

SUOMI - FINLAND

Overview of residential child care

Journal abstracts

What could explain the dramatic rise in out-of-home placement in Finland in the 1990s and early 2000s?

Author: Hiillamo, Heikki.

Publication info: Children and Youth Services Review 31. 2 (Feb 2009): 177-184.

Abstract: Objectives Despite exceptionally favourable economic conditions and school children's outstanding educational attainment the number of children placed outside their home in Finland has increased rapidly in the 1990s and early 2000s. This study identifies factors that are related to a child's risk of placement outside the home in Finland and tries to explore possible explanations for an increase in the share of children placed outside the home. Methods: A regression analysis was applied to study the share of children placed outside the home and suggested risk factor indicators on sub-regional level. The use of sub-regional data from SOTKANet indicator bank allowed us to test indicators for seven areas, namely family structure (single parenthood), receipt of social assistance, unemployment, parents' alcohol and substance abuse, parents' mental health, domestic violence and abortion. Educational level, number of social workers and domestic migration were included as background factors. Results: Child placement outside home in Finland is most clearly associated with long-term economic hardships. However, the results indicate that the rate of change in the share of children placed outside the home is associated with alcohol and substance abuse. Conclusions: The results suggest that the Finnish success story as a world leader in children's issues has a darker side. A change in the distribution of welfare in Finland seems to place the children in the margin of the society into a more disadvantaged position. [Copyright Elsevier B.V.]

On the margin? Residential child care in Scotland and Finland.

Author: Francis, Joe; Kendrick, Andrew; Poso, Tarja.

Publication info: European Journal of Social Work 10. 3 (Sep 2007): 337-352.

Abstract: Situated on the margins of Europe, Scotland and Finland are small countries which share similar demographic and economic profiles. In many European countries, residential child care can also be considered to be 'on the margin' of child care provision; there is ambivalence about residential care and a view that it should be used as a last resort. This paper examines systems and practices of residential care in Scotland and Finland, locating these in the context of wider child welfare policy in both countries. The underpinning principles of child welfare provision in both countries are similar-based on children's rights and primarily family-focused. In both countries there are also similar concerns about the fragmentation of child care provision and the cost of residential services. However, there are also important differences relating to child welfare provision and the use of residential care. In Finland, overall numbers of children in residential care are much greater than in Scotland; the age profile of these children and young people is very different; and the two countries vary markedly in the use of secure accommodation and custody. This comparative analysis suggests new ways of understanding the similarities and difference in the use of residential care in the two countries. It highlights the continuing challenge to develop residential care as a positive and integral part of a continuum of care services. Reprinted by permission of Taylor and Francis.

High-risk youth transitions to adulthood: A longitudinal view of youth leaving the residential education in Finland.

Author: Jahnukainen, Markku.

Publication info: Children and Youth Services Review 29. 5 (May 2007): 637-654.

Abstract: This paper is based on a Finnish study, where the post-adjustment of the students of the residential education for high-risk adolescents in Finland was followed-up in 2002. On the basis of the qualitative descriptions it is evident that a placement in residential education can be followed by different life courses. These are grouped here as three main pathways, (1) 'making it'-pathway, (2) 'living on the edge', and (3) 'mixed'-pathway. The results indicate that, in particular, young males are at high risk of cumulative risk behavior during the next years after leaving the institutions. However, in general, the life situations have stabilised during their early 20s, in particular for those young people who have committed a supporting partnership. [Copyright 2006 Elsevier B.V.]

Violence Talk and Gender in Youth Residential Care.

Author: Honkatukia, Paivi; Nyqvist, Leo; Poso, Tarja.

Publication info: Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention 8. 1 (2007): 56-76.

Abstract: The article focuses on violence and gender from the special point of view of meanings attached to violence. It is based on a study where the meanings of violence were studied among young people in residential child welfare institutions (reform schools) in Finland. Fifteen focus group interviews were conducted in two reform schools, with 38 participants between the ages of 12 and 17 years. Belligerent masculinities, vulnerable femininity and negotiable violence in heterosexual relationships were the strong gendered themes in the analysis. Within those themes, different positions were

available to the young. In the narrations, boys were violent actors in peer groups while violence as girls' activity or experience was clearly less talked about. The young people's interpretations of violence contained many cultural norms that are broadly shared but also criticized by society. As a result, child welfare and residential care face a demanding task in eliminating everyday practices that maintain violent relationships or experiences.

The Fuzzy Foster Parenting -- A Theoretical Approach.

Author: Isomaki, Veli-Pekka.

Publication info: The Social Science Journal 39. 4 (Oct 2002): 625-638.

Abstract: For those outside the family-care profession, it seems to be difficult to understand the nature of fostering. There are mixed opinions about the motives of why to begin as foster parents. People may even be astonished at the fact that the foster parents receive any remuneration at all for their job. The foster parents themselves are confused as well, for most of them think they just wanted to open their heart and home for children living in need of a safe and decent home. They soon find that the job is not merely parenting but frequently the work resembles that of nurses. The experience and targeted training provide the foster parents with expertise in a specialty area, and the foster parents usually work in a close cooperation with a net of authorities. Hence, we can very well call it a profession. There are several aspects that make foster parenting a special and complicated role. It differs from the role of an ordinary bioparent, but it is not quite like an adoptive parent either. The term foster parent itself is a fuzzy term, as are many of the concepts involved: motivation, income level of the family, and the health and behavior of the child. To understand the fuzzy nature of these concepts is to understand the fuzzy nature of the foster parenting altogether. This entity will get its expression as a model of the fuzzy reality of foster parenting. In this paper, some fuzzy logics are involved and simple models for measuring the suitability for (Fuzzy Measure of Aptitude of a Foster Family [FMAFF] and exacting nature of the foster parenting (Indicator for Exactingness of the Task and Need of Training and remuneration [IFEN] will be presented. This article deals primarily with the fostering situation in Finland, but in principle, most findings apply in any Western country. As a theoretical approach, based partly on discussions with acting foster parents and social workers, this paper includes some assumptions that should be surveyed empirically in the next phase of the research. Then, they will serve as hypotheses to be verified.

