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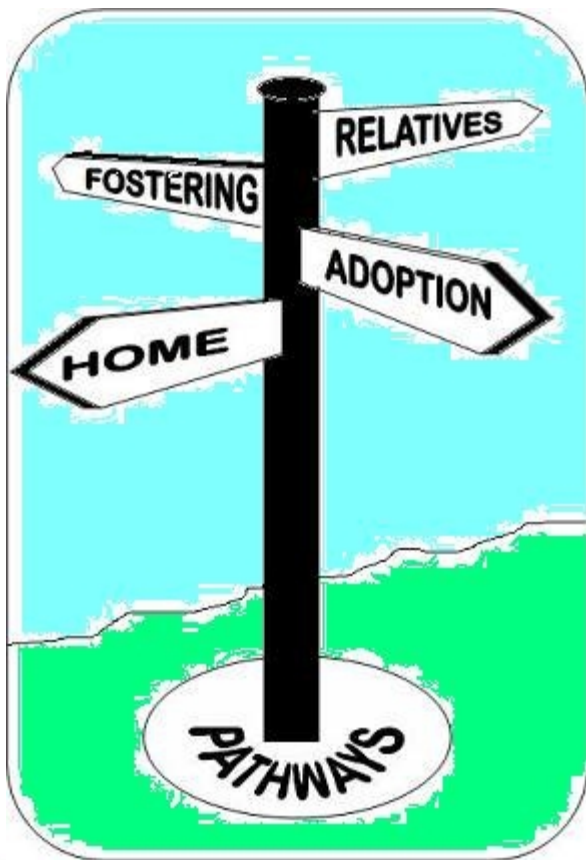
Pathways to Permanency

'Understanding children's pathways through care'

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Pathways to Permanency

Longitudinal study based at Institute of Child Care Research (ICCR)(Q.U.B) and primarily funded by the R&D Office for HPSS in Northern Ireland.

Aim To examine placement patterns and outcomes for a full population of children (n=374) who were under five years old and looked after in Northern Ireland on 31 March 2000 and to explore how the children appear to be faring within their placements.

Research questions:

1. What are the key placement outcomes for this population?
2. What, if anything, predicts placement outcomes?
3. How do parents (foster, adoptive and birth) perceive the children to be getting on in their placement?



Pathways to Permanency

CONTEXT

Unique as N. Ireland context allows for tracking of a full population of children and we are the only UK study that is examining a full population rather than a sub-sample.

Research tends to focus on sub-samples of children at particular ages and doesn't necessarily follow all the potential placement outcomes.

Ward et al (2006) highlight the lack of available knowledge of the experiences of young children in care and identify the Pathways study as one of the very few pieces of research that focuses specifically on young children.

Surprisingly little is known about the experience of very young children in care and accommodation. Much of the research into children's experiences has focused on older children, with a wealth of literature on young adults experiences post care (Biehal et al., 1995; Courtney et al., 2004; Dixon & Stein, 2002; Kufeldt & Stein, 2005). However there has been virtually no research that has focused on the needs and experiences of babies and very young children placed away from home' (Ward et al., 2006, p. 20)



Pathways to Permanency

1. PATHWAYS TO PERMANENCY: MULTIPLE PLACEMENTS (2000-2003)

SOSCARE Data

SOSCARE (the social services administration system) data for full population on 31 March 2000 and 31 March 2002

- placement histories from child's point of entry into care until end March 2002
- Date of birth, gender and legal status.

The placement status of the population was updated on the 31 March 2004 giving us three reference points (2000, 2002, 2004)

Case file Data

Case files for each child up to 31 March 2002 used to extract data on factors such as

- reason for entry into care, child and family background and characteristics, care planning, schooling, health and behaviour problems, and developmental delay.

2. PATHWAYS TO PERMANENCY: THE CARERS PERSPECTIVE (2003-2006)

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

Parent Stress Index-Short Form (PSI/SF)

Interview data (56 foster parents, 51 adoptive parents, 7 parents of children who had been returned home).

semi-structured interviews carried out (up to 2004) to explore parental perspectives on

- care history to date,
- views on how the child was settling into the placement,
- development of relationships at home, school and socially,
- care plan involvement,
- contact with birth family or previous carers and support issues.



