



Foster care in Sweden. Policy, practice and research.

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The disposition of the presentation

- The Swedish context and the legal framework
- Out-of-home care according to national statistics
- Child welfare organisation, foster care policy and practice
- Research in foster care
- Discussion and personal views



The Social Services Act

Since 1980 no special Children's Act. Children are included in the Social Services Act. This primary law is a goal-oriented enabling Act based on voluntary efforts, and stipulates general guidelines for municipalities concerning their social services obligations.



The Care of Young Persons Act

- The Social Services Act is supplemented by the Care of Young Persons Act, which regulates compulsory care. The county administration board decides on compulsory care – after an application from the municipal child welfare committee.



No permanency planning

The law sets no time limits on care, but if a child has lived in a foster family for more than three years, transfer of custody to the child's foster parents should be considered.



Children in out-of-home care

70 per cent are in care according to the Social Services Act (with consent) and 30 per cent according to the compulsory law – due to home environment and/or young persons own behaviour.



National statistics, per year

22 700 children and young people 0-20 years of age were in out-of-home care at some point of time 2008, which means **0, 98** %.

The proportions are:

0, 53 % of 0-12-year-olds

1, 73 % of 13-17 year-olds

1, 38 % of 18-20-year-olds.



National statistics, a certain day

15 800 of them were in out-of-home care a certain day, 1 of November, which means **0, 69 %**.

The proportions are

0, 38 % of 0-12-year-olds

1, 24 % of 13-17-year-olds

0, 88 % of 18-20-year-olds



Three types of foster homes

In sum 75 % in foster homes:

- "Ordinary" foster homes, recruited by the social services
- Kinship foster homes, relatives or other persons who know the child
- Emergency foster homes, contacted for a given number of beds



Child welfare research (1)

There is one influential category of studies, initiated at the National Board of Health and Welfare. Extensive quantitative studies on outcome of out-of-home care, based on national registers and social files.

Compared to other groups of people, the outcome is throughout worse for those with experiences of out-of-home care.

See Franzén, Sallnäs, Vinnerljung et al.



Child welfare research (2)

Another category of studies have a less extensive and more qualitative approach, and a theoretical framework. Use interviews and self reports in combination with other data. Focus on process as well as outcome, different perspectives, in-group variety.

See Andersson; Höjer



Evaluation studies

A third category of research include evaluations of evidenced based methods.

MTFC, (Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care).

See Kyhle Westermarck et al.



Discussion

- Law as framework or regulation
- Professional development or manual based methods
- Foster care for reunion or permanency
- Research on in-care processes or outcome of care later in life
- The impact of research on practitioners and service users