

PLACING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OUTSIDE THEIR HOMES IN DENMARK – NEW APPROACHES?

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Placements – historically constant conditions and new developments

Historically constant conditions:

- Frequency of placements
- Higher frequency in Denmark than in other countries?

New development:

- Preventive initiatives
- Longer placements
- More placements without consent from parents
- Increase in placements in foster care and decrease in placements in residential care centers

New approaches – a positive direction?

Findings from a recent study of foster families and the children who are placed in foster care

Historically constant conditions



Frequency of placements

around 1 % in 1918 (calculated estimate)

around 1 % in 1926

more than 1 % in 1950'ties and 1960'ties

more than 1 % in 1993

1,2 % in 2003

1,3 % in 2009

1,1 % in 2012

1,2 % in 2016 – in total 14.097 children

Higher frequency of placements in Denmark than in other countries?

Frequency of placements in Denmark, Norway, Sweden and England 2006-2014:

| | 2006 | 2010 | 2013 | 2014 |
|------------------------------|------|------|------|------|
| Denmark Aged 0-17 | 1,06 | 1,10 | 1,04 | 1,01 |
| Norway Aged 0-22 | 0,74 | 0,88 | 0,97 | 0,99 |
| Sweden Aged 0-20 | 0,65 | 0,74 | 0,98 | 0,93 |
| England Aged 0-17 | 0,55 | 0,58 | 0,60 | 0,60 |

New developments concerning placements



Preventive initiatives

- Children with supervision/counseling - around **4 % in 1932**
- Children with supervision/counseling - **3,7 % in 1953**
- Children and their families receiving one or more preventive initiatives - **3,6 % in 2000**
- Children and their families receiving one or more preventive initiatives - **3 % in 2014**
- Children and their families receiving one or more preventive initiatives - **2,2 % in 2016**

A decrease in preventive initiatives in the past years

Longer placements

- The duration of placements increased from **13 months in 1985 to 34 months in 2010** (RFF)
- Increase 2010-2015:
Foster care: from 5 years and 3 months to 5 years and 9 months – **6 more months**
Residential care: from 3 years and 3 months to 3 years and 7 months – **4 more months** (KL nøgletal 2018)
- Long-term placements have a positive effect on the children's lives as grown up – higher income and less unemployment (RFF)

More placements without consent from parents

- Placements without consent from parents are in **1985** **1,4 %**
- Placements without consent from parents have increased from **13 % in 2009** to **18,2 % in 2016**
- Placements without consent from parents in **foster care** are **23 %**
- The increase are mostly seen among the youngest children

Increase in foster care placements (1/2)

A current snapshot of placements (2016):

- Placements in total: 14.097
- Foster families – 60 % (including kinship/network foster families (7,5 %) and municipality foster families (3,2 %))
- Residential care centers – 18,5 %
- Private residential care centers – 13,2 %
- Other placements – 6,6 %

Increase in foster care placements (2/2)

A historical view on placements:

- Foster families – **15 %** of all placements in 50 years, from 1988 **40 %** in a period of 25 years, increase from 2010th to **60 %** in 2016
- Residential care centers – **most common** placement until the end of the 1980ties with **25 %** and **18,5 %** in 2016
- Private residential care centers – from 1970th **15 %** of all placements to **13,2 %** in 2016

Are placements in foster care better than placements at residential care centers

WE DO NOT KNOW

A lot of studies show that children in foster care are doing better on several parameters as grown ups than children who have been placed at residential care centers

BUT

We also know that the youngest children are placed in foster care (early intervention) and that the children placed in foster families have been seen as having less difficulties and special needs even before placement than children placed in residential care

New approaches – a positive direction?



