YIPPEE young people from a public care background pathways to education in Europe

Final report of the YiPPEE project

WP12

Young people from a public care background: pathways to further and higher education in five European countries

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Contents

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the final report (WP12) of the YiPPEE project – Young People in Public Care Pathways to Education in Europe. The aim of the project is to find out how more young people who have spent all or part of their childhood in state care can be encouraged and enabled to remain in education after the end of compulsory schooling and go on to study at higher levels. YiPPEE is one of five projects funded under the Framework 7 programme of the European Union, **Youth and Social Inclusion, Research in the Socioeconomic Sciences and Humanities,** which is concerned with social cohesion and the social integration of young people as well as with the role and effectiveness of education in European societies.

The overall aim of the YiPPEE project is to investigate educational pathways after the end of compulsory schooling among young men and women who have been in public care in European countries as children, and to consider how their opportunities to access further and higher education might be improved. The research was carried out by a Partnership of five EU countries: England (Coordinator), Denmark, Sweden, Hungary and Spain. This report consists of summaries of the five national case study reports (Work Packages 5-9), prepared by their authors, with introductory and concluding chapters by the Project Director and Coordinator. Earlier reports covering three previous; stages of the research are published on the project website (http:/tcru.ioe.ac.UK/yippee). At each stage national reports were produced and consolidated into a single comparative report by the lead partner for that phase of the project[1].

Although the legal age of leaving school is still 16 in all partner countries except Hungary (where it is 18), staying on at school or going to further education college has become a normal expectation for children not in care. EU figures for 2006 show that one year after the upper age of compulsory schooling 72% of young people in the UK were still in education. The proportion in the other countries was far higher – ranging from 84% in Denmark to 97.7% in Sweden. Preliminary enquiries found that in relation to children in care this area was completely unresearched, but the studies cited above suggested that it was a subject that urgently needed investigation and also that there was potential for action.

Specific objectives of the project were to:

1. map current knowledge about educational participation among this group
2. track and evaluate the educational plans and pathways of a sample of young people aged 19-21

[1] *Höjer et al (2008), State of the Art Literature Review (WP2); Cameron et al.(2010) Young People from a PublicCare Background: secondary analysis of national statistics on educational participation (WP3); Casas et al (2009) Data to understand and monitor educational itineraries and achievements of young people in and after care: Tracking for relevant quantitative and qualitative information in 5 European countries;* Jackson & Cameron (2011)

3. identify the conditions within care and education systems that facilitate or act as obstacles to continuing in post-compulsory education
4. explore young people's constructions of educational identities and trajectories in terms of social class, gender, ethnicity and care responsibilities, both from the perspective of young men and women themselves and of carers and staff in services designed to support them

An initial hypothesis was that young people's experience of education and social services and their educational opportunities would be influenced by the welfare regime of the country in which they grew up (or to which they had migrated). The YiPPEE project partnership was constructed with this in mind, so that several different types of regime are represented.

Sweden and Denmark are social democratic states with generous universal benefits based on redistribution of resources through the tax system; England is characteristic of neo-liberal welfare states with a safety net to avoid destitution in the form of (mainly) means-tested benefits set at a very low level. Post-communist countries like Hungary have not all developed in the same way and sometimes retain a legacy of universal services in some areas, notably childcare, but not all. Spain formerly came into the category of conservative-corporative regimes, characterized by a limited role for the state and an expectation that the family will provide for members who are not economically independent. However, over the last three decades major changes have occurred, in the development of health, education and welfare systems and promotion of gender equality.

These different models may produce different pathways to educational participation, especially among disadvantaged groups such as children in care. The extent to which families in different countries are expected to support young people over 18 obviously has a strong impact on the possibility for a young person with no family backing to continue in education.

Research design and methods

The research followed a similar pattern in all countries, with variations depending on the availability of data and cultural context. The design was discussed and refined in seven cross-national meetings which took place at regular intervals throughout the project.

The first stage was a literature review which revealed the full extent to which this subject had been neglected (Höjer et al, 2008). Beyond compulsory schooling age virtually no research existed apart from one study in England, and even widening the inclusion criteria to cover compulsory school years produced very few studies relating to children in care.

This was followed by secondary analysis of published and unpublished statistics, which again revealed many gaps in available data. In two countries no national statistics on educational attainment of children in care were available: in the other three, access to much of the information had to be negotiated, with the result that work on this phase of the project continued alongside the intensive fieldwork stage. The statistical findings

and secondary analysis are published on the web as Work Packages 3 and 4 (Casas et al. 2009; Cameron et al., 2010)

The next stage of work was case studies of each country (WP 5 – 9). In each country up to five local areas were chosen as a focus for study. Managers and practitioners were interviewed and asked to supply names of young people willing to take part in the research. Those who agreed were interviewed by telephone and constituted a screening sample from which 30-35 young people in each country were selected to form the intensive interview sample. The criteria for selection were that the young man or woman should be between the ages of 18 and 21, have spent at least a year in care, was in care when aged 16 and at that age showed some indication of 'educational promise'.

Eventual data sources included 36 interviews with managers, 372 telephone screening interviews with young people, 170 biographical narrative interviews with young people plus 135 follow-up interviews a year later, and 112 interviews with adults nominated by the research participants as having been supportive to their education. The first stage interviews with the young people followed a biographic narrative structure and covered a number of agreed areas: present lives, family and care lives, educational pathways, informal learning and leisure, and hopes and dreams for the future.

Findings

Around eight percent of young people who have been in care as children access higher education. This is about five times less than young people overall.

Despite marked differences in the organization of social care and child protection services and very different education systems, there were found to be remarkable similarities in the characteristics and experiences of young people who had been in public care. The family backgrounds of research participants in all countries were very much alike. Apart from some immigrants and those who had come to the host country as unaccompanied asylum-seekers, the majority came from chaotic families in which their lives were punctuated by recurrent crises. Most birth parents were divorced or had never married. Many had problems with alcohol or drug addictions, committed criminal offences or suffered from mental disorders.

In every country the hypothesis that young people in public care are severely disadvantaged educationally by comparison with others in their age cohort was fully confirmed. Their educational opportunities are stunted initially by disrupted schooling and deficiencies in their basic education, for which the school system does not allow or compensate, and then later by the low priority given to education by the majority of social workers and carers. The intensive interviews with follow-up interviews a year later enabled us to track their educational pathways in detail, and in all countries they were found to fall into four or five distinct groups.

Children in public care are less likely than others to progress to upper secondary level and complete their educational courses. They lacked career guidance and were often given poor advice. They are under pressure to opt for short-cycle occupational training in order to become economically independent as soon as possible rather than higher level academic or vocational options with the potential to lead to more satisfying

careers in the longer run. This was particularly marked and explicit in Spain and Hungary but also applied to other countries even if less openly acknowledged.

The educational opportunities of young people in and leaving care appear to decrease progressively with age. The gap in attainment at 16 is less in some countries, such as Sweden and Denmark , where a relatively high proportion reach the expected level by the end of compulsory education, compared with fewer than half in England, but many are delayed in getting to that point and then fall further behind at the upper secondary level. In the Spanish Yippee sample 90%, selected for showing educational promise, obtained the Certificate of Compulsory Education (ESO) at the usual age of 16 years, which was better than the overall figure for Catalonia, which was 60% (Casas, Monferrat and Malo, 2010), but at the post-compulsory stage their progress was subject to increasing delay. Women do much better than men in all countries. The gender difference is greatest in Sweden and least in England.

Direct comparisons are difficult because in some countries educational participation is less tied to chronological age. For example, in Denmark (and Sweden) some young people postpone university entrance until their mid-twenties. However statistical analysis of participation rates in higher education in Denmark up to the age of 30 showed that those who had been in care were still much less likely to access university-level education than others in their age group.

There was very broad agreement among all countries on the factors that help young people in care to achieve in education and those which help to explain low attainment and limited opportunities, even for those selected for showing educational promise. From the young people's perspective the most important factors were stability of placement and schooling, being placed with carers who gave priority to education, feeling that there was someone who really cared about them and their achievements and having sufficient financial support and suitable accommodation to pursue their educational objectives. The more successful young people (predominantly female) were strongly motivated to have a better life than their parents and clearly saw education as the path to that end.

Instability in the early care experience was often reflected in what the Danish report refers to as 'yo-yo transitions' in which young people repeatedly enrol and drop out of different courses. These tended to be the individuals who had suffered the most severe abuse and neglect in their birth families, although this was a common experience across the whole sample.

Recommendations

In their national reports each team made recommendations specific to their own country as well as some directed at the EU level and others which apply more generally. Overall, if public care is to become a path to better life chances rather than social exclusion, it is essential for these young people as a group to gain statistical and social visibility.