Overview

1. What are the key placement outcomes for this population?

- Main placement types in 2004
- Placement in 2000, 2002, 2004
- Continuity of placement type 2002-2004

2. What, if anything predicts placement outcomes?

- Factors significantly related to placement type
- Event history analysis –adoption model and return home model

3. How are the children getting on in their placement?

- SDQ
- PSI-SF



Key Placement Outcomes

PLACEMENT	2000	2002	2004
Non relative foster care	61	41	22
Relative foster care	10	11	6
Care with Birth Parents	14	22	27
Prospective adoption	13	7	3
Adopted	0	18	38

- Major decline in % children remaining in foster care from 61% in 2000 to 22% in 2004
- Although % of children at home has increased the rate of increase has declined over period (children who stay in care longer are less likely to return home)
- A very high % adopted or in pre-adoptive placement by 2004.
- Represents significant shift in use of adoption as a key permanency option
- Kelly and Coulter (1995) found that extremely low numbers of children were being adopted from care.



Key Placement Outcomes

MAIN PLACEMENT IN 2004

Placement Type	N	%
At Home	97	28
Adoption	151	43
Foster Care	104	29
Total	352	100



Key Placement Outcomes

SAME PLACEMENT IN 2002 AND 2004 (%)

Same placement	Placement Type			
	At Home	Adoption	Foster Care	N
Yes	84	91	83	302 (87%)
No	16	9	17	47 (14%)

- The vast majority of the population (87%) were in the same type of placement in both 2002 and 2004.
- When we looked at movement between placement types we found that:
 - Children in relative foster care in 2002 were not adopted by 2004.
 - A higher % of children placed in relative care in 2002 were at home in 2004 than those in non-relative foster care
 - If not already in relative foster care by 2002 not likely to be in 2004.



Summary

Summary: What Are The Key Placement Outcomes?

- Adoption was main placement type in 2004
- The high % adopted by 2004 represents significant shift in use of adoption as a key permanency option in N. Ireland
- Major decline in % children remaining in foster care from 2000 to 2004
- Children who stay in care longer are less likely to return home.
- The majority of the population (87%) were in the same type of placement in both 2002 and 2004.



What predicts placement outcomes?

FACTORS SIGNIFICANTLY RELATED TO PLACEMENT TYPE IN 2004

Trust area	$\chi^2=77, df=8, P<0.001$
Reason case opened	$\chi^2=32.6, df=14, P<0.001$
Legal status at 31 March 2000	$\chi^2=35.4, df=8, P<0.001$
Age first looked after	$\chi^2=30.6, df=4, P<0.001$
Age at 31 March 2000	$\chi^2=24.4, df=4, P<0.001$
Length time case open at 31 March 2000	$\chi^2=17.2, df=4, P<0.01$
Asthma prior to 31 March 2000	$\chi^2=7.9, df=2, P<0.01$
Reflux prior to 31 March 2000	$\chi^2=6.1, df=2, P<0.05$
Behaviour problems	$\chi^2=7.2, df=2, P<0.05$
Substance misuse (family)	$\chi^2=6.2, df=2, P<0.05$
Alcohol abuse (family)	$\chi^2=5.7, df=2, P<0.06^*$

- Chi square analysis to identify factors significantly related to placement type in 2004.
- Out of a total of over 70 variables these were found to be significantly related.



