Placement Foster Care

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on Foster Care Research
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Overview

1. **Out of home placement**

2. **Does foster care work?**

3. **Parent – child contact during foster care placement**

4. **Back home?**

Introduction

- Out-of-home placement is a drastic decision
- Badly defined decision problem: not only out of home placement, but also replacement (or reunification) of the child back to his or her parents
- The unclear perspective of a foster placement is one of the main reasons of problems in foster care
- Difficult to sustain a decision

  - Sometimes the child protection worker has the assumption that the parents are always to be preferred

  - Sometimes a decision is made because of the right of the parents to rear their child and the child's right to be reared by its parents

The main goal of our research projects on Foster Care is to terminate the period of insecurity for the child, parents and foster parents, so that all parties concerned know for which period they have to enter certain obligations.

1. Out of home placement

Reasons for out of home placement
(n=150)

(Dys)functioning of the mother, among others: - no competence of upbringing - psychiatric problems	1.81
Familyfunctioning, among others: - neglect - violence - maltreatment - no shelter	1.44
(Dys)functioning father, among others: - no competence of upbringing - psychiatric problems	.77
Functioning of the child	.14
Average reasons:	4.2

Reasons:

- Characteristics of the parents:
no competencies of upbringing and psychiatric problems

- <u>Non-kinship foster care</u>:
neglect, psychiatric problems, addiction
- <u>Kinship foster care</u>:
death of one the parents, jail

- Average 4 reasons
(conjecture of abuse of children: 25 %;
reason for out of home placement: 2 %)

Care before out of home placement

- Ambulant care family: 43 %

    - For instance: VHT
- General support: 24 %
- Admission parents: 20 %
- Child centered care: 9 %

In files: no insight in duration of care!!

Care before out of home placement (n=63)

- 1 to 14 years of care (mean: 5 ½ year)
- 3 to 14 care organizations (mean: 7,6)
- Training of parents: 0 to 8 years (mean: 3 ½ years)
- **Meaning:**
  ¾ of the life of a child there is a form of care in the family!!

(Kastelein, 2010)

Reflections:

- There is a lot of help or care in the family before out of home placement of a child without considerable result

- Children are not the reason for out of home placement

- Social workers are focused on parents (especially the relationship with the parents) and not focused on the child

Out of home placement

- Ambulant care in the long run has no contribution on the development of the child

- Care fails if keep trying at it

- The main goal is never the avoidance of out of home placement

- The criteria of out of home placement have to be clear and transparant

Decision matrix

	Out of home placement?		
		Yes	**No**
Family?	**No**	Residential care	-
	Yes	**Foster Care**	Daycare/ Ambulant

Strong empirical evidence in favour of foster care

- 50 years of research where children in foster care are compared with children in residential care: foster children develop better
- Children who are adopted from residential care to foster care show beyond doubt more progress in their development
- Bucharest Early Intervention Project (BEIP)

Decision matrix

	Out of home placement?		
		Yes	**No**
Family?	**No**	Residential Care	-
	Yes	**Foster care**	**Day care/ ambulant**

2. Does Foster Care work?

Reasons to place a child in foster care

- Safety of the child: 31 %

- Development of the child: 19 %

- Offer structure: 16 %

- Shelter: 15 %

The scope of development

Foster parents ...
problems ...
than social workers

In all cases the amount of problems decrease

... qualitative research

	entry	stay	ntry (n=61)	stay
Physical *)	41 %	13 %	80 %	54 %
Motor	19 %	15 %	69 %	48 %
Language	26 %	23 %	66 %	41 %
Friends	25 %	23 %	62 %	56 %
Social *)	39 %	30 %	61 %	69 %
Emotional *)	57 %	48 %	95 %	89 %
Cognitive	23 %	21 %	-	-

*) significant

Results foster care

- The development of all foster children progress: (the problem score decrease from 2.3 to 1.8)

- Significant better:
  - Physical development,
  - Emotional development
  - Social functioning

Kinship and non-kinship foster care

- Kinship: less deprivation in development

- Favorable start in kinship foster care

- During stay (after 3 years): same developmental score for kinship and non-kinship children

- Conclusion: non-kinship children grow more in development than kinship children
  - *Reflection:*
    May be that non-kinship foster parents have more commitment with their foster children

3. Parent – Child Contact

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Frequency of contact
(Case file research (n=150))

- 87 % of the foster children visit one of their parents

- Mothers more than fathers

- Frequency contact:
  On average 2 x per month or more

Parents about the contact (n=50)

- Among **60 % of the parents have no problem** with the visiting arrangments and with their child
  - Only the frequency is problematic (they want more even if the frequency is twice a week)
- 25 % of the parents: child has problematic behaviour
- 33 % of the parents have problems with the foster parents:
  - Not pleasant
  - With tensions
  - We are 'too much'

Foster parents about the contact (n=50)

- All foster parents attach great importance of contact between parent and child
- Among **70 % of the children have problems**:
  - Before (they don't want to go)
  - During
    - no guidance of the parents in the behaviour of the child
    - parents can't give a new meaning to the visit (they are talking with the foster parents in stead of the child)
    - child doesn't listen to the parents
  - After
    - regressive behaviour (nightmares, bed-wetting, not eating, busy behaviour)
- More problems with the mother (70 %) than with father (50 %)

Results

- A lot of parents have no reflections about their own contribution in the contact with the child

- A lot of stress and fear within the child when after 'a few years' the decision is not clear about the upbringing situation

- If there is an attachment and upbringing relation with foster parents than parent contact in scope of a home replacement is threatening for the child