The following recommendations appear in some form in all the country reports:

1. Reliable statistical information is an essential basis for improving the educational opportunities of young people who have been in care. **Comparative statistics bringing together care and education data should be collected and published by the EU and by national governments.**

2. The present lack of statistical data is one indication of the split between care and education which is highly damaging to the opportunities of young people in public care. It is essential that the services work closely together and develop clear protocols for financial responsibility with the welfare of the child as the main consideration. **Ideally care and education should be the responsibility of the same administrative body at both national and local levels, as in England.**

3. Child welfare services, child protection agencies and institutions such as children's homes should **collect regular and up-to-date information on the educational participation and attainment of individuals in their care as well as in aggregated form up to the age of 25.**

4. **This information should be broken down by age, gender, citizen status and, where possible, ethnicity.**

5. The child welfare/protection system should award education **a more central and prioritized status in relation to care and transition processes for leaving care.**

6. The education system must recognize these young people as a group with additional educational needs due to their family circumstances and traumatic life experiences they have suffered. **This means providing individual tuition and mentoring support to compensate for gaps in schooling and enable them to catch up with their peers.**

7. Young people who have been in care usually require more than average support over more time because their pathways in education are delayed compared with other young people of the same aged. **It is important to postpone labour market integration processes and extend their period of education to equal that of the general population.**

8. Expectations of young people's educational potential should not be based on the characteristics of their families of origin but on their own motivation and ability. **The assumption that young people in care are more suited to vocational routes and short-term occupational training rather than academic courses should always be challenged.**

9. Discussion of career and educational options beyond compulsory schooling should start early. **Young people in care should be encouraged to aim as high as possible, regardless of their care status.**

10. **Changes of care placement and school should be reduced to a minimum.** If unavoidable the new school should make special efforts to help the student adapt to their new surroundings.

11. **Foster care:** much more attention should be given to education in selection and training of foster carers. There should be checks on their knowledge of the education system, their ability to help young people with homework and to guide and support them along their educational pathways.

12. **Residential settings:** social pedagogues should give higher priority to education and ensure that it is always discussed at meetings with young people in order to motivate them to continue studying and to raise their expectations.

13. **School performance should be documented and tracked in a standardized format from the point of admission to care.** In addition to a written plan (PEP in England) there should be a person with special responsibility for monitoring the child's academic process.

14. **Transition to independent living should occur when the young person is ready** and not when they reach some arbitrary cut-off point, such as 18th birthday or leaving upper secondary school. Continuing support should be available at least up to 23 years of age.

15. Because of delays and disruptions at earlier stages in their education, **access to adult education is absolutely vital**

16. **Leisure and social activities** should be actively promoted and efforts made to ensure continuity after leaving school and across placement moves. Young people should be assisted to use opportunities for leisure-based and volunteering activities to provide qualifications, income and work experience

Social workers and professionals tend to focus on the risks and problems in the lives of children and young people in out-of-home care. It is important to recognize the positive features, strengths and competences of these young people and their at times astonishing capacity for resilience. An essential factor to translate this into educational success is **access to support and encouragement from at least one significant adult, not necessarily a direct carer**, who can give them good advice, focus on the opportunities open to them and help them develop a perception of themselves as competent learners.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

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This is the final report (WP12) of the YiPPEE project – Young People in Public Care Pathways to Education in Europe. The aim of the project is to find out how more young people who have spent all or part of their childhood in state care can be encouraged and enabled to remain in education after the end of compulsory schooling and go on to study at higher levels.

1.1: The European context

The most recent European strategy (EC 2010) reiterates earlier aims to increase social cohesion and reduce inequality, which has increased markedly in European nations over the past 30 years despite a period of sustained economic growth. Specifically, the EU 2020 strategy included a target to reduce the proportion of young people who leave school early, and to increase the proportion who complete tertiary education (EC 2010). The European Commission cites evidence from the Framework 6 Programme that countries and regions with high socio-economic inequalities experience the most acute socio-economic problems in terms of lower growth rates, increases in violence, poorer educational achievement, declining civic participation and higher mortality rates. Countries with lower levels of inequality fare better in all these domains. The prediction is that, without decisive action and in the current economic climate, the situation is likely to deteriorate further.

The European Commission's Renewed Social Agenda, published in 2008, underlined the goals of social integration for European citizens, through good quality employment, equality of opportunity, access to education, social protection, and health care services in order to overcome inequalities. Young people must be 'equipped to take advantage of opportunities', particularly through education, of 'different and higher levels than their parents achieved' (European Commission 2008). This is particularly true for young people in care, whose parents have generally failed them, since to improve their life chances must be one of the reasons to take them into care in the first place.

Besides YiPPEE, other programmes in the Framework 7 programme relating to youth, education and social exclusion are:

> **EDUMIGROM**: Ethnic Differences in Education and Diverging Prospects for Urban Youth in an Enlarged Europe: a comparative investigation in ethnically diverse communities with second-generation migrants and Roma. This research focuses on the role of schools in reducing, maintaining or deepening inequalities in young people's access to the labour market, further education and training, and also to different domains of social, cultural and political participation. www.edumigrom.eu
>
> **CSEYHP**: Combating Social Exclusion among Young Homeless Populations a comparative investigation of homeless paths among local white, local ethnic groups and migrant young men and women. This project aimed to gain in-depth

knowledge of the life trajectories of different young homeless populations and to explore the effectiveness of early intervention and reinsertion programmes. Young people leaving state care and those with low educational attainment were identified as groups particularly at risk. www.movisie.nl/homelessyouth

EUMARGINS: On the Margins of the European Community: young adult immigrants in seven European countries The project seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the reasons why some young adult immigrants find their way to participate as active citizens in society whereas others struggle to achieve access to the majority population's institutions.
www.iss.uio.no/forskning/eumargins

YOUNEX: Youth, Unemployment and Exclusion in Europe: a Multidimensional Approach to Understanding the Conditions and Prospects for Social and Political Integration of Young Unemployed.
www.younex@unige.ch

And in the Framework 6 programme:

INCLUDE-ED: Strategies for inclusion and social cohesion in Europe from education. This study found that educational practices, in schools and classrooms orientated towards inclusion lead to better academic achievement than those based on segregation or discrimination (as in streaming or tracking).
www.ub.es/includ-ed

All the projects involve partnerships between a number of EU countries and have the common purpose of investigating the factors which lead to certain groups of youth (broadly defined) facing a high possibility of failing to become integrated into society. It is recognized that educational attainment and opportunities play a key role in this and that such opportunities are very unevenly distributed between social groups.

None of the projects except YiPPEE focuses specifically on young people who have been in public care, and this illustrates the invisibility of the group in research and policy development as we discuss further below. However, many of their findings are highly relevant to the experiences of children in care and care leavers, particularly EDUMIGROM and INCLUDE-ED.

1.2 Origins of the YiPPEE project

The study proposal developed from two previous research projects in England, 'By Degrees' was the first, and, so far, the only research on university students with a care background. It tracked three successive cohorts of young people who had been in residential or foster care through their undergraduate degree courses over a period of five years. At that time (2001-5) it was estimated that only one care leaver in a hundred continued into tertiary education (Jackson et al., 2005), This was not surprising as the normal expectation was for young people to leave school and often care too at age 16 even if they had done relatively well in the GCSE exam taken at the end of compulsory schooling. The By Degrees research found that there was much scope for improving the

experiences of the small minority of young people going from care to university but to widen participation significantly, the crucial period was upper secondary education, when young people study for the examinations that qualify them to apply for university entrance. Another study at the Thomas Coram Research Unit, looking at access to services by young people aged 18-20 in difficult circumstances, found a surprising level of motivation among care leavers to continue their education or get back to it. In doing so they faced formidable obstacles and needed an exceptional degree of determination and self-reliance to succeed.

Longitudinal research at the Institute of Education, based on data from the 1970 British Cohort Study, showed that quality of life on numerous dimensions, but especially health and employment, was closely associated with the highest level of education achieved. The low educational attainment of children in care could be identified as a key factor in their very poor adult outcomes (Simon & Owen, 2006) and certainly contributed to their high risk of social exclusion.

Although the legal age of leaving school is still 16 in all partner countries except Hungary (where it is 18), staying on at school or going to further education college has become a normal expectation for children not in care. EU figures for 2006 show that one year after the upper age of compulsory schooling 72% of young people even in the UK were still in education. The proportion in the other countries was far higher – ranging from 84% in Denmark to 97.7% in Sweden, but the UK was noted to be 'catching up' (REF). Preliminary enquiries found that in relation to children in care this area was completely unresearched, but the studies cited above suggested that it was a subject that urgently needed investigation and also that there was potential for action.

1.3 Project Aims and Objectives

The overall aim of the YiPPEE project was to investigate educational pathways after the end of compulsory schooling among young men and women who were in public care in European countries as children, and to consider how their opportunities to access further and higher education might be improved.

Specific objectives were to:

- map current knowledge about educational participation among this group
- track and evaluate the educational plans and pathways of a sample of young people aged 19-21
- identify the conditions within care and education systems that facilitate or act as obstacles to continuing in post-compulsory education
- explore young people's constructions of educational identities and trajectories in terms of social class, gender, ethnicity and care responsibilities, both from the perspective of young men and women themselves and of carers and staff in services designed to support them

1.4 YiPPEE project partners

England: Thomas Coram Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London (coordinator)

Denmark: Department of Educational Sociology, Danish University of Education, Copenhagen

Hungary: National Institute of Family and Social Policy, Budapest

Spain: Quality of Life Research Institute, University of Girona

Sweden: Department of Social Work and Department of Education, University of Gothenburg

1.5 Welfare regimes

An initial hypothesis was that young people's experience of education and social services and their educational opportunities would be influenced by the welfare regime of the country in which they grew up (or to which they had migrated). The YiPPEE project partnership was constructed with this in mind, so that several different types of regime are represented.

