Does Placement Type Matter? Comparing the Well-Being of Care-Experienced Young Adults in Northern Ireland


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Does placement type matter?

This is a longitudinal study that has been following all the 774 children who were in care and under 5 years old on 31st March 2000 in Northern Ireland. It aims to compare how these young people (now aged 18 to 27) get on in their different types of placement. It also seeks to explore what other factors help or hinder their life chances and their general wellbeing.

**WHAT IMPACTS WELLBEING**

**NEGATIVE IMPACT / CHALLENGES**

- Bullying
- Bereavement
- Paid Work
- Meaningful Hobbies
- Self-concept
- Therapeutic Support
- Physical and Mental Health

**POSITIVE IMPACT**

- Foster Support
- Family and Friends Support
- Therapeutic Support
- Meaningful Hobbies
- Paid Work
- Bereavement
- Bullying
- Unemployment
- Self-concept
- Physical and Mental Health

**MEANINGFUL HOBBIES**

- She (foster mum) is just a great mother in general. The way I see it she basically saved me at a young age, so she did probably become nothing without her, so I would. So she basically took me in. She raised me. I just think she had the patience to listen to me. I would say it’s all down to her, not down to me at all. I pushed every button.

**Tennessee Self-Concept Scale**

Second Edition Short Form

T-scores of 40 or below are considered low. Individuals with low scores are doubtful of their own worth. Seven out of 10 (72%) that completed the questionnaires had low T-scores (5 foster care, 5 kinship care, one adopted and one subject to RO).

**CONCLUSIONS**

The concept of wellbeing is very complex, and has been defined in a range of ways. According to Dodge et al. (2012), it is about having the psychological, social and physical resources needed to meet a particular psychological, social and/or physical challenge. Here, the resources we have focused on are some health dimensions, self-concept and life satisfaction, although this study is exploring a range of others (e.g. social support).

Because of the yet small numbers of participants, it is difficult to draw confident conclusions. Most young people in the study are showing good levels of wellbeing (based on these dimensions), but there is a proportion that struggled in the past, with a few (still) struggling now. Placement type does not appear to be the main force behind any differences in wellbeing. While more young people in certain placement types appear to enjoy higher levels of life satisfaction or self-worth (i.e. adoption), the differences are too small. Also, in other respects, some young people in these same placements are showing difficulties, particularly in terms of mental health. A range of challenges are appearing to be tipping the balance of wellbeing. These include bullying, bereavement of close relatives/friends, unemployment, and family rejection. On the other hand, some factors are having a positive impact, including sense of belonging to a family, becoming a parent, support from friends and family, paid work, and therapeutic support.

**SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING**

**Mean values for each placement type**

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO KNOW MORE**

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Comparing the well-being of care-experienced young adults in Northern Ireland

- young people were asked how satisfied they were with their life nowadays (0-10) (mean=7.45), and to what extent they felt things they did in their lives were worthwhile (0-10) (mean=7.22).
- Adopted young people had a larger mean score than young people in other placement types.

- young people were suffering from a long-standing illness or disability (16 out of 48).
- young people had been diagnosed with autism (out of 48).
- young people were suffering had suffered from depression and/or anxiety (88 out of 48).
- young people were ever self-harmed, suicidal thoughts or attempted suicide (35 out of 48).

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