Finnish Children in Foster Care: Evaluating the Breakdown of Long-Term Placements.

Author: Kalland, Mirjam; Sinkkonen, Jari.

Publication info: Child Welfare 80. 5 (Sep 2001): 513-527.

Abstract: In Finland, the organization Save the Children studied risk factors associated with placement disruption or breakdown in cases where long-term foster care was intended. Before their placement in 180 foster families, most of the 234 children studied (75%) had experienced neglect. The follow-up time after initial placement averaged 4 years and 2 months. Achieving long-term beneficial foster care placement of children of varied ages and experiences with abuse and neglect involved considering the needs of the foster parents who may or may not have their own children or other children in their care. Some children were reunified with their parents; careful evaluation is needed before such reunion.

The Multinational Transfer of Competency-Based Foster Parent Assessment, Selection, and Training: A Nine-Country Case Study.

Author: Herczog, Maria; van Pagee, Rob; Pasztor, Eileen Mayers.

Publication info: Child Welfare 80. 5 (2001): 631-643.

Abstract: Describes transfer of methods of the PRIDE program for foster parent training and assessment from Sweden and Finland, to Hungary, Norway, Poland, and Estonia. Discusses three critical factors: program content, methodology used to accomplish the transfer, and commitment of the transferring organizations and individuals involved. Considers the impact on the transferring countries and the outcomes of the transfer.

Lived Space in the Children's Home

Author: Torronen, Maritta.

Publication info: Janus 8. 3 (2000): 266-280.

Abstract: This article focuses on the everyday lives in a children's home and how the children organize their social relations, applying an ethnographic methodology. The study concentrates on those ordinary aspects that often go unnoticed. This approach uses the concept of "lived space," which also provides a tool for examining the children's activities in time and space as a whole. The ethnographic research material was produced in the Helsinki region in southern Finland in 1996. All in all, it consists of photos, group interviews, notes taken during participant observations and other literary material. The duration of the total observation period was approximately eight months. The main conclusion is that children organize their social relations with adults and other children on the basis their involvement, engagement, and emotions. Without the sense of being an insider with important human relations and emotions, the children would not be prepared to commit themselves to life in an institution.

Psychosocial factors and adequacy of services for children in children's homes.

Author: Hukkanen, R; Sourander, A; Bergroth, L; Piha, J.

Publication info: European Child and Adolescent Psychiatry 8. 4 (Dec 1999): 268-275.

Abstract: Standardized methods of the Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL), Teacher's Report Form (TRF) and Children's Global Assessment Scale (CGAS) were used to evaluate psychosocial functioning of children in children's homes in Finland. Data on sociodemographic situations and traumatic events in their lives were also assembled. The percentage of behavioural and emotional problems within clinical or borderline range in the different ratings was 55-80%. Results show that the children in social service residential settings are a highly vulnerable group and that they have extensive mental health needs.

From the Child Welfare Trap to the Foster Care Trap

Author: Kahkonen, Paivi.

Publication info: Child Welfare 76. 3 (May 1997): 429-445.

Abstract: The inclusion of mother, father/partner, and child(ren) in child welfare practice during the placement process is examined via ethnographic content analysis of case records for 44 children in 32 families in Jyvaskyla, Finland. Findings show that social workers worked with mothers as the main clients, while fathers/partners and children were less visible. The construct of the foster care trap was introduced to highlight the fact that, eventually, mothers also were neglected by workers; after placement of the child, social workers focused on the foster family. As a result, along with the parent-child relationship breakdown, marital relationships faltered as well, destroying the family to which the child might eventually be returned.

Behavior problems and sexual abuse in residential care in children's homes.

Author: Hukkanen, Raija; Sourander, Andre; Bergroth, Lasse; Piha, Jorma.

Publication info: Nordisk Psykiatrisk Tidsskrift = Nordic Journal of Psychiatry 51. 4 (1997): 251-258.

Abstract: Behavior problems of 109 children and adolescents in residential care in children's homes in Finland were examined using the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL). 43% of children had total CBCL scores within clinical range. Boys were significantly more disturbed than girls, and a history of sexual abuse and no contact with parents were related to clinical range functioning. Furthermore, special school form and special children's home were associated with more serious behavior problems. A group of most disturbed children had been referred to psychotherapy. The implications of these results for clinical practice are discussed.

Specialized Family Care for Children with Developmental Disabilities: The Finnish Experience.

Author: Szymanski, Ludwik S; Seppala, Heikki T.

Publication info: Child Welfare 74. 2 (Mar 1995): 367-381.

Abstract: Finland's specialized family care for children with disabilities includes: professionalization and training of foster parents and the establishment of municipal employee-like status for them; long-term placements; and the preservation of relationships with biological families whenever possible. A case example of a 12-year-old child with mental retardation and autistic disorder who is in specialized care is included.

Child Welfare Services in Finland.

Author: Utriainen, Sirpa.

Publication info: Child Welfare 68. 2 (1989): 129-140.

Abstract: Describes Finland's child welfare system, including its general services, income supports, preventive services, foster care services, as well as the role of voluntary child welfare organizations. Also discusses the funding sources for child welfare work.

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