Using Esping-Andersen's (1990) classification, which is discussed in more detail in the comparative report (WP10), Sweden and Denmark are social democratic states with generous universal benefits based on redistribution of resources through the tax system, and not on individual contributions. England is characteristic of neo-liberal welfare states with a safety net to avoid destitution in the form of (mainly) means-tested benefits set at a very low level, and public services other than health catering mainly to low income, working class individuals and families. Post-communist countries like Hungary have not all developed in the same way and sometimes retain a legacy of universal services in some areas, notably childcare, but not all. Spain formerly came into the category of conservative-corporative regimes, characterized by a limited role for the state and an expectation that the family will provide for members who are not economically independent. However, over the last three decades major changes have occurred, for instance in developing health, education and welfare systems which do not depend on people's occupational status. Changes may be diverse in each of the 17 *Comunidades Autónomas* in which the country is at present organized. There has been an overall strong drive towards gender equality and to encourage women's participation in the labour market. These measures have met with considerable success. Spain has a Ministry of Equality and women make up 50 per cent of government ministers. However, Spanish social policies still retain a strong reliance on the family to offer support in times of trouble. This is reflected in the high proportion of children in kinship foster care compared with other countries (see Chapter 5) and in the late age of leaving the family home, with over half of those aged 25-29 still living with parents.

Different types of welfare state, or regime, as categorised by Esping-Andersen (1990) and elaborated since (Lewis 1992; Ferra 1996), produce different histories, and distinctive blends of political and cultural values. These may have profound structuring

effects on patterns of educational participation among disadvantaged groups such as children in care (Moss, 2004). Welfare regime differences are connected to models of family support and state support, which lead to different pathways to educational participation in each grouping of countries. A 'strong family' based system, such as Spain, may present additional difficulties in accessing higher education for individual young people for whom family support is absent or unreliable, or for whom care responsibilities for kin are expected. The extent to which families in different countries are expected to support young people over 18 has a strong impact on the possibility for a young person with no family backing to go to university.

1.6 Research design and methods

The basic design of the project fell into three phases. The first was a mapping and review stage. For this a state of the art literature review was carried out, and this included 'grey' literature and policy documents. Included within this phase was secondary analysis of published statistics and any other quantitative data that could be obtained. Throughout the duration of the study, there was a dissemination phase, which included a website, policy focused seminars in Brussels, conferences in the partner countries and presentations at academic conferences and meetings of policy-makers and practitioners. But the main empirical phase of work was case studies in four or five selected administrative districts of each country in which managers of care and education services were interviewed to find out their views and a picture was built up of the educational opportunities available for young people in care beyond compulsory school age. The managers were also asked to provide contact details for all young people who met the criteria for inclusion in the study and were willing to take part.

These names constituted a screening sample, to be interviewed by telephone. The aim was to recruit 35 young people in each country to form the intensive interview sample. Each young man or woman was interviewed face-to-face using a biographical narrative approach, and those who could be contacted were interviewed again a year later. They were asked to name a person who had been supportive of their education and these 'nominated adults' were also interviewed, usually by telephone.

Overall, for each 'workpackage', national country reports were produced, translated if necessary, and partners took responsibility for producing a consolidated comparative report on that workpackage.

In order to facilitate production of consolidated comparative reports at each stage of the project, the original research design envisaged using identical methods across the five countries of interrogating published material and statistical data, recruiting interview samples, conducting interviews and analyzing transcripts. In practice this proved impossible because of differences in the way care and education systems are organised in the partner countries (outlined in Chapters 2-6 below). Adaptations of the research design were necessary in every case. Eventual data sources for the national case studies included 36 interviews with managers, 372 telephone screening interviews with young people, 170 biographical narrative interviews with young people plus 135 follow-up interviews a year later, and 112 interviews with nominated adults.

The main obstacle to achieving comparability was unavoidable differences in the way the intensive samples were drawn. There was a low response rate at the screening questionnaire stage in four out of five countries. In the fifth, differences in the organisation of services prevented use of this method and potential participants were contacted directly by known support workers. More young women (n =115) than men (55) agreed to be interviewed which probably reflects more willingness to take part in research as well as being more likely to being engaged in education. Finally, in two countries the source of young people was related to services they attended; in three it was not. All of these factors have a bearing on the comparability and representativeness of the sample of young people. In three countries, data from the in-depth sample was complemented by national level data relating to the same age group and contextualisation of the findings was possible.

The systems of public care in each of the five partner countries followed similar structures but differed greatly as to delivery. In each, children's or social services legislation provided the general child welfare or child protection framework and local authorities or child protection agencies implemented the legislative provisions. Degrees of centralisation differed. In Hungary, for example, there were 20 child protection agencies, covering the entire country, making possible some degree of consistency in implementation. At the opposite extreme, in Sweden, there were 21 regions and within just one region, 49 local authorities, each with responsibility for children in care. This highly devolved structure brought its own issues in terms of identifying responsibility (especially financial) for young people when they crossed local authority boundaries.

All interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed using the NVivo qualitative data analysis package. Cross-national meetings were held in each partner country as well as on two occasions in Brussels where analytic categories were discussed and frameworks for writing up developed.

1.7 Limitations of the research

The main problems arose in two areas. The first was the complete absence of relevant statistical data on the educational attainment and participation of young people with a care background in two of the five countries, Spain and Hungary, and its inaccessibility in two others, Sweden and Denmark, where the information could only be obtained after protracted negotiation. This resulted in serious delay to the statistical analysis which was designed to provide a baseline to enable measurement of progress on one of the central purposes of the project – to raise participation of young people from a care background in further and higher education. The report on this part of the study, *Young People from a Public Care Background: secondary analysis of national statistics on educational participation* (Cameron, Hollingworth and Jackson, 2011) therefore relates to only three of the five countries, England, Sweden and Denmark. Some estimates have been made by the Spanish and Hungarian teams but they caution against putting too much reliance on them.

The second problem relates to the way the sample of young people for the national case studies (WP 5-9) was recruited. The original age range was planned to be 19-21, when the majority of young people would have officially left care. However England is the only country in which local authorities are legally obliged to keep in touch with all those

formerly in care up to the age of 19. This should have meant that it was easier to locate participants for the research in England, but paradoxically they were the hardest of all to contact (Cameron et al. 2010), and it was only possible to obtain a sample of 32 instead of the planned 35. Even that involved some compromise, such as extension of the age band to 18-24 and redefining 'educational promise' to include some young people with very poor qualifications at 16 on the basis that they were continuing in further education of some kind. Difficulties in recruiting the sample were also encountered in Sweden, and it is no accident that Sweden and England are the two countries with the highest proportion of children in foster care. At the time Sweden had no formal provision for post-18 support of those previously in care – they were considered 'just like anyone else'. So, even more than in England, identifying young people for the screening sample was dependent on the goodwill of social workers and care managers who were still in touch with them.

Contacting young people for interview who met the research criteria was much easier when they had been in children's homes, especially if they had taken advantage of the opportunity to remain in post-care residential accommodation, as in Spain and Hungary. Since this was usually conditional on being in employment or education and jobs were hard to find, this may have skewed the sample in the direction of those continuing in education and probably made it less representative of the post-care population as a whole.

In Denmark, although the general approach is similar to Sweden, expecting care leavers to rely on universal welfare provision, post-care support is available on request, but only 15 per cent of the care population take advantage of it. These were the young people most likely to be known to managers and social workers..

A further difficulty, which should perhaps have been anticipated, relates to normative educational trajectories in terms of chronological age. The system in England is extremely inflexible: it is virtually impossible to repeat a year, regardless of educational or social difficulties or illness. Almost all students enter tertiary education aged 18 or 19, apart from those who take a 'gap year', usually having already secured their university place. In Denmark and Sweden, on the other hand, it is much more common to stay in school up to the age of 19 or 20 and then further delay university studies until the mid 20s. Consequently it can be very misleading to compare participation rates for different countries at younger ages. We have allowed for this in our secondary analysis of national statistics in WP3 (Cameron et al., 2011). It does not affect within-country comparisons of those with a history of public care and young people who have not been in care.

1.8 Structure of this report

This report should be read alongside the thematic report (WP10) which compares results from the five YiPPEE partner countries in relation to a number of different issues arising from the research findings. The present report presents the findings from each country separately in summary form.

A basic outline was agreed and has generally been followed but each country team was free to interpret it in the way most suited to their specific interests and circumstances. The areas to be covered were:

1. National policy context and brief outline of care and education system
2. What did we know at the start of the study and what questions did we need to ask?
3. How the research was carried out
4. Views of service managers and professionals
5. The experience of the young people who agreed to participate in the intensive study sample, covering present lives, family and care lives, educational pathways, informal learning and leisure, looking ahead – hopes and dreams for the future
6. Conclusion and recommendations

The summaries are based on the reports from each country; the full reports in their original language and, where necessary, in English translation, can be found on the project website. They bring together findings from all three years of the research but with a focus on the national case studies (WPs 5-9) and the experiences of the young people who formed the intensive study sample.

Conclusions from the five case studies and recommendations derived from the findings in each country and from the project overall are to be found in Chapter 7.

Project website: http:/tcru.ioe.ac.uk/yippee

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CHAPTER 2: DENMARK

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2.1 The national policy context and outline of care and education systems

Education in Denmark

Expenditure on education in Denmark is slightly over the OECD average as a percentage of public expenditure. The elevated expenditure on higher education in Denmark may in part be ascribed to the relatively high cost of financial grants to students (Undervisningsministeriet 2010).