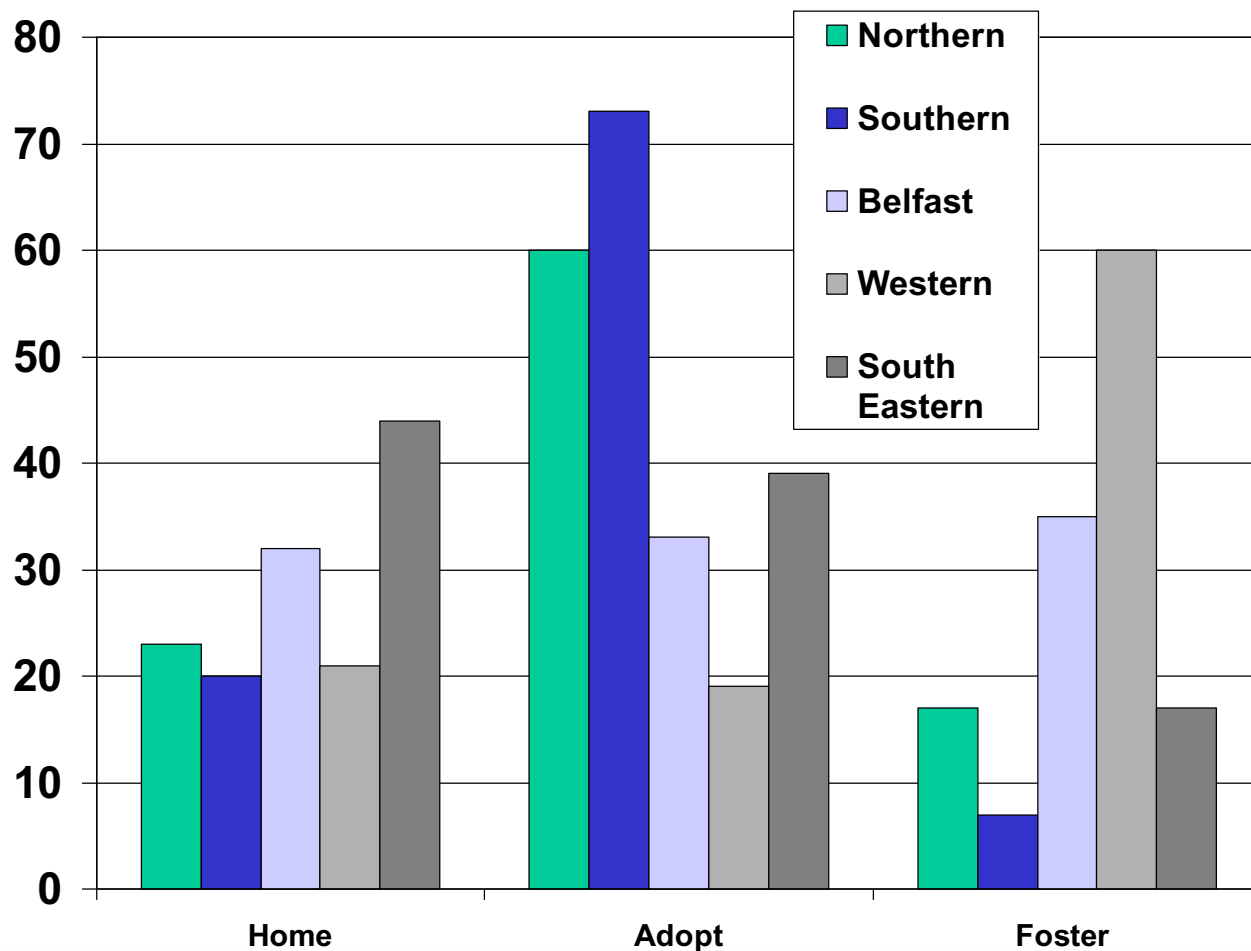
What predicts placement outcomes?

PLACEMENT TYPE IN 2004 ACROSS THE 5 NEW TRUSTS %				
TRUST	PLACEMENT TYPE			
	At home	Adoption	Foster care	N
Northern	23	60	17	92
Southern	20	73	7	45
Belfast	32	33	35	79
Western	21	19	60	79
South Eastern	44	39	17	57

Placement type was significantly related to HSS Trust area ($\chi^2=77$, $df=8$, $P<0.001$).



Placement Type In 2004 Across The 5 New Trusts %



What predicts placement outcomes?

