

” Barnrättsbyrån  
är fantastiska!  
När jag är här  
känner jag mig ”  
verkligen trygg.”







Stockholms

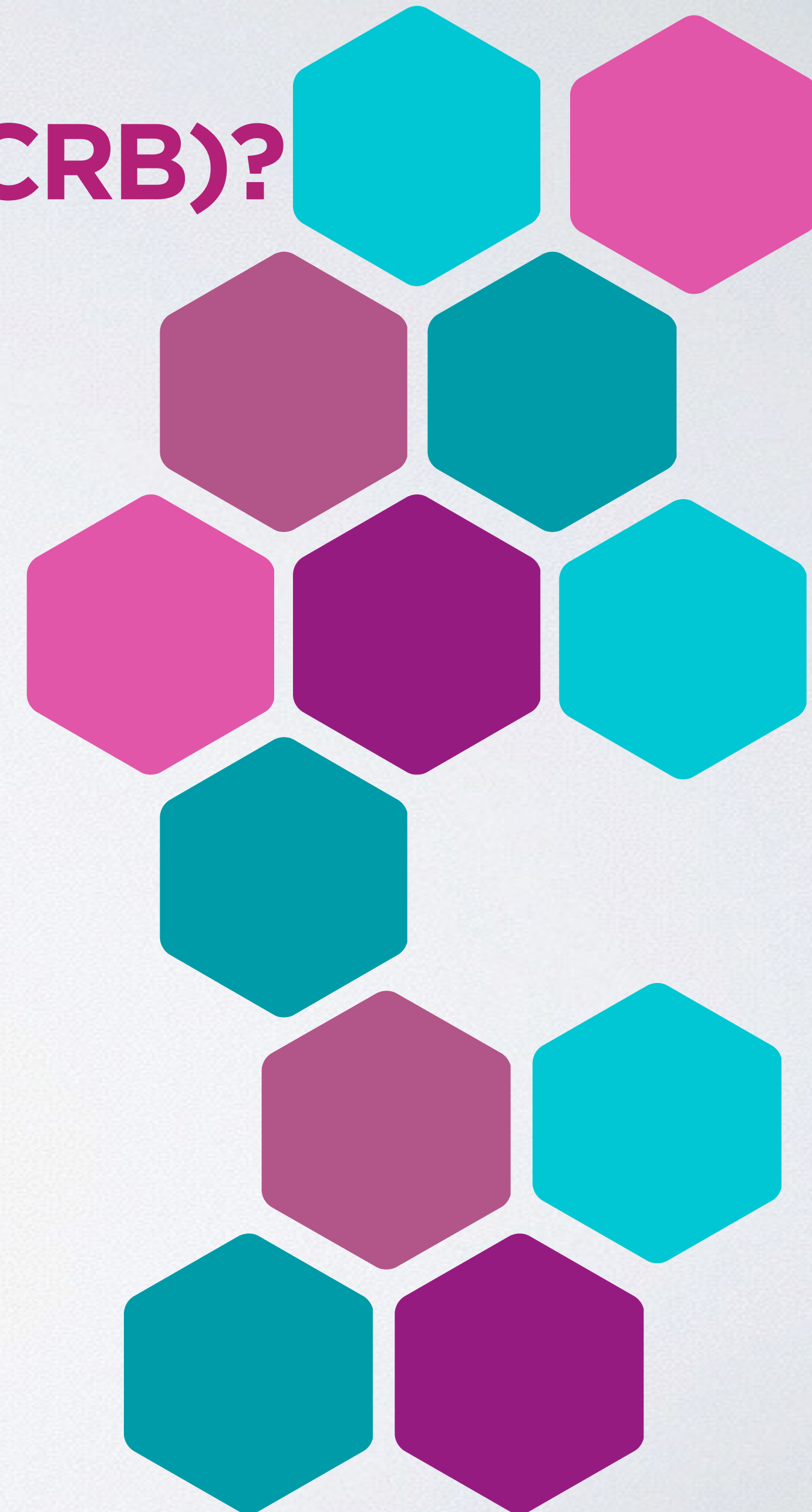




# What is the Child Rights Bureau (CRB)?

**The CRB is an independent NGO (2015) and the first rights based child advocacy service in Sweden.**

- **Offer children and young people (0-21 yrs) independent advocacy**  
Social and legal support on self-referral basis. Holistic and wide approach: all rights under the CRC.
- **Structural advocacy work**  
We use our children's experiences to pressure government, authorities and civil society to change.