In Denmark, there are nine years of compulsory education[2]. Children are expected to enter grade one in the calendar year of their seventh birthday. In addition, after completing the nine years of compulsory school there is an optional grade 10. The Danish primary and lower secondary school is comprehensive with no streaming through from the preschool class to the end of grade 10 (Cirius 2006). After compulsory school young people can continue to short-cycle education programmes that usually take two years or to vocational education and training that usually takes between two and four years, or they can continue to upper secondary school or vocational secondary school. The latter two programmes are academically oriented and give access to higher education. They give access to medium-cycle higher education programmes such as nursing, pedagogy etc. that can be studied at university colleges. Traditional academic subjects like law, economics and history can only be studied at university on courses leading to a bachelor a masters degree.

Research has shown that approximately 15% – 20% of all young people never obtain a youth education (Jensen and Jensen 2005) and the Danish government has made a strong commitment to increase participation rates. The goal is that by 2015, 95% of the age cohort should have completed a youth education.

2.2 Children in care and their education

In Denmark, approximately 15,000 children and young people are placed in care, amounting to 1.3% of the relevant population. This figure has been constant over the last 100 years (Bryderup 2005, Andersen (red.) 2010). The great majority of children in Denmark are placed on a voluntary basis. More males than females are placed in care. The smallest group of children placed in care are the 0-3 year olds, accounting for 6 per cent of the total care population. The largest group consists of 15-17 year olds, accounting for 41% of all placements of children and young people. Young children are more likely to be placed in foster care and older children in residential care centres. The majority of the 15-17 year olds are placed in residential care centres.

[2] It is important to note that it is the education in itself that is compulsory, not attendance at school. Parents, thus, may choose to teach their children at home. In reality, however, this opportunity is rarely used.

Overall guidelines and aims for the placement of children and youngsters into care are laid down by Parliament. It is up to the local authorities to provide the required number of places and to approve the institutions involved. The local authorities also fund and manage actual placements.[3] Local authorities have a number of different placement options when a child or a youngster is to be placed outside their home: foster care, residential care centres, private residential care centres, boarding schools, own accommodation and 'ship project'. The young people can stay in care until the age of 18 and further receive leaving care support up to the age of 23, although only a minority make use of this provision.

A fundamental principle of Danish educational policy is that everyone should have the same access to education and training. The focus is on the individual and all students are entitled to instruction that is adapted to their situation and potential, and which takes into account any special needs.

Since 1998, residential care centres, private residential care centres and day-care centres have been authorised to establish schools for children and young people. Approximately half the children and young people of compulsory education age placed in care at these centres are educated in on-site schools (Bryderup et al. 2001). The type of instruction offered in these centres is defined as special educational provision and as such it is subject to the rules of the Folkeskole Act.

2.3 What did we know at the start of the study and what questions did we need to ask?

The first stage of the research was to carry out a comprehensive literature review to find out what was already known (Höher et al, 2008). In Denmark research relating to the schooling and education of young people in care and leaving care is very limited. Several researchers in more recent years have concluded that more research is needed on the experience of young people in care in the educational system and in particular on their future pathways after leaving care (Christoffersen 1993, Bryderup 2004, Egelund & Hestbæk 2004, Cowi 2005, Bryderup & Andsager 2006).

Statistics comparing the educational attainment of children in care with the general population are not published in Denmark. Only a few studies have focused on children in care and their schooling experiences, and research regarding young people's pathways after compulsory school is even more limited. However, the research that has been carried out documents that young people in care/from a public care background suffer from a range of disadvantages and are also more likely than their peers to experience educational difficulties (Christoffersen 1993, Mortensøn and Neerbek 2008, Ottosen and Christensen 2008, Melbye & Husted 2009, Andersen (red.) 2010).

Three studies examining post-compulsory pathways drawing on statistics from Statistics Denmark have all revealed that young people from a public care background are under achieving compared to their peers. Only a minority of young people with a

[3] Since 1 January 2007 the administrative system in Denmark has been changed. The number of municipalities has been reduced from 275 to 98

public care background obtain qualifications beyond compulsory school (Christoffersen 1993, Melbye & Husted 2009, Andersen (red.) 2010).

The findings from previous research showing that young people in care do less well than their peers are consistent. But there has been little or no interest in the minority who are educationally successful and no research addressing the central question for the YiPPEE study, how well does the care system recognise and promote educational potential among children in care? To what extent are the young people enabled to, or prevented from accessing universal educational provision beyond the age of compulsory schooling? Are the young people influenced by others in choosing to study or not choosing to study? What facilitates their learning and what resources can be identified for maintaining the young people in the educational system?

2.4 How the research was carried out

The Danish team gained insight into the educational identities held by young people, the structural and individual processes and pathways leading from the end of compulsory schooling and towards continued participation in formal education by analysing the empirical data consisting of 1) Literature review, 2) Secondary analysis of national statistics on children in care and their educational attainment, 3) A case study consisting of 5 interviews with group leaders, 75 telephone interviews with young people, 35 in-depth face-to-face interviews with young people, 29 follow up interviews with young people, 14 interviews with adults nominated by the young people themselves as having been supportive of their education.

The following table shows the number of interviews with care managers, number of telephone interviews, the number of in-depth interviews, the number of follow-up interviews and the number of nominated adults' interviews across the five municipalities.

Table 1 Sources of empirical data

Method/ Municipalities	Interview with care manager	Telephone interviews with young people	In-depth interviews with young people	Follow-up interviews with young people	Nominated adults interviews
Frederiksberg	1	23	12	9	4
Nyborg	1	5	2	2	2
Horsens	1	16	8	7	4
Roskilde	1	7	2	2	0
Frederikshavn	1	24	11	9	4
Total	5	75	35	29	14

All research regarding young people in care and education as well as research regarding vulnerable young people was included in the state of the art literature review. The next stage consisted of secondary analysis of national statistics on children in care and their educational attainment. Five local authorities were chosen for closer study and agreed

to participate. They were selected to represent different socio-economic characteristics with varying numbers of children in care and care leavers. They differed greatly in size, with the largest area having a total population of 90,000 and the smallest only 30,000.

Managers of leaving care services were interviewed in each area. They were asked for information on their services, on educational opportunities available in their locality and for their views on what made it easier or harder for young people in care to access further and higher education.

They were also asked for contact details for all young people aged 19-21 in their area who met the criteria for showing educational promise[4] and were willing to become involved. Telephone screening interviews were then carried out with 75 nominated young people[5], from which the intensive sample of 35 young people was drawn. The criterion for inclusion in the intensive sample was based on the young people showing "educational promise".

Thirty five individuals were interviewed in depth in the five study areas, and 28 of them were interviewed again approximately one year later. The young people were asked to nominate an adult who had been supportive of their education and 16 young people did so. These 'nominated adults' were interviewed by telephone. The telephone interviews with young people were analysed using SPSS and all face-to-face interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed using the NVivo qualitative data analysis package.

Over the course of the project the research team moved towards a more grounded theory approach by continuously returning to read the transcribed interviews when discussing themes and findings. Reading through the interviews several times ensured that the themes derived from the study were grounded in the empirical data. By doing so we gained insight into patterns that it would not have been possible to identify otherwise. This method of returning to the interviews on an ongoing basis also facilitated the identification of five ideal types of young people.

The first interview with the young people took a life story approach following the interviewees' lead but with a list of areas to be covered. The follow up interviews that were carried out approximately a year after the first interview were more structured, although still using open-ended questions as far as possible. The first interview included a 'lifeline' which helped the researchers to map the young person's care and educational career.

All these data sources have provided a very comprehensive and rich data set that made it possible to investigate young people's educational pathways and lives in care from many different perspectives.

[4] The inclusion criteria were that the young person was in care at the age of 16, had been looked after for at least a year and had shown some sign of educational promise in the form of having completed compulsory school and having started on an education programme or being on the point of doing so.

[5] 235 letters were sent to nominated young people but only 75 agreed to participate.

2.5 Findings from the literature review

The Danish literature review of policies, procedures and literature since 1990 included a discussion of policy and its impact at family and individual level, and it documented that the research on children and young people in care is very limited. At the time of the review there was only one study that had focused on the education of young people from a public care background after compulsory school (Christoffersen 1993).

2.6 Analysis of statistical data

The Danish research team analyzed statistical data from Statistics Denmark. Our statistical research focused on three groups in the Danish population from 31st December 2006:

- Children aged 0 to 17 years placed who were still in care at the time of the research as well as young people aged 18 to 22 years who were receiving leaving care support on 31st December 2006, and all children and young people of that age;
- Young people aged 17-20 (born between 1986 and 1989) who had been in care for their whole 16th year compared to all young people aged 17-20 years;
- Young people aged 27-30 (born between 1976 and 1979) who had been in care during their whole 16th year compared to all young people aged 27-30 years.

The following table will sum up some of the main findings of the statistical analysis. The table shows the level of education obtained by the 18-22 year olds in care, the 17-20 year olds from a public care background, the 27-30 year olds from a public care background. All age groups in care/from a public care background are compared to all young people the same age as per 31.12.2006.