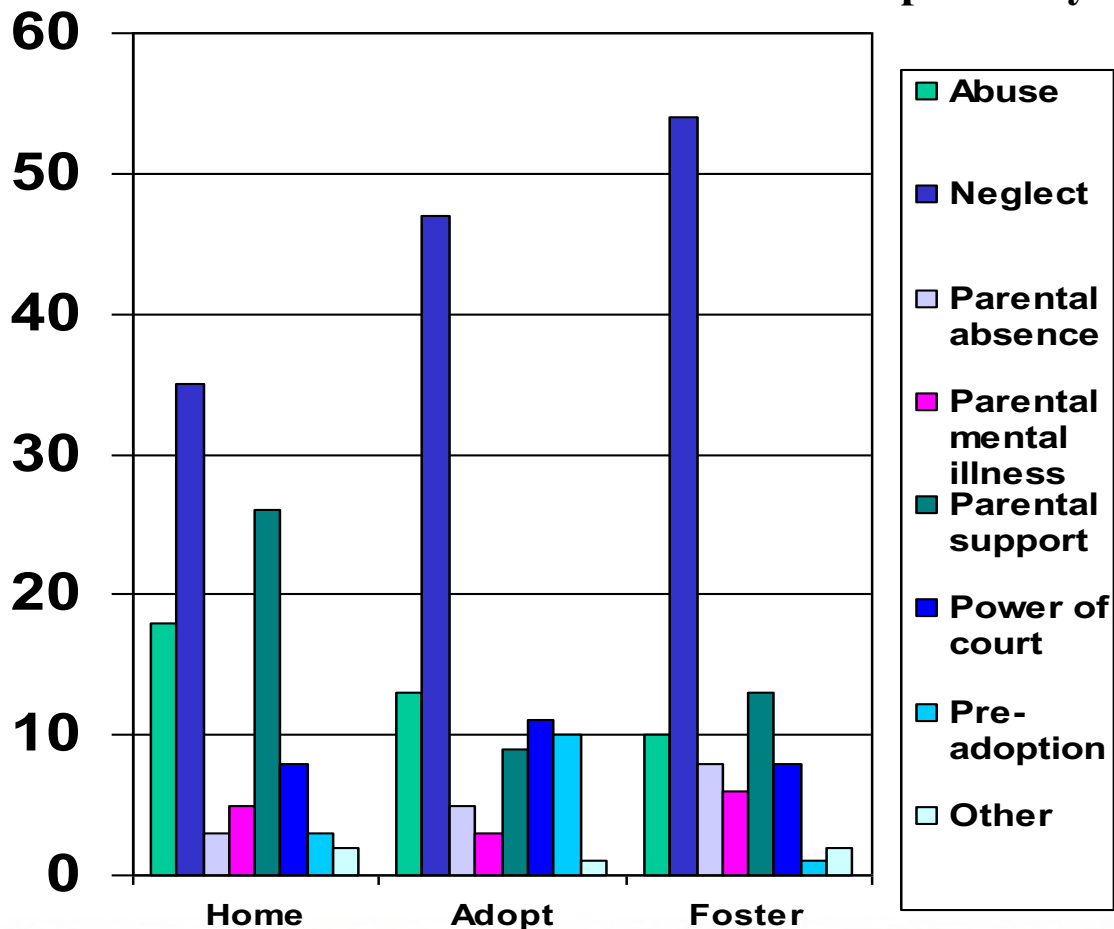
REASON CASE OPENED BY PLACEMENT TYPE IN 2004				
REASON OPENED	PLACEMENT TYPE %			
	At home	Adoption	Foster care	N
Abuse	18	13	10	47
Neglect	35	47	54	161
Parental absence	3	5	8	18
Parental mental illness	5	3	6	16
Parental support	26	9	13	52
Power of court	8	11	8	33
Re-adoption	3	10	1	19
Other	2	1	2	6
Total	100	100	100	352

The reason the case was opened was significantly related to placement type in 2004 ($\chi^2=32.6$, $df=14$, $P<0.001$).



What predicts placement outcomes?