Trends in placements of children in Denmark

- Increase in placements in foster care in the past two decades
- Decrease in placements in both types of residential care centers
- This increase call for more knowledge about foster families and more knowledge about the children placed in foster families

A Danish study about foster families and the children placed in foster families

- A nation-wide survey with two questionnaires to foster families
- One questionnaire about them selves – their characteristics and their view on their tasks etc. – in total 3.200 foster families, resposnrate 70-80 %
- Second questionnaire about the three latest children placed in their care – in total 4.770 children

Results of the study of foster families

- Some findings



The 'typical' Danish foster family (1/2)

- Married couples, age 45-65, who have been living together for more than 16 years
- Live in the countryside or in a small town in their owned house or farmhouse
- They have 2, 3 or 4 children, age of 20-30 - most of them have left home
- They are ethnic Danish (98,2 %) and they have an explicit christian view of life (82,5 %)

The 'typical' Danish foster family (2/2)

- They have been foster families for 10 to 15 years (in average 10,6 år)
- They have currently one or two children in care (more than 80 %), 10 % have 3 children in care, and 2 % have four children in care
- They have often children in weekend relief at the same time (55,6 %)
- They typically have a higher education than the average Danish population

Experiences and education

- Most foster families have **experiences** from working with children before they became foster families (80 %)
- Half of these foster families have **experiences** from working within day care, kindergartens and schools etc.
- 25 % of the foster families have **experiences** from working at residential centers
- Around 30 % have an **education** as pedagogues, 8 % have an education as teachers, 7 % have an education as social and health assistants etc.
- Half of the foster families **do not have an education** with relevance for being foster families

Analyses of various types of foster families

- Foster families with **experiences with 5 or more children** (N: 480)
- Foster families with an **education as pedagogues** (N: 897)
- Foster families with **foster care as only 'employment'** (N: 1.308)
- Foster families with **experiences from working at residential care centers** (N: 830)
- Foster families with **experiences from working in day care, kindergartens, schools** etc. (N: 1.280)
- Foster families who in their own view **did not know enough about foster care** before being a foster family (N: 1.218)
- Foster families with **no experiences from working with children** (N: 654)

Results of the study of types of foster families

- The different types of foster families look very much alike as to age, level of education, motives etc.
- Except foster families with **no experiences from working with children** – they have a lower level of education and more often economic motives

Characteristics of the children placed in foster care – according to the foster families

- Some findings

Age, length of placements, and other placements

Age at the start time of placement in this foster family:

- 49,3 % are 0-5 years old
- 34,5 % are 6-12 years old
- 16,2 are 13-17 years old

- Average length of placement in this foster family: 5 years

- 40 % of the children have been placed in another placement before this placement

- 33,6 % of the children have been placed in another placement after this placement

Reasons for placing children outside their homes

Most frequent reasons attached to parents:

- neglect of care
- abuse
- mental disorder

Most frequent reasons attached to the child:

- mental disorder
- anti-social behavior
- problems in school

39 % of the children have diagnosis, most frequent ADHD

The foster family's perception of the childrens special needs

| | Special physical needs | | Special behavioral needs | | Special emotional needs | | Special health needs | | Special social needs with peers | | Special social needs with adults | |
|--------------------|------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|-------------|-------------------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------|---------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| To a high degree | 1493 | 31,5 | 3.015 | 63,6 | 3.695 | 78,0 | 1.770 | 37,4 | 2.881 | 60,8 | 2.721 | 57,4 |
| To a low degree | 1546 | 32,6 | 1.087 | 22,9 | 697 | 14,7 | 1.502 | 31,7 | 1.060 | 22,4 | 1.266 | 26,7 |
| Not a special need | 1699 | 35,9 | 636 | 13,4 | 346 | 7,3 | 1.466 | 30,9 | 798 | 16,8 | 751 | 15,9 |
| In total | 4.738 | 100 | 4.738 | 100 | 4.738 | 100 | 4.738 | 100 | 4.738 | 100 | 4.738 | 100 |

Children in foster care with severe troubles and complex needs

Investigating 2 groups:

- children with diagnosis (N: 1.365)
- children without diagnosis and with special emotional needs (2.095)

In total 70 % of all children in the study

Children in foster care with severe troubles and complex needs - findings

- Most of the children in foster care with severe troubles and complex needs have special needs and difficulties in many areas at the same time
- **More than half of all children in foster care are children requiring (psychosocial) treatment**
- In which types of foster families are these children placed?
- In all types of foster families!

Conclusions – new approaches, a positive direction?

- A decrease in preventive initiatives
- Longer placements
- A rise in placements without consent from parents
- Increase in placements in foster care
- Placements of children in foster care with many breakdowns
- Placements of children with special needs in many areas at the same time: school related problems, emotional problems, diagnoses etc.
- More than half of the children in foster care are requiring (psychosocial) treatment

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THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!