Table 2.1 Level of education obtained by young people in care/from a public care background divided by age groups compared to all young people the same age as per 31.12.2006

Age / level of education	18-22 year olds in care / all young people not in care	17-20 year olds from a public care background / all young people	27-30 year olds from a public care background / all young people
No education completed	15.5% / 5.9%	17.1% / 2.9%	11.9% / 1.3%
Completed an education course beyond compulsory school	2.5% / 38.1%	18% / 3.2%	38.0% / 78.8%

Source: Own analysis based on statistics from Statistics Denmark

The analysis of the statistical data showed that young people in care/from a public care background lag far behind the attainment levels of their peers in the overall population. They do not finish compulsory school at the same speed as all young people and only a minority obtains qualifications beyond compulsory school compared to all young people. In all three population groups there is a big difference between the level obtained by young people in care/from a public care background and all young people. Seventeen percent of young people aged 17-20 years old who were in care when they were 16 years old had not completed compulsory school compared to 3% of all young people. Twelve percent of young people aged 27-30 years old had not completed compulsory school compared to 1% of all young people. Three percent of young people aged 17-20 years old who were in care when they were 16 years old had obtained qualifications beyond compulsory school compared to 18% of the general population of the same age. Less than 40% of the young people from a public care background aged 27-30 years had obtained qualifications beyond compulsory school compared with more than 80% of all young people of the same age. Although the gap between young people from a public care background and their peers is decreasing, when it comes to the third group, the difference in educational level between young people in care/from a public care background and all young people is still significant. Overall women in all groups perform better than men.

2.7 Analysis of interviews with care managers

The group leaders (managers) shared the view that when the decision is made to place a child in care, the social workers are primarily concerned with finding the right type of placement; matching the child or young person with a place seen as best suited for them. Education was a secondary consideration and it was often not considered at all until the child or young person had settled into his/her new surroundings. According to the group leaders, this reality explained why many of the young people had periods in their life when they had not attended compulsory school. The care managers interviewed expressed a strong commitment to improving the educational attainment of young people in contact with their service and encouraging them to continue in some form of post-compulsory education or training. With some exceptions, expectations and aspirations for the young people concerned were rather modest and they tended to be steered towards vocational qualifications rather than academic courses.

The following figure shows facilitating factors and obstacles identified by the care managers that helped or stood in the way of the young people's educational participation.

Figure 2.1 Facilitators and obstacles for young people continuing in education

Facilitating factors	Obstacles
• Young person motivated to take responsibility for his/her own life • Good self-esteem and high expectations • Feet on the ground/realistic awareness of their situation • Support from family, carers and professionals • Respect for education/school in the (birth) family • More focus on schooling/education before placement • Mentors • Measures to prevent/discourage dropping out • Continuity in education • Being at the same level as their peers • Continuous personal support/advice throughout placement • Placement stability • Staying in placement after 18 • Services focused specifically on this group of young people • On-going support after leaving care • Keeping young people who require further support after 18 in the same department • More focus on schooling and education	• The young people lack self-esteem and motivation • Low-achieving compared to their peers • Poorly functioning family that provides no stimulation • No role models to copy or learn from • No support from their social network • Too many young people in the classes • Lacking the opportunity to be like their peers, e.g. having a computer, being dressed according to the fashion • Lacking friends • Schooling/education is under-prioritised • More focus on placement than schooling/education • Different approaches to support from different municipalities • Lacking personal support throughout placement • Two different laws and two different ministries responsible for care and schooling

2.8 Analysis of the interviews with 35 young people

A holistic approach was taken to the research questions, locating the young people's educational experience within the overall context of their lives, in and out of care. The areas covered were young people's lives at the time of first and second interviews, their

current concerns, educational engagement and attainments, social relationships and informal learning and leisure time activities.

Exploration of their past experiences covered life in their birth families and ongoing relationships with relatives, childhood events, care careers and educational lives during the compulsory school years. Other areas for discussion were how much support for education was provided by birth relatives, teachers, social workers, foster parents, residential carers and others and finally the young person's own hopes and dreams for the future. Most of the young people were interested in the study and very positive about contributing to it.

The study enabled us to identify five ideal types of young people based on their educational pathways. This is a device we adopted as a means of representing, analysing and interpreting data. It was our belief that the ideal types highlighted points of comparison and contrast between the young people in each group. Each ideal type raises a range of issues through patterns of similarity in the young people's educational pathways. The five ideal types and their educational pathways are as follows:

Young people with "promising" educational pathways in college or university
Pathway: compulsory school ⟶ upper secondary school ⟶ college or university

Young people with "promising" educational pathways in vocational education and training
Pathway: compulsory school ⟶ basic vocational education and training / vocational education and training ⟶ employment/unemployment

Young people with "yo-yo" pathways in education
Pathway: compulsory school ⟶ start of education [course] ⟶ drop-out ⟶ start of new course ⟶ drop-out ⟶ unemployment/un-skilled job

Young people with "delayed" educational pathways
Pathway: compulsory school ⟶ unskilled job/unemployment ⟶ in education / unemployed

Young people with health problems that dominate their educational pathways
Pathway: compulsory school ⟶ start of education ⟶ drop-out ⟶ start of new course

This structure of using ideal types enabled more nuanced descriptions of consistent themes and allowed for more patterns to emerge and moreover facilitators and barriers also became very clear.

Present lives

The pathways listed above reflect the young people's educational lives. The young people with "promising" educational pathways in college or university were all but two studying at the first time of interview. The majority lived on their own and had leisure time interests.

The majority of the young people with "promising" educational pathways in vocational education and training were enrolled in vocational education and training programmes, and some were in employment or unemployed. Half of them lived with a partner. Few had leisure time interests.

The young people with "yo-yo" pathways in education were either in education, in employment or unemployed or off sick or on maternity leave. The majority lived with a partner. Few had leisure time interests.

The young people with "delayed" educational pathways were mainly in education. Half of the young people in this group lived on their own. Few young people in this group had any leisure time interests.

The young people with "health problems" dominating their educational pathways were divided into those on sick leave, on a training course, in education, in employment/ unemployment and on maternity leave. Two were still placed in care and two were living in their own apartments. Only one was living with a partner.

Family and care lives

All the young people who participated in the study had been placed in care, some very early but most at a later age[6]. Their placement history differed considerably: some had been placed in a foster family; some in residential care centres; some in both types of placement; and, a few had been set up in their own apartment. Some had experienced a number of breakdowns in their placements and others had a more stable placement history, often with the same foster family throughout.

Most of the young people came from families experiencing poverty and social exclusion and their relationship with their biological family was described as "demanding". In all of the 'ideal types' of educational pathways the majority had in common that their parents were divorced but they differed in a number of other ways:

Among the group of young people with "promising" pathways in college or university, half were placed in care before the age of six years and had thus experienced early intervention. Their parents were better educated and more supportive than the parents in the other groups and half of the young people talked of having a close relationship with their parents.

Of those with "promising" pathways in vocational education and training, half were placed in residential care centres. Few of their parents had qualifications beyond compulsory school and only a few said that their parents wanted them to become educated. They had irregular contact with their parents.

The group of young people with "yo-yo" pathways in education were more likely to have had parents who had been violent and they only retained irregular contact with them. Four out of nine young people in this group had experienced more than three placements. The majority were placed in foster families.

[6] If a child is placed in care when he/she is 10 years old or older we regard it as being placed in care at a late age because there have been substantive problems in the family for a long time before a placement becomes a reality.

The group of young people with "delayed" pathways typically had parents who were divorced, violent, mentally ill or physically ill. Two of the parents were on early retirement and few held any qualifications. Only one parent was described as supportive of the young person's education. The majority were placed in foster care.

The group of young people with "health" problems had parents who were divorced, drug abusers, violent, and had committed a crime. A few of these young people had also been victims of incest. Only one parent held a qualification beyond compulsory school. They had irregular contact with their parents and their parents were not regarded as supportive.

Educational lives

The young people with "promising" educational pathways in college or university were studying for a BA. They had a stable time in compulsory school with no periods of non-attendance and had not dropped out of further education.

Young people with "promising" educational pathways in vocational education and training had all completed a vocational education and training programme. They, too, had experienced a stable time in compulsory school. Only one young person in this group had been absent for more than three months and none had dropped out of further education.

The group of young people with "yo-yo" pathways in education either held un-skilled jobs or were unemployed. Their schooling had been disrupted, and two young people in this group had a leaving certificate from compulsory school with fewer subjects than required. Five out of nine of these young people had been absent for more than three months in school. Some had also dropped out of further education.

Those with "delayed" pathways in education were either in education or were unemployed. They, too, had experienced an unstable time in compulsory school and two young people stated that they had missed more than three months in school. Nevertheless, none had dropped out of education.

The majority of the young people with health problems dominating their educational pathways were nevertheless in education. They had experienced an unstable time in compulsory school and one young person in this group had a leaving certificate from compulsory school with fewer subjects than required. Five out of these six young people had missed more than three months in school. Some had dropped out of education.

In general, the young people regarded education as a tool to live a better life and to "get a good job". The study showed that the notion of becoming an educated person was a driving force for the young people. They were striving to be part of the norm and in this respect the norm meant having stable employment and contributing to society. This was in contrast to their parents who rarely held a job.

Informal learning and leisure

None of the young people participating in the Danish study explicitly articulated that their social and leisure activities were part of, or added to, their learning identity. In their opinion, leisure time activities were seen something they enjoyed doing in free

time from school or their job. Many young people had no leisure time interests mainly due to lack of time, no tradition of leisure time activities and financial problems.

Those in the "promising" educational pathway in college or university were more likely than others to have leisure time interests which mainly consisted of individually based sports such as running and going to a fitness centre. Leisure time activities were almost non-existent before placement but when placed in care, the young people were encouraged to take up activities by foster parents and through living in a residential care centre. They were also sometimes influenced by a friend or a parent.