Reason Case Opened By Placement Type In 2004



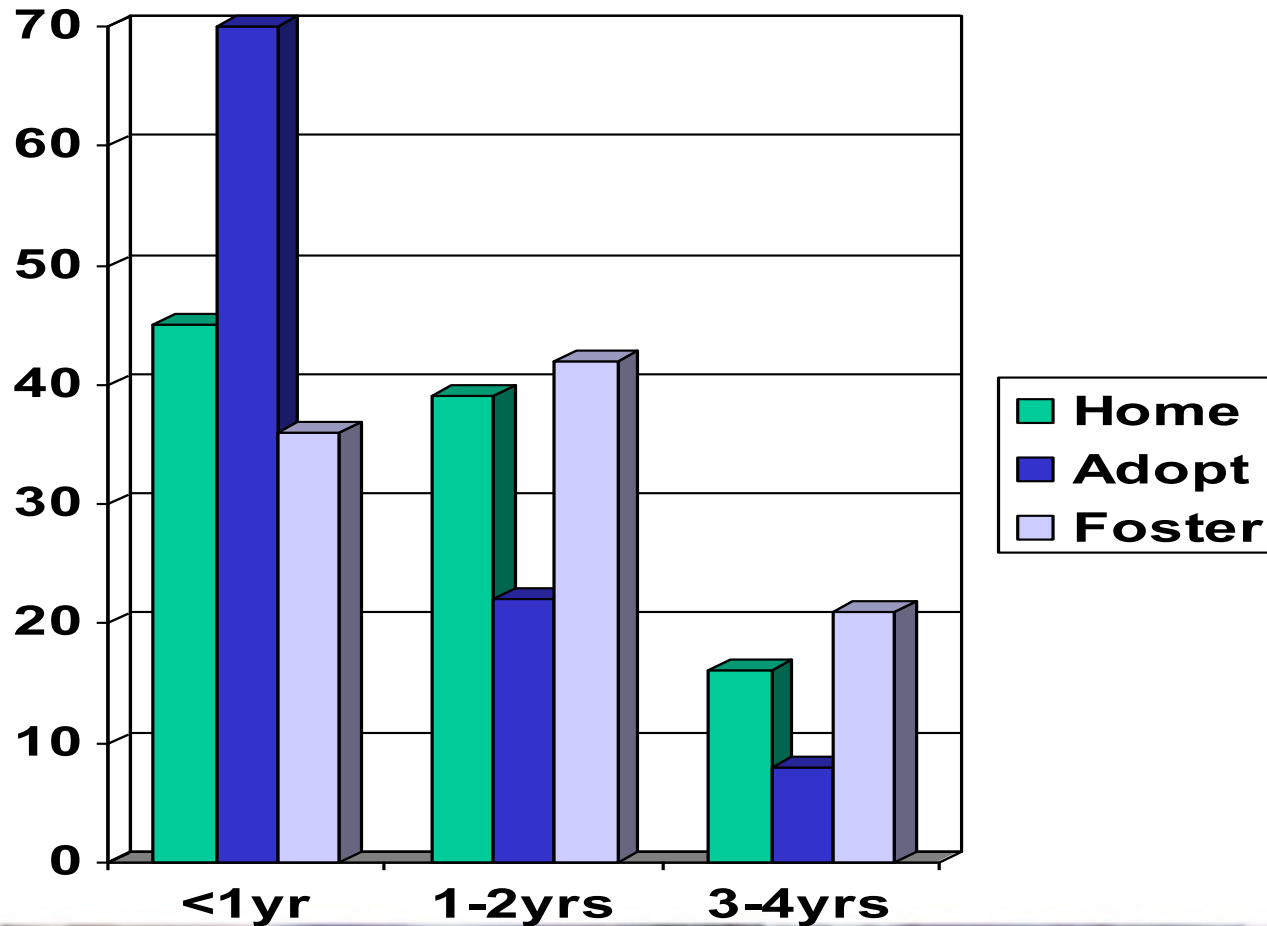
What predicts placement outcomes?

AGE FIRST LOOKED AFTER BY PLACEMENT TYPE IN 2004				
AGE	PLACEMENT TYPE %			
	At home	Adoption	Foster care	N
<1 yr	45	70	36	180
1-2 yrs	39	22	42	111
3-4 yrs	16	8	21	48
Total	100	100	100	399

Age when first looked after was significantly related to placement in 2004 ($\chi^2=30.6$, $df=4$, $P<0.001$)



Institute of Child Care Research
What predicts placement outcomes?
Age First Looked After By Placement Type In 2004



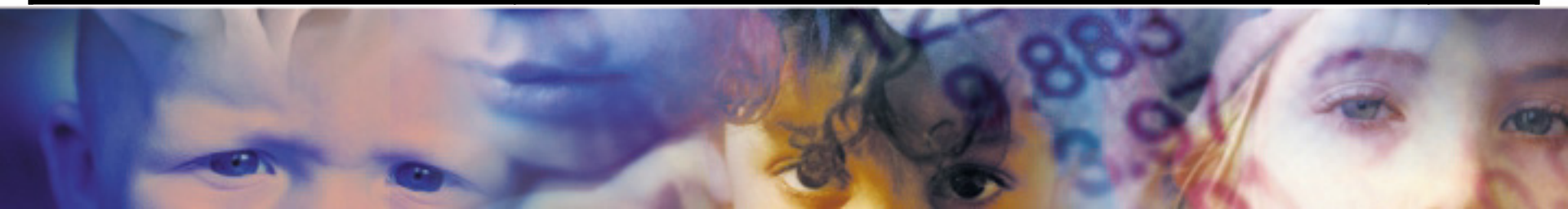
What predicts placement outcomes?

