) and Giovanni.

In total, during 2012, 75 young people received emergency short-term housing thanks to the cooperation between Botorg and the supported housing facilities. The alternative for these young adults would have been emergency night shelters, hostels or sleeping rough, all of which pose significant risks to young adults. Between them, these 75 young adults stayed for a total of 667 nights. In addition to providing more suitable accommodation to these vulnerable young adults, this represented a major financial saving: the city was able to use of these vacancies instead of paying for 667 hostel nights. In fact, this has proved to be a logical solution for improving the use of existing resources.

At the end of almost every conversation with clients, Botorg asks two evaluation questions to help assess how well the project is achieving two of its key goals: to give clients increased knowledge, and to improve their ability to gain stable accommodation. Clients are asked whether, as a result of contacting the Botorg centre, they now have better knowledge about the support services and housing options available, and whether their ability to find housing has improved. During 2012, of the 363 young adult clients who responded to the first question, 321 (88%) said that they now had better knowledge about the support services and housing options available to them. Of the 340 young adults who responded to the second questions, 291 (86%) said that their ability to find stable accommodation

had increased after support from Botorg.

Botorg project manager, Anette Arebo, also highlighted another important outcome of the various projects to date: they have raised awareness among the city's district administrations about the serious situation faced by young adults who are



homeless or risk of homelessness.<sup>12</sup> Three of Stockholm's 14 city districts have started a one-stop-shop service for young adults, which was originally identified as a need in the project 'Young adults who are homeless or at risk of homelessness'.

Some city districts are now also helping young adults to move into long-term privately-owned accommodation, by lending them the money to cover the deposit that is normally required when renting from a private landlord. This loan is separate from any benefit payments. Until recently, all the city districts had refused to help with loans for these deposits. As a result, young clients often ended up in a no-win catch-22 situation: they were encouraged to search for stable long-term accommodation, in the form of a room or an apartment to rent, but were then unable to accept it because they had no resources for the deposit.

Results of an in-depth interview study with eight Botorg clients, conducted by two researchers, indicated that Botorg's team of staff have provided a range of support to these young adults. Much of the support described in the respondents' stories is similar to the support that parents would usually provide.

These young adults facing homelessness explained that staff at the Botorg centre had helped them in the following ways:

- providing temporary accommodation at the Botorg centre
- computer and other support in order to register for housing searches on the web
- support with writing personal presentations and CVs
- learning effective ways of contacting the various authorities e.g. by preparing a check list before phoning
- debt counselling and financial advice e.g. how to negotiate a re-payment plan
- information about living in mainstream society e.g. obligations, rights, learning to follow social rules
- contacting a doctor or psychologist
- staff accompanied them to meetings/looking at apartments/medical appointments, and provided support and advice
- information on education opportunities and the motivation to start an education
- staff acted as a role model, pointing out obligations and how to exercise control
- emotional support, including supportive conversations
- counselling sessions, including the ease of making a counselling appointment.

This interview study confirms that the Botorg project provides effective intervention: all the clients who were interviewed felt that they had received adequate help from Botorg, and that this had empowered them<sup>13</sup>.

According to the most recent figures, in Stockholm, the number of young adults aged 20 to 25 years old who are homeless has been decreasing: from 314 in 2010, down to 256 in 2012 (an 18% decrease.) This is a reassuring result, especially, as manager Anette Arebo points out, because there is now a far higher awareness of the problem of homelessness for young adults, due to projects such as Botorg. It is often the case that higher awareness of a problem can result in the authorities taking more care to count all those with that problem (i.e. all those who are homeless), and more thorough reporting can lead to more homeless young adults being included in the figures. The fact that the figures are down is very encouraging.

On an individual level, all clients who received support from the Botorg project were linked to appropriate employment services, such as Jobbtorg (the job centre).

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Anette Arebo, manager of Botorg: 27 February 2013.

<sup>13</sup> Evaluation of project Botorg for young adults: survey of clients in outpatient counselling and interviews with young adults who live or have lived in Botorg's temporary accommodation (Utvärdering av Botorg för unga vuxna), Elisabet Karlsson Rådelius och Håkan Källmén, 2013.

## 2.3 Challenges

The Botorg project shows that a major challenge for Stockholm is increasing the use of early-intervention. There is still a need to develop effective methods of identifying young adults who are at risk of homelessness at a much earlier stage, and to develop effective early support that will prevent them from becoming homeless in the first place. This will reduce the risks associated with using unsuitable emergency accommodation.

To meet this challenge, even better co-ordination of the different public services is needed. Although coordination of all the various municipal services has improved since 2008, when the first project for homeless young adults was launched, the services need to be coordinated more closely. Young adults who are homeless or near homeless often have multiple problems, so cooperation between the various authorities and other stakeholders is crucial. It is also a matter of raising awareness even further, which Botorg has already done with considerable success. It takes time to integrate services, and ensure cooperation between stakeholders, and more initiatives would help to further improve the knowledge and awareness, within the different authorities and city districts, about the housing problems facing young adults.