Looking ahead: hopes and dreams for the future

Short term plans were dependent upon where the young people were in their lives.
Those with "educational promise" in college or university wanted to continue their studies. Likewise, those with "educational promise" in vocational education and training did not hope for many changes in the near future. Those in jobs wanted to retain their jobs or to find a permanent position and those unemployed were hoping to find skilled jobs.
Young people with "yo-yo" pathways in education said that they wanted to start an education [course], stay in education or retain a job. Those with "delayed" pathways in education expressed wishes to stay in education or start on a new educational programme.
Finally, those with health problems dominating their educational pathways also wanted to stay in education or to start an educational programme. By the second interview 18 of the young people had fulfilled their initial plans in relation to education and employment. Eight young people had not followed their initial plans, mainly due to health problems.
Long-term future plans were the same at both the first and second round of interviews and included getting further educational qualifications, getting a good job and establishing a family.

2.9 Analysis of interviews with nominated adults

The nominated adults raised many of the same points as the managers/group leaders. They highlighted the transition to adulthood as very important for the young people and they wanted to ensure the young people received continuous support after turning 18 years old. They also argued that there should be increased attention to education in the everyday practice of social workers. They all agreed that education was the tool for the young people to combat their problematic background and suggested that young people in care need more support in school.

2.10 Conclusions and implications for policy and practice

The Danish study showed that although all the interviewed young people showed some degree of educational promise, which was the criterion for selecting them, they had not all obtained qualifications beyond compulsory school, nor had they achieved the same level of education. The analysis of differences between the ideal types shed light on barriers and facilitators in general and further explained why some young people managed better than others. Facilitators were mainly evident in the two "promising" groups (those with educational pathways in college or university or in vocational education and training). Barriers were mainly seen in the other three groups of young people (those with "yo-yo" pathways, "delayed" pathways or with health problems dominating their lives and possibilities). Facilitators included early intervention, stable

schooling, no bullying, few if any changes in placement, a safe community with adults in whom the young people could confide and trust, friends, leisure time interests, support from carers/adults, resilience, a driving force in the form of a strong motivation to follow a different life course from their parents, and being hard-working.

Based on the findings from this study some recommendations were developed. These recommendations concern four main issues: a) upbringing; b) schooling and further education; c) placements; d) social lives and leisure time activities. A final set of recommendations focuses in particular on actions that should be taken by local authorities.

Upbringing

- Provide disadvantaged families with early intervention and comprehensive support;
- Optimise the potential for the municipality to raise parental knowledge of the importance of education so that parents can motivate and support their children to pursue further education

Schooling and further education

- Acknowledge and recognise that young people in care do not have the same family background/support and living conditions as their peers and therefore they need intensive support from teachers in order to be retained in the educational system;
- Provide young people in school with extra support, which they may need due to a lack of motivation or difficulty in concentrating due to problems at home, and teaching tailored to their individual needs;
- Ensure that schools provide support to children in care through social communities and extra help with their learning;
- Ensure that after a change of school and/or placement the new school focuses in particular on helping the student adapt to their new surroundings.

Placements

- Consider types of placement carefully so that the children do not experience too many changes. Continuity is key.
- Ensure that the approval process for foster parents includes checks regarding their capability to help young people with homework; their knowledge of the educational system; and, their ability to guide and support young people along their educational pathways.
- Give higher priority to education at crucial stages including when a placement starts; at key points during a placement; and, when a placement ends. Such priority should be given by both foster and residential carers (social pedagogues) and social workers.
- Care placements should provide a safe community and opportunities for developing the social competency of young people.
- Carers should support young people in taking up leisure time interests.

Social lives and leisure time activities

- Local authorities should establish a network where young people can share experiences and discuss future educational possibilities through the development of peer groups of young people in care and/or care leavers;
- Schools should ensure that young people in care are part of social communities at school and engage in out-of-school activities.

Local authorities

- Reconsider the consequences of the division between schooling and care and increase collaboration and communication between the two departments
- Keep responsibility for young people with a care background in the same department in a municipality after they turn 18 years old
- Share information about school progress and attendance in school between departments;
- Ensuring that education is always discussed at meetings with young people in order to motivate them to continue studying and to raise their expectations
- Providing more leaving care support and enhance current provision through introducing special programmes for children and young people in care preparing them for independent living, such as budgeting and cooking.

In conclusion, local authorities, teachers and social workers should take a long term view at every step of child protection and care processes both in terms of education but also in terms of the present and future lives of children in care.

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CHAPTER 3: ENGLAND

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3.1 Education in England

Expenditure on education in the UK is just above the EU average as a proportion of GDP, but a higher then average proportion comes from private sources due to the existence of fee-paying independent schools, only accessible to high income families. They cater for about seven per cent of the school population but account for almost half the intake of the most prestigious universities. The majority of children attend neighbourhood comprehensive schools at secondary level.

School attendance or education in some other setting is compulsory from 5-16 at primary (5-11) and secondary (11-16) schools. Most children also attend some form of pre-school provision, usually part-time. Upper secondary education either at school or further education college is not obligatory, but with 87 per cent of young people now staying on it can be regarded as the normative pathway. Universities are independent though largely financed by government, and there is a national admissions system (UCAS). The government sets attainment standards for key stages, of which the most important is Level 4, the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), the first national examination taken at 15 or 16. The minimum standard for successful completion of secondary education is five subject passes at grades A*-C. This is attained by only 14 per cent of looked after children compared with 65 per cent of all children and almost all pupils attending independent or selective schools.

Those who remain in academic education take further exams at 17 and 18 (AS and A levels) and in the past nearly all those who obtained two A level passes went on to university. This may change with the projected threefold increase in tuition fees at many universities. The chances of achieving high level passes at A level, required for entry to prestigious universities, are much greater for those attending independent schools or staying on in school 'sixth' forms then for students taking A levels or equivalent at FE colleges.

Children in care and their education[7]

About 61,000 children are looked after by English local authorities at any one time, but with a large amount of movement in and out of the system. The peak age for admission is 13-14, and these young people tend to stay until they leave care, usually at age 17 or 18. Family care, either provided by local authority carers or through private agencies, is generally preferred to institutional care, and between 70 and 80 per cent of those in care are looked after by foster carers.

Growing awareness of serious deficiencies in care and after-care services led to some local authorities setting up leaving care and educational support teams in the 1990s.

[7] Since the 1989 Children Act the official term for children in out of home care in England is 'looked after' but it has continued to be used interchangeably with 'in care' as it is in this report

However, education was not generally considered of much importance for children in care until the Labour government took office in 1997 (Jackson, 2010).

An influential government enquiry established the link between their very low educational achievement and high risk of social exclusion in adulthood (Social Exclusion Unit 2003). Numerous measures were introduced, designed to raise attainment and improve the long-term life chances of children and young people in and leaving care through legislation, statutory guidance, dissemination of best practice and provision of additional resources. Attempts were made to discourage early leaving from care and to make transition to adulthood a more gradual and individualised process. The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 laid a statutory duty on local authorities to support young people in full time education up to age 24. In 2004 Children Services Departments were set up in every local authority bringing care and education under one administrative body both locally and centrally, with legal responsibility for promoting the educational progress of children they look after. A Children's Rights Director has been appointed to seek the views of children and young people about the services they receive but the approach to children's rights is generally legalistic, with emphasis on formal complaints procedures rather than participation in decision-making in everyday life.

The broader policy context includes the Every Child Matters agenda with five targets including two, 'enjoy and achieve' and 'achieve economic well-being' directly related to obtaining educational qualifications, with the care system not seen to be doing well enough on either count (DfES 2006), and the Widening Participation programme designed to increase the proportion of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds accessing higher education. Children in care were clearly a target group for this initiative since their participation at the time was estimated to be about one per cent, less than any other identifiable section of the population (SEU, 2003).

The timing of the present research coincided with an economic recession in the UK during which employment prospects for young people, especially those without educational qualifications, steadily deteriorated (Jackson & Cameron, 2009)..

3.2 What did we know at the start of the study?

The first stage of the research was to carry out a comprehensive literature review to find out what was already known (Cameron and Jackson, 2008). Research on the education of children in care in England dates back to the 1970s and the extent of their educational disadvantage is well documented. Statistics comparing the educational attainment of children in care with the general population have been collected since 1999 and published since 2002. They show a wide and growing gap between the levels attained by looked after children and others.

There is now a substantial body of research relating to the school experience and educational achievement of looked after children, but it has serious weaknesses. It consists mostly of small scale qualitative studies or evaluations of practice initiatives using subjective measures of change or improvement. It is all written from a social care perspective, taking no account of educational or sociological evidence or theoretical insights which are relevant to the care population.

Three research reviews before our own, including one commissioned by the government (SEU2003), and two subsequently (Jackson, 2009; Brodie, 2009), all have similar findings. But almost all previous research was exclusively concerned with schooling up to 16. There is only one empirical study of the post-compulsory educational experience of young people with a care background: the By Degrees study (Jackson, Ajayi and Quigley, 2005). This focuses on the very small group of care leavers who go to university, leaving a gap in our knowledge of what happens to the majority of young people in care between the ages of 16 and 19. Statistical information on the further or higher education of young people who were looked after at 16 is very limited and poorly differentiated.

Another relevant body of literature relates to young people making the transition from care to independence. We found plenty of evidence that lack of qualifications caused severe problems for them but in general research on leaving care is more concerned with accommodation, employment and budgeting than education. One study noted that among a group of young people who did progress to further education, the drop-out rate was 80 per cent (Wade & Dixon, 2006). There seemed to be little interest in the minority who were educationally successful and no research addressing central questions for the YiPPEE study: How well does the care system recognise and promote educational potential among children in care? To what extent are they enabled to, or prevented from accessing universal educational provision beyond the age of compulsory schooling?

