Moving Out Does Not Always Mean Moving On: Placement Stability and Relational Permanence for Care-Experienced Young People


Document Version:
Peer reviewed version

Queen's University Belfast - Research Portal:
Link to publication record in Queen's University Belfast Research Portal

Publisher rights
© 2018 The Authors.

General rights
Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Queen's University Belfast Research Portal is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy
The Research Portal is Queen's institutional repository that provides access to Queen's research output. Every effort has been made to ensure that content in the Research Portal does not infringe any person's rights, or applicable UK laws. If you discover content in the Research Portal that you believe breaches copyright or violates any law, please contact openaccess@qub.ac.uk.
Moving out does not always mean moving on:

Placement stability and relational permanence for care-experienced young people

Kerrylee Weatherall
Head of Service in Belfast HSC Trust for Children’s Residential Homes, Fostering Services and Children on the Edge of Care
Dominic McSherry
Senior Research Fellow
Montserrat Fargas Malet
Research Fellow
School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work
The Care Pathways and Outcomes Study

- Longitudinal study following 374 children who were in care on 31/3/00 in NI and under 5 yrs.
- Aim: To find out what placements the children end up in; and whether placement type matter.
- 3 phases completed. On the fourth phase.
IV: The Teens and Early Adulthood

ISSUES

Identity, Service-provision, Coping, Health, Attachment, Education, Stress, Self-concept, Lifestyle, Life-satisfaction, Contact, Belonging

METHODS

• 1st visit to families:
  • Online survey on iPad: 1 for young people & 1 for carers/parents;
  • Two tests on iPad for young people: spatial working memory and decision-making

• 2nd visit to families:
  • Semi-structured interviews.
Data collection so far

49 participant families

- 32 both young people & parents/carers taking part
  - 31 completed all visits
  - 1 have only done the first. Second scheduled

- In 15 cases, only parents/carers have taken part
  - 11 completed all visits
  - 4 have only done the first. Second scheduled

- In 2 cases, only young person have taken part
  - 2 have only done the first. Second scheduled

13 foster care
7 kinship care
14 adoption (1 fam)
12 Residence Order (5 fam)
3 birth parent

45 families took part in previous phase
4 new to study (2 foster, 1 birth and 1 adoption)
Placement stability and relational permanence

- Placement stability for the CPO group between 2000 and 2009
- The concept of relational permanence
- Findings on relational permanence and belonging from our group
- Placement breakdowns and permanency
- Summary
- Implications for policy and practice
Placement stability

Stability to 18 yrs old or at 31st March 2016 (under 18s) by placement (%)

- **Adoption**: 97% (Stability 2007-2016), 86% (Stability 2002-2016)
- **Residence Order**: 94% (Stability 2007-2016), 86% (Stability 2002-2016)
- **Birth parents**: 86% (Stability 2007-2016), 78% (Stability 2002-2016)
- **Kinship foster care**: 71% (Stability 2007-2016), 55% (Stability 2002-2016)
- **Foster care**: 63% (Stability 2007-2016), 43% (Stability 2002-2016)
Relational permanence

• Permanence can occur without continuity of placement

• Placement stability does not necessarily mean that the young person feels secure or part of that family.

• THUS – placement stability ignores the subjective experience of the young person.

• RELATIONAL PERMANENCE = young person’s enduring parent-like connection to caring adults (Semanchin Jones & LaLiberte, 2013)
Relational permanence and belonging

• All parents/carers interviewed expressed warm and loving feelings for the young people they cared for (even when pl broke down).

• Young people also described feelings of love and belonging to these foster/adoptive/birth families, most calling their caregivers mum and dad (or granny/granddad depending on their age or relationship).
Just your like, its just like a normal family like, as my [adoptive] mum always says, I might not have gave birth to you but I feel like I have, you know. Like I’m so like her, I’m the double.

I still call her mum. ... Of course, I always call her mum. She IS my mum. She brought me up. She raised me. ... She always keeps in contact, or she will never drift too far apart. ... She just wants to see me doing well. She doesn't wants to see me going downwards again. And with her support and everyone's support, hopefully I won't.
Placement breakdowns

Of the 48 young people taking part in our study so far, **9 have experienced a placement breakdown** (17% of all breakdowns):

- 4 in foster care (of 13 recruited)
- 3 in kinship care (of 7 recruited)
- One adopted (of 14 recruited)
- One living with birth parents (of 3 recruited)

Of these 9, all still had a special bond, and 7 had managed to maintain their relationship going (with regular contact) over the years while living apart.

Of the 354 young people in the study (for which we know placement type at 18 or at 31/03/2016)
We knew something was going to happen sooner or later because he was getting more violent. We knew something was going to happen but...

It would have. I think if they had kept in the police cell I think that would have been the better option and I think we would have got him back home then.

Instead of the move directly to the residential home.

Because once he experienced that he just thought he was the bees knees. He really thought.

Getting high on drugs.

He didn’t want to come home. They more or less gave him the freedom of the city.

We said, we said one or two nights in a police cell would have cured him.

He was my son you know. ... He’s their wee brother and he still is. **He’s still my son.**

Edgar’s foster parents. Placement broke down @ 12/13
SUMMARY

• High levels of placement stability across a 14-year period for children adopted, placed on RO, and who lived with birth parents.

• Level of stability twice as high in adoption compared with foster care BUT level of stability over a 14-yr old period for foster care still close to 50%.

• All yp (except for one) developed a sense of belonging & connection to the family, which continued into early adulthood (irrespective of placement).
Placement type

Length of placement

What makes relationships continue after placements break down?

Relational permanence after breakdown
Implications for policy & practice

• Long-term placement breakdowns should not be deemed the end of these relationships. THUS greater effort to be made by SS to maintain contact between yp and foster parents/carers following breakdown/disruption (if both parties so wish).

• Foster/kinship foster parents/carers should be seen & recognised as a source of vital social/emotional support for yp.

• Young children should be placed with long-term carers asap to help build the foundations for future supportive relationships.
Questions


Research team:
Dominic McSherry (PI)
Montserrat Fargas (CI)
Kerrylee Weatherall (was part of 3rd phase)

http://blogs.qub.ac.uk/pathways
www.qub.ac.uk/cpo
kerrylee.weatherall@belfasttrust.hscni.net
dominic.mcsherry@qub.ac.uk