Paradox of foster care

- The child develops bad when there is no good contact between child and parent

- Contact with parents are 'overestimated'

- If there is an attachment relation with foster parents and the child must go to his parents: fear of existence

4. Replacement / Reunification

Replacements

are experiences of loss:
- Loss of the primary caregiver, of a beginning attachment relation
- Loss of oneself: Am I nog good enough
- Feeling of: 'not normal'
- Loss of siblings
- Loss of beloved possesions
- Loss of own social network: friends, school
- Loss of autonomy: no grip on your own life
- Loss of trust in adults

Replacement history

- Average replacements

  - 60 % at least 2 replacements

  - 40 % 3 or more replacements

- Kinship care: 1.8
- Non-kinship care: 2.9

- 47 % of the foster placement is terminated within one year:

  - Back to parents (40 %)

  - Other foster family (60 %)

Replacement to parents: 40 %
(n= 51)
(Dankaart, 2011)

- Mother: 33   65 %

- Father: 6   12 %

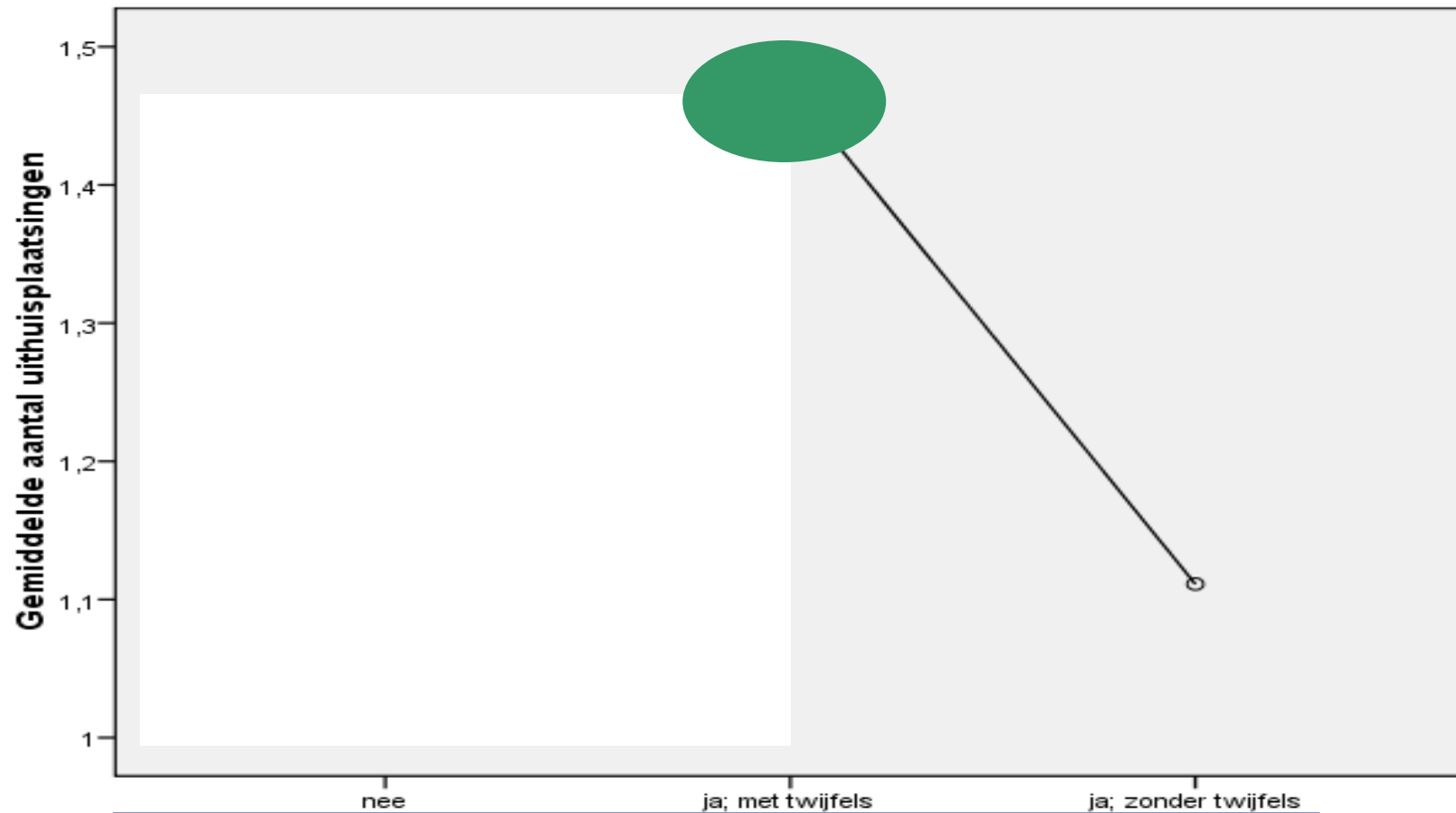- Both: 12   24 %

Reasons for reunification:

- **Parent factors**:   72 %
    - Among others: training parental capacity
    - Help for psychiatric problems

- **Parents and family factors**:   28 %

No child factors
    and no interaction parent-child!!!

(Dankaart, 2011)

Out of home placement for 2nd time

Does social worker agree with replacement to parents?

Overall Conclusions

- Social workers are focused on parents, <u>not</u> on the problems of the child

- Expectation: support of parents lead to improvement of the relationship with the child

- But: social workers are not focused on the *interaction between parent and child*

- The best interest of the child must be in the best *developmental* interest of the child

Van den Bergh
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Pleegzorg in perspectief

Pleegzorg
in perspectief

Ontwikkelingen
in theorie en praktijk

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