3.3 How the research was carried out

The general study design discussed in Chapter 1 was followed in England. Following the mapping and review stage, five local authorities were chosen for closer study and agreed to participate. They were selected to represent different socio-economic characteristics: urban and rural, within and outside London, with varying numbers of children in care, care leavers and unaccompanied asylum seekers. They differed greatly in size, with the largest area having a total population of 640,000 and the smallest only 172,000. The number of children in care ranged from 386 to 640.

Managers of leaving care services and education support services were interviewed in each area. They were asked for information on their services, on educational opportunities available in their locality and for their views on the obstacles and facilitators for young people in care accessing further and higher education. They were also asked for more detailed statistical information and contact details for all young people aged 19-21 in their area who met the criteria for inclusion in the study[8] and were willing to become involved. Telephone screening interviews were then carried out with all those nominated, from which the intensive sample was drawn. Recruiting the sample proved very difficult and time-consuming, as detailed in the England national report (WP5). A reasonable gender balance was achieved, though weighted in the opposite direction from the total population in care (47% male, 53% female as opposed to 57% male, 43% female in the national figures. It was notable that a very high proportion of those nominated had come to the UK as unaccompanied asylum-seekers,

[8] The inclusion criteria were that the young person was in care at the age of 16, had been looked after for at least a year and had shown some sign of educational promise in the form of passing at least one GCSE or equivalent or having continued into further education after compulsory school age.

as the Table 3.2 shows. Fifty one percent of the screening sample were born outside the UK, but in the in-depth sample this was reduced to 34 percent as a deliberate strategy to make the intensive sample more representative.

However, in the final sample black and minority ethnic young people still make up a high percentage of those interviewed compared with their proportion in the care population, and this may reflect a real difference in their propensity to continue their education to advanced levels.

Table 3.1 Ethnicity of young people in care and in the study

Ethnicity	National data*		Screening sample		Case study sample	
	N	%	n	%	n	%
White	46,340	**76**	27	**37**	16	**50**
Mixed	5,120	**8**	2	**3**	2	**6**
Black	4,390	**8**	26	**36**	7	**22**
Asian	3,020	**5**	8	**11**	1	**3**
Other	1,840	**3**	7	**10**	3	**9**
Not asked/stated	210	**0**	3	**4**	3	**9**

Screening sample base: n74 Missing: n1
Case study sample base: n32
National data 2008-2009

Thirty two individuals agreed to participate and were interviewed in depth in the five study areas; 26 of them were interviewed again approximately one year later. The young people were asked to nominate an adult who had been supportive of their education and these individuals were also interviewed, either face-to-face or by telephone. All face-to-face and some telephone interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed using SPSS and the NVivo qualitative data analysis package.

The first interview with the young people took a biographic narrative approach following the interviewees' lead but with a list of areas to be covered. Other interviews were more structured although still using open-ended questions as far as possible. The first interview included a 'lifeline' which helped the researchers to map the young person's care and educational careers.

Table 3.2 Data sources for England Case Study (WP5)

5 face to face interviews with managers of case study area Leaving Care Teams
4 face to face interviews with Virtual School Head teachers
77 screening interviews by telephone using a structured questionnaire
32 in-depth face-to-face interviews with young people (Time 1)
27 Follow-up interviews (telephone and face to face) (Time 2)
18 interviews with nominated adults (telephone and face to face)

3.4 The views of leaving care managers and teachers

There was considerable difficulty in obtaining the statistical information requested from leaving care teams, indicating that aggregated data on the post-16 education of looked after young people is not routinely collected. The survey of leaving care teams found that around nine percent of young people known to the teams were in or had graduated from higher education and around half were in some form of further education. Almost all the leaving care managers interviewed expressed a strong commitment to improving the educational attainment of young people in contact with their service and encouraging them to continue in some form of post-compulsory education or training. With some exceptions, expectations and aspirations for the young people concerned were very modest and, as in other countries, they tended to be steered towards vocational qualifications rather than academic courses. In contrast to previous research findings, there was a clear assumption that looked after young people who enrolled on college courses or obtained university places should be supported in their studies. There was broad agreement across local authority areas on the factors that helped or stood in the way of participation, at individual, organisational and policy levels.

Table 3.3: Managers views on facilitating factors and obstacles for young people from care continuing in post-compulsory education

Facilitators	**Obstacles**
Placement stability	Multiple placements
Early support for catch-up learning	Disrupted schooling and failure to compensate for gaps
Action-oriented Personal Education Plans (PEPs)	Problems in birth family
Priority given to education by social workers and carers	No emphasis on education or interest in school experience
Personal motivation and persistence	Low self-esteem and lack of aspiration
Individual tutoring to compensate for gaps in schooling	Lack of basic skills esp. literacy
Support from family and carers	Poor conditions for study

Financial resources and practical help	Leaving care/independent living
Sympathetic schools	No understanding of care problems
Positive community and cultural influences	Knowing no one with HE experience
Clear protocols agreed with colleges and HEIs	Lack of information and guidance
Staying in placement after 18	Rejection by foster carers Having no one who cares
Leaving care team promotes education over employment, includes education specialist	Anxiety about lack of money – few part-time jobs

3.5 Young people's experiences

The following sections relate to the intensive interview sample of 32 young people from across the five study areas. A holistic approach was taken to the research questions, locating the young people's educational experience within the overall context of their lives in and out of care. The areas covered were: young people's lives at the time of first and second interviews, their current concerns, educational engagement, social relationships and informal learning and leisure activities. Exploration of their past experiences covered life in their birth families and ongoing contact with relatives, childhood events, care careers and educational lives during the compulsory school years. How much support for education was provided by birth relatives, teachers, social workers, foster parents, residential carers and others? What were the young person's own hopes and dreams and to what extent were they fulfilled? Most of the young people were interested in the study and very positive about contributing to it.

Present lives

At the time of the first interview 25 out of the 32 young people described education as their main daytime activity. Twelve were already in higher education and 11 more intending to continue their education at university level. Only three young men and one woman were not in education, employment or training. Almost all were living independently in social housing and working part-time to supplement the inadequate financial assistance they received from leaving care services. Only three were still living with foster carers but former carers were often an important source of support, emotional as well as practical (cf. Jackson& Ajayi, 2007).

Almost all those interviewed experienced severe financial difficulties. Those in further education were entirely dependent on support from leaving care teams as they were not eligible for welfare benefits. Living independently involved a constant struggle to find money to pay bills and everyday expenses, while part-time jobs were increasingly scarce. The housing they were allocated was often in isolated or run-down areas and in a bad state of repair. They reported a serious falling off of professional support after leaving school and little targeted support for care leavers in their further and higher educational institutions, although those at university seemed to enjoy greater stability in their lives than the others.

Six young people reported serious mental health problems, but, with one exception, were determined to continue with their education.

Family and care lives

The family backgrounds of the UK-born young people in the study were very typical of children in the care system. They came from extremely complicated families and almost none, with the exception of the unaccompanied asylum seekers, had lived with both parents for any length of time. Fathers were generally absent altogether. The three dominant themes that emerged from accounts of their family life before care were feeling unwanted and unloved, parents' addictions and mental health problems, and bereavement. A third of the interviewees had lost a parent by the age of 15. Generally parents were too bound up in their own problems to pay attention to their children's health, wellbeing or education. The young people often did not know much about their parents' occupations or education, but in general for those born in the UK, they could be described as unwaged working class with few or no educational qualifications. Conflict with step-parents featured in many accounts and in some cases precipitated the entry into care. Some children suffered many years of severe abuse before beginning to be looked after.

For 60 per cent of the young people their main placement was in foster care, 16 per cent had been in residential care and 20 percent in both types. Seventeen had 1-3 placements, 13 had between 4-10 placements and two had more than ten placements. Several reported very positive experiences and warm relationships with foster carers who had been supportive of their education. Others were not so lucky. Seventeen reported at least one negative experience in care, such as emotional abuse, inadequate food, being treated differently to other children, being asked to leave prematurely. In residential care, according to our informants, education hardly seemed to figure at all: 'no one goes to school in (residential) care very much'. The majority of carers were reported as being uninterested in education and ill-equipped to offer support.

On the other hand several young people said that at least one of their foster placements, usually the last, had been extremely supportive of their education, not only urging them to aim high and taking a keen interest in their activities and achievements, but sometimes also making a substantial financial contribution, which had enabled at least one young men to go to university when he would otherwise not have been able to do so. This was not necessarily associated with having a higher level of basic education themselves, but it did seem to go with an ongoing engagement with learning.

Educational lives

Nearly all the young people in our sample had experienced extreme disruptions in their education, caused by the characteristics of their birth families, the traumatic experience of coming into care and the events leading up to it and frequent changes of placement within care. Many, though not all, had a very unhappy time at school due to bullying and discrimination and sometimes their own disturbed behaviour. Despite this, some young people were able to maintain a clear sense of themselves as competent learners and with what might be called a strong learning identity. They looked forward to the next phase of their educational lives in the hope that it would be better than the previous one.

The majority came from families with no experience of post-compulsory education and some had to overcome opposition or scepticism from relatives or carers when they

decided they wanted to continue in education after 16. That was easier if they attended a school where this was the norm or had a group of friends who were aiming for university. As can be seen from Table 3.4, the asylum-seekers as a group showed exceptionally strong educational motivation, especially considering that they faced many additional obstacles, including uncertainty about their immigration status and acute financial problems.