- Used **Event History Analysis (EHA)** to examine what, if anything, predicted adoption from care or a return home for the population during that time frame.
- Based on Case File and SOS CARE data for the two year period between 31.03.00 and 31.03.02
- Two models were tested - one for adoption and one for a return home.
- Due to the difficulties of establishing an exact date at which a foster placement became long-term, a long-term foster care model was not run.
- EHA allowed us to examine the time elapsed before adoption or a return home occurred for the population and helped to explain why some participants were at a higher risk of experiencing these events than others.
- Used Cox Proportional Hazards regression to examine the extent to which a range of child, family, case background and social work process variables predicted the likelihood of children being returned home or adopted.
- A total of 68 children (18% of population) were adopted in the two year period between 31.03.00 and 31.03.02.
- A total of 43 (13% of population) were returned home during the period.



What predicts placement outcomes? Adoption Model

PREDICTIVE VARIABLE	LIKELIHOOD OF BEING ADOPTED ON 30.03.2002	P
Those not on Child Protection Register (CPR) prior to 31.03.00	4 times more likely to be adopted than those on CPR	0.000
If mother under 16 at birth of child	5 times more likely to be adopted than those whose mothers were between 17-21	0.017
If mother under 16 at birth of child	4^{1/2} times more likely to be adopted than those whose mothers were between 22-30	0.028
If <1 yr old. when first looked after	2^{1/2} times more likely to be adopted than those 1-2 yrs old when first looked after	0.028
If one or less adverse family circumstance	3^{1/2} times more likely to be adopted than those with 2-3 adverse family circumstances	0.059
Northern Board	2^{1/2} times more likely to be adopted than those from Western Board	0.088
If mothers lived alone prior to 31.03.00	2^{1/2} times more likely to be adopted than those whose mother and father were living together prior to 31.03.00	0.072
Those without behavioural problems prior to 31.03.00	2^{1/2} times more likely to be adopted than those with behavioural problems	0.083
If case open 3-4 years at 31.03.00	2^{1/2} times more likely to be adopted than those whose case was open less than three years.	0.090
If no family history of domestic violence	2 times more likely to be adopted than those with history	0.080



What predicts placement outcomes? Return Home Model

PREDICTIVE VARIABLE	LIKELIHOOD OF A RETURN HOME ON 30.03.2002	P
If no family history of alcohol abuse	3 times more likely to return home than those with family history of alcohol abuse	0.007
Eastern HSS Board	6 times more likely to return home than those in NHSSB	0.001
If mother under 16 at birth of child	10 times more likely to return home than those whose mother was aged between 31-40 yrs at birth	0.013
If case open less than one year at census	4 times more likely to return home than those whose case was open 1-2 yrs .	0.005
If case open less than one year at census	25 times more likely to return home than those whose case was open 3-4 yrs at census	0.032
If religion = Protestant	2 times more likely to return home than Catholic children	0.053
If Looked After on voluntary basis at census point	2 times more likely to return home than children Looked After on Interim care order.	0.061
If developmental problems prior to census date	2 times more likely to return home than those without developmental problems prior to census	0.091



Summary

Summary: What Predicts Placement Outcome?

Factors significantly related to placement type (Chi SQ)

- Trust area
- Reason case opened
- Legal status at 31 March 2000
- Age first looked after and at 31 March 2000
- Asthma, reflux, behaviour problems prior to 31 March 2000
- Family history of substance misuse

Factors that increased likelihood of adoption by 2002 (EHA):

- Mother under 16 at birth
- Being <1yr old at 31 March 2000
- Not on CPR prior to 31 March 2000

Factors that increased likelihood of a return home by 2002 (EHA):

- No family history alcohol abuse
- Being in EHSSB
- Mother under 16 at birth
- Case open less than a year at 31 March 2000



How are they getting on?

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

Parent Stress Index-Short Form (PSI/SF)

Completed as part of Phase 2: Pathways To Permanency: The Carers Perspective (2003-2006)

56 foster parents, 51 adoptive parents, 7 parents of children who had been returned home (not included here as numbers too low for analysis).

Carried out Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for two groups to investigate differences between groups in terms of how getting on within their placement from perspective of carers.



How are they getting on?