# This is about John

**John is 16 years old. During the last few weeks he has slept on friends' couches, on the tube and in a garage. It's December 2013.**

John has been in touch with social services and was housed for a week but then asked to go home. Social services makes it clear, after speaking to the dad, that they will not be able to help John as his dad accepts him to come home.

At home John is subject to physical and mental abuse.

When he returns, his dad throws him out again.

John does not know where to turn, has no knowledge of his rights, are not aware of possibility of appeal. He starts sleeping rough in December 2013.

Through a friend, John gets in touch with CRB.





# The problem



- Although a well developed social and legal system in Sweden, children's rights are still violated.
- Struggling authorities.
- The system is difficult to navigate within and consists of web of authorities and stakeholders.
- The system often demands that a child has a competent help-seeking adult by their side.
- Access to legal representation limited to certain processes and areas of law.
- The complaint systems available are not child friendly nor accessible.
- Critique from the CRC committee: no accessible complaints mechanism for children.



### **Child Rights Bureau's history (and mine...)**

- **2002 Elin in Manchester, working with homeless kids (and doing a BA). Gets frustrated.**
- **2006 Elin moves to London, starts at Kids Company.**
- **2009 Moves to Sweden and ChildLine (BRIS).**
- **2010 Opportunity to write a pre-study for new innovative children's project in Stockholm (Ersta diakoni)**
- **2011 Launch of the Child Rights Bureau (a 3-year project).**
- **2015 the NGO Child Rights Bureau is created and takes over the running of the service.**
- **June 2015 the CRB is referred to in a commission of enquiry as an example of a possible new function for Sweden.**



# What is advocacy?

*Advocacy is about speaking up for children and young people.*

*Advocacy is about empowering children and young people to make sure that their rights are respected and their views and wishes are heard at all times.*

*Advocacy is about representing the views, wishes and needs of children and young people to decision-makers, and helping them to navigate the system.*

National standards for the provision of children's advocacy services,  
UK Department of Health 2003





# The aim (in short)



- The child receives all help and interventions that they are entitled to and want.
- They experience a positive change in their life.
- They feel hope in society.



# Our kids - the ones who have slipped through the net

Vulnerable and an adults-bad-at-reaching-group.  
200+ cases since 2011.

- Average age 16,5, equal boys/girls. Stockholm area.
- Often lone children, lacking supportive networks
- Feel they have not been listened to or believed in.
- 70 % in care, homeless, thrown out of home, or in other unstable housing situation.
- Subject to physical, sexual and emotional abuse.
- Children/YPs in migration processes, undocumented.
- Complex legal issues.
- **Requesting support in contact with authorities.**





# So what do we actually do?



- Work on behalf of the young person - together we form an assignment they give to us.
- Case work - one key worker assigned.
- Multi professional team (legal advisor, social worker, structural/policy).
- Relationship based, systemic approach, attachment theory.
- Listen and believe. Inform about rights.
- Making/support in contact with authorities. Make referrals.
- Accompany to meetings.
- Coordinate network. Be the catalyst.
- Legal advice.
- When needed, take things further (managerial level, national boards, appeals in court, ombudsmen)





## **OUR IDEOLOGICAL BASE**

- We believe in children.
- We like them.
- Children do well if they can.







ETT AV ALLA BARN SOM FÅTT HJÄLP AV BARNRÄTTSBYRÅN.

# What happened to John?

- Immediate referral to social services, inc. referral meeting.
- Dispute regarding which local authority is responsible (numerous e-mails and phone calls).
- Social services continues to deny John housing and support, says he can go home.
- John too scared to go home. Does one attempt, gets physically abused and thrown out middle of the night. This is communicated to social services.
- Accompanying to duty social services three times to get emergency housing.
- 10 e-mails to duty social services to argue for John's right to emergency housing.
- E-mails to managers explaining the situation and John's acute homelessness.
- Another meeting, an assessment is initiated. A social worker is allocated.
- John's application for supported housing is approved. Moves in to new accommodation February 2014.
- Shortly after, his younger sister is also accommodated.
- **Today: John has just finished his A-levels (gymnasium), he has been in the same placement since January and has a good relationship with his social worker.**
- **We are still supporting him and attended his graduation. Currently helping him applying for university.**





# Key learnings



- Don't be the expert - let the kid set the agenda! Form your interventions after their requests and needs.
- No boxing and labeling! Widest possible target group: all rights under the CRC.
- Lacking the knowledge? Employ detectives.
- Work together.
- Talk about ideology all the time.



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Isn't the solution that we strengthen our authorities? Is it not a matter of resources? Surely, in a perfect world there would be no need of a Child Rights Bureau?



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Could not agree more.

But until we have the perfect world, we  
have some work to do.





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