A particular challenge is the high level of staff turnover at the social welfare unit: this means that the Botorg centre needs to maintain a constant dialogue with the unit, in order to ensure new staff are aware of the serious housing problems for young adults and have the necessary information. Another challenge, which had already been identified in the 'Young adults who are homeless or at risk of homelessness' project (2010-2011) is the need for social services to be far more accessible, especially online.

To try to meet this challenge, another project in Stockholm, the Social Online Project, is developing social services work on the internet<sup>14</sup>. For example, social counselling on the internet, open to all citizens in Stockholm, was launched in May 2013.

In terms of providing more suitable emergency accommodation, it is still a challenge to find alternatives to night shelters, for young adults with addictions, as suitable short-term housing for young adults is always substance-free. Homeless projects such as 'Young adults in homelessness', and Botorg, have sometimes solved this problem by dividing premises into separate sections: allocating some parts to homeless older people with addictions, and other parts for homeless young adults with addictions.



A further challenge is how best to identify each client's problems. When a young adult first contacts the Botorg project, there are usually many different aspects of their situation to be taken into account, and sometimes the Botorg staff need to meet a client several times in order to identify all the various issues. According to Anette Arebo, manager of the Botorg project, it would be useful to develop a faster and more efficient initial assessment process, so that each client's problems could be identified in a single session<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> <http://bit.ly/134VHTh>.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Anette Arebo, Manager of the Botorg project: 27 February 2013.

## 2.4 Future plans and dissemination

For the future, Stockholm's social affairs administration will continue to work with initiatives to support young adults facing homelessness, and will use the experiences gained in projects undertaken so far: 'Young adults in shelters'; 'Young adults in homelessness'; and Botorg. After the end of 2013, it is expected that the Botorg experience may be used to create a new project to address homelessness in young adults, with a clear mission to develop the Botorg methods further. Alternatively, the Botorg approach will be implemented as a mainstream service, but on a smaller scale.



One specific future plan, within the work with homeless young adults, is to further improve the process of finding more housing opportunities. The Botorg team has already achieved significant progress, by encouraging collaboration with the city's supported housing facilities. But there are still further opportunities to identify further suitable accommodation. As manager Anette Arebo points out: "...there are still empty beds out there: you just need to find them"<sup>16</sup>.

To sum up, the Botorg project is a good example of the active inclusion of people who are furthest from the labour market in Stockholm, in line with the EU active inclusion strategy. The underlying aims of Stockholm's Botorg project are to prevent young adults from becoming homeless long-term, to direct them to their right to a minimum income (in the form of social welfare benefits), ensure they receive high quality social services, and thereby empower them to enter the labour market.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

## 2.5 Additional information

Basic information	Web link & Contact person
<p><b>Funding:</b> Young adults facing homelessness were prioritised as a key development group in Stockholm's 2012 budget. So Stockholm's social affairs administration applied to the city's central reserve budget to obtain funding for the Botorg project, in order to develop new active inclusion methods for young adults facing homelessness. 2012 funding was around €600,000.</p> <p><b>Location:</b> The Botorg centre is at Krukmakargatan 36A, Södermalm, Stockholm (the southern inner city district).</p> <p><b>Start and end dates:</b> Botorg opened on 1 March 2012, and closes in December 2013.</p>	<p><b>Contact person:</b> Anette Arebo, Botorg Project Manager tel: +46 8 508 25 658 email: <a href="mailto:anette.arebo@stockholm.se">anette.arebo@stockholm.se</a></p>

## ANNEX 1

### Internet source:

Stockholm city website: [www.stockholm.se](http://www.stockholm.se).

### Interview source:

Anette Arebo, Botorg Project Manager, City of Stockholm, 27 February 2013.

### Published sources:

1. Proposal document for the Botorg project (Förebyggande projekt för unga vuxna 18-25 år i eller med risk för hemlöshet. Bo-torg stöd och rådgivning i boendefrågor och jourboende för unga vuxna) Stockholms stad, 2011
2. Homelessness in the city of Stockholm (Hemlösa i Stockholms stad) 18 April 2012
3. Progress report for project Botorg (Lägesrapport Projekt Botorg) Stockholm city, 2013
4. Young adults in shelters: final report (Unga vuxna på härbärge: slutrapport:)Stockholm city, 2009.
5. Young adults in homelessness or at risk of homelessness: final report (Unga vuxna i hemlöshet eller riskzon för hemlöshet: slutrapport) (Final report) Stockholm city, 2011.
6. Evaluation of project Botorg for young adults: survey of clients in outpatient counselling and interviews with young adults who live or have lived in Botorg's temporary accommodation (Utvärdering av Botorg för unga vuxna. Kartläggning av klienter i öppen rådgivning och intervjuer med unga vuxna som bor eller har bott i Botorgs tillfälliga boende) (Elisabet Karlsson Rådelius and Håkan Källmén, STAD, Centrum för psykiatriforskning SLL, Karolinska Institutet, 2013.



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