Parent Stress Index-Short Form (PSI/SF) (Abidin. 1995)

- measure of stress in the parent-child system

The PSI/SF yields a Total Stress Score from three scales:

- parental distress- distress parent is experiencing in role as a parent
- parent-child dysfunctional interaction- parents perception that child does not meet expectations and that interactions are not rewarding
- difficult child- parents experience of basic characteristics of the children that make them either difficult or easy to manage.



How are they getting on?

Parent Stress Index-Short Form (PSI/SF)

PSI Measures	Long-term foster (n=56)	Adoption (n=53)	Significance (Anova)
Parental Distress	22.77	20.85	0.16
Parent-Child Dysfunctional Interaction	27.14 (90 th)	19.25 (50 th)	0.03
Difficult Child	29.11 (70 th)	24.77 (40 th)	0.01
Total Stress	74.04 (65 th)	64.87 (35 th)	0.01



How are they getting on?

- Significant differences between foster and adoptive parents on 3 measures (foster parents showing higher levels of stress in each case)
 - Parent child dysfunctional interactions
 - Difficult child
 - Total stress
- Parent-child dysfunctional interactions scale:
 - adoptive parent scores were consistent with the mean 50th percentile
 - foster parents scored well above the mean on 90th percentile
 - Indicating a high foster parent perception that child does not meet expectations and that parent-child interactions are not rewarding
- Difficult child scale:
 - Adoptive parents scored below the mean 40th percentile
 - Foster parents scored well above mean 70th percentile
 - Indicating that foster parents found their children difficult to manage
- Total stress score:
 - Adoptive parents scored below the mean 35th percentile
 - Foster parents scored above the mean 65th percentile
 - Indicating that foster parents experiencing more stress in their role as a parent than adoptive parents



How are they getting on?

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

(Goodman) is a brief behavioural questionnaire completed by parents

Assesses domains including:

- emotional symptoms,
- conduct problems,
- hyperactivity-inattention
- peer problems
- personal strengths i.e. prosocial behaviour



How are they getting on?

STRENGTHS AND DIFFICULTIES QUESTIONNAIRE (SDQ)

SDQ Measures	Long-term foster (n=56)	Adoption (n=53)	Significance (Anova)
Emotional symptoms	2.8	2.66	0.76
Conduct problems	3.39	2.23	0.03
Hyperactivity	4.95	4.87	0.91
Peer problems	2.00	1.77	0.59
Prosocial	7.20	9.00	0.00
Total Difficulty score	13.14	11.13	0.18



How are they getting on?

SDQ

- Foster group score higher on each of the difficulty measures-suggesting that parents rated foster children as experiencing a higher level of personal difficulties than adopted children.
- Adoptive scores were not too far behind foster scores on emotional symptoms, hyperactivity or peer problems indicating that adoptive children were also experiencing difficulties.
- The hyperactivity scores for both groups was within average range but almost at cut off point for risk for clinically significant problems
- Significant differences between foster and adoptive parents on 2 measures
 - Conduct problems (foster children higher scores within cut off point for risk for clinically significant problems)
 - Pro-social Behaviour (adoptive children higher scores)



Summary

SUMMARY: HOW ARE THE CHILDREN GETTING ON IN THEIR PLACEMENT?

- Adoptive group scores are lower than foster scores on every measure across the PSI/SF and SDQ except for pro-social behaviour. This suggests that:
 - adoptive parents experience less difficulties with the child and in their role as a parent to the child than foster parents do
 - adoptive parents rate their children as being kinder and more considerate than foster parents rate their children
- Conduct problem scores and (to a lesser degree) hyperactivity scores were concerning for both foster and adoptive groups
- Difficult Child and Conduct Problems were significantly higher in foster than adoptive indicating that foster parents rated their children as more difficult to manage than adoptive children
- However, these scores don't allow us to examine differences between age at placement and length of time in placement which we know are important factors and differences between the two groups could simply reflect a tendency for adopted children to be in their placement for longer.
- These are parental ratings and don't tell us about how the children rate themselves, or how they would be rated independently



Pathways to Permanency: The Children's Perspective (2006-2009).

Funded by R&D Office

- Update placement status for 31 March 2007
- Repeat measures
- Update analysis (2000-2007)
- Explore children's perceptions on how they are getting on within their current placements and their ideas on family, identity, and permanency.