Table3. 4 Highest educational attainment of YiPPEE intensive sample by T2*

	No quals	**GCSEs**	**A levels**	**NVQ2 or Diploma**	**UG Degree**	**Total**	**Continuing to study** **Below degree level**	**At University**
Male	2	2		2	1	7		1
Female	1	3	7	1	1	13	3	7
Total	**3**	**5**	**7**	**3**	**2**	**20**	**3**	**8**
UASC								
Male	-	2	1	6	-	8	4	4
Female	-	-	1	2	-	4	-	4
Total	**-**	**7**	**9**	**11**	**2**	**32**	**7**	**16**

*Some missing data from those not interviewed at T2 who may be still in education
This table needs a footnote to explain how those with no quals got into the study
Also needs a row to total the UASC male and female. Also said earlier that 12 were in higher ed.

Informal learning and leisure

This is an almost completely unexplored area in the research literature. However there is evidence from studies in the USA and Ireland that participation in social and leisure time activities has a positive effect on educational progress. The 32 young people in the intensive sample engaged in a wide range of social and leisure activities which were very important in bringing them into contact with others of their age who had not been in care and enabling them to develop new friendships and a wider social network. Sport, especially football, was the most popular activity, but, perhaps less predictably, 41 per cent were or had been involved in volunteering, sometimes over a period of many years, in a wide variety of settings. Of the 12 volunteers, 11 were in full time education, five of them at university.

Table 3.5 Leisure and spare-time activities of YiPPEE young people

Type of activity (cited as a main leisure activity by young person)	Number of case study young people participating in activity
Sport (including swimming, boxing, football, going to the gym, tennis, basketball, running, martial arts)	13
Volunteering	12
Lone activities at home (reading, watching TV, playing computer games, internet)	8
The Arts (writing, singing, dancing, acting, music)	7
Faith based activities (attending church, mosque other religious activities)	4
No leisure activities cited	5

Seven young people were involved in arts-related activities which had enabled them to develop and use their skills and abilities, and in at least one case to turn away from a self-destructive life-style. For two young men, music had played a key therapeutic role, helping them to overcome depression and continuing to play a major part in their lives. Both had also used their music for social purposes, organising groups and performances and teaching others to play instruments.

Church and faith-related activities made up an integral part of the leisure and social lives of four young people, enabling them to become part of a community which could fill their time in socially useful and enjoyable ways at low cost. Most importantly it brought them into contact with friends from stable backgrounds and adults who could act as informal mentors. This was also true of other leisure and social activities (Gilligan, 2007).

Most of the young people said their friends were very important to them, especially for those who had lost contact with family. Some young people had been encouraged to continue in education by friends who were staying on at school or applying to university. In one case a young asylum seeker not entitled to help from his local authority was enabled to stay at university by financial help from his friends.

Friends, along with professionals and carers were found to be crucially important agents in the formation of positive learning identities in young people through inspiring, encouraging and providing practical means for them to take up leisure activities that foster and develop their skills and abilities and give them a positive orientation to

learning. Such activities can provide vital consistency for young people in the midst of disruption in other areas of their lives

3.6 Conclusions and implications for policy and practice

In drawing our conclusions we address the research questions proposed in our original proposal: i) what are the educational pathways of young people who have been in local authority care for at least part of their childhood and (ii) what are their educational identities and how do characteristics such as social class, gender, ethnicity, being an asylum seeker or having caring responsibilities impact on their educational pathways. In looking at these questions we have moved beyond the discourse of research on the care system and considered our findings in the light of theories drawn from educational sociology.

One concept that we examine is individualisation, as discussed by Beck and colleagues, who argue that the choices individuals make about their own lives are less constrained than in the past by normative barriers and expected roles and distinctions along gender, ethnic and class lines (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002). Our findings do not support this hypothesis. For this highly disadvantaged group of young people, although the rhetoric of self-determination and choice making was present in their discourse, there remained a strong link between social class and identity and there was limited scope for actual choice-making, as Ball et al. (2000) and Furlong (2009) suggest. Although it could be argued that being in public care gives some young people access to resources that would not have been available in their families of origin, the evidence from our study suggests that the professionals and substitute carers with whom they come into contact are as likely to reinforce their class and gender-based assumptions about educational and career paths as to challenge them.

From a group selected for having educational promise only three had gone from school to university with no delays. For this group, and for the others, choices of education destinations tended to made close to their home town, and showed limited occupational and geographic horizons. Their contact with professionals in no way compensated for the lack of social capital or support from their birth families. Most of them did not receive any personalised career guidance, or if they did it was a one-off encounter. This is very unlike the informal iterative talk about education and future employment routes that goes on in the homes of the middle-class young people. For these privileged girls and boys, long before 16, there are detailed and well-informed discussions about choice of subjects and universities with a clear understanding of their implications for different career goals (Ball et al., 2000). Among the young people in our study, those who were able to articulate future goals were most likely to be influenced by friends and relatives or by courses available at their local college. By the time of our second round interviews they had sometimes been obliged to reduce their ambitions by practical circumstances such as accommodation or financial problems, or by failing to achieve required entry qualifications, often in the aftermath of some family upheaval. Unplanned pregnancies were a factor in the lives of three young women but could provide an incentive rather than an obstacle to their education plans.

It is clear from this study that far more young people growing up in care have the potential to benefit from further and higher education than has been assumed in the

past. The problem is that it seems more or less impossible for them to follow a normative educational pathway through school and post-compulsory education. Most often, educational journeys are marked by interruptions, diversions and false starts.

Reaching the expected level for continuation in education at 16 is very hard because of the disruptions caused by family crises, irregular attendance at younger ages and frequent changes of care placement, often also involving changes of school. They may also suffer from poor self esteem due to abuse or neglect in the family setting, discrimination and bullying by fellow pupils and difficulty in doing school work as a result of gaps in attendance and lack of support in their home setting. The generally low educational level of first hand carers limits their ability to provide support for homework or provide a stimulating environment. A few may also have negative attitudes towards education derived from their own experiences.

It is very important that practitioners recognise that, for all these reasons, it is most unlikely that the GCSE examination results achieved by looked after young people at 16 represent their true level of ability or potential. The crucial factor is motivation, as the better attainment of many asylum-seekers demonstrates, and professionals can play a key role in supporting young people to improve their educational and career chances by remaining in education after 16. However because they are starting from behind and may still have many obstacles to overcome, this means that they are more likely to be ready to enter higher education at 20 or older than at the normative age of 18 or 19.

It is therefore essential that local authorities do not set arbitrary age limits on the financial support they are willing to provide for young people who have been in care to pursue their educational goals, and without which they will have little hope of achieving qualifications leading to satisfying (or any) employment.

3.7 Recommendations

National government

- Statistics on the education of children in care should continue to be collected and published annually including detailed information on post-compulsory education. Reliable statistical information comparing the attainment of looked after children with the general school population is an essential basis for further improvement
- Education and care statistics should be combined and disaggregated to show the proportions of care leavers with different characteristics (gender, ethnicity etc.) attaining different levels of qualification up to the age of 25
- Education and care for looked after children should continue to be the responsibility of the Department for Education and of a single local authority department with a director of children's services at chief officer level , a lead elected member and a Virtual School Head

Local authorities and children's services

- Irregular school attendance should be recognised as a possible indication of serious family problems and information on unexplained absence should be more closely linked to safeguarding policies

- A detailed educational assessment should be made when a child begins to be looked after and intensive catch-up help given from the earliest opportunity
- Looked after children should be retained in mainstream education with whatever additional support is required. Behaviour problems should be seen as a response to adverse experiences rather than an intrinsic characteristic of the child.
- It should be assumed that children in long-term care will remain in placement and education at least until the age of 18 and care and Pathway Plans should be formulated in line with that expectation
- Foster and residential carers should be clear that promoting educational achievement is a key aspect of their role. Those not able to provide educational support due to their own low level of education should receive additional help and guidance from qualified teachers.
- Teachers need to understand the care system and social workers need to be well informed about education; this should form part of their respective training and continuing professional development
- Leisure and social activities should be actively promoted and greater efforts made to ensure continuity across placement moves. More should be done to assist young people to capitalise on the opportunities for leisure-based and volunteering projects to provide qualifications, income and work experience.

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CHAPTER 4: HUNGARY

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4.1 The national policy context and brief outline of care and education systems

The care system in Hungary

During the transition years after 1989, practically all policies related to education, and the protection and support of children and young people were changed and modernized. The Act 31 of 1997 on the protection of children and guardianship was accepted by the Hungarian Parliament in April 1997. It is based on the Hungarian Constitution and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Hungary signed in 1990. Its importance is highlighted by the fact that this is the first comprehensive, independent legislation concerning child protection in the history of legislation in Hungary. It re-structured, improved and organized the system of protection for children into a comprehensive whole.

Children's rights and interests are prioritized, therefore the aim is to bring up children in their own family. The Act is the relevant piece of legislation for all services for children, such as childcare, respite care, residential care and foster care. Using the services is optional. Parents or guardians are required/referred to use them only in certain cases. The two main objectives in relation to children in public care are 1) to help children to get back to live with their own families as soon as possible, and 2) if this is not possible, to promote their integration into society, and to help them achieve an independent life. This Act is the statutory base for supporting young people until they reach 24 years old (or 25 if they study full time).

Before the termination of short- or long-term care, the guardianship office provides for after-care support of children or young adults, for a minimum of one year, provided that young adults personally request this after-care support. Upon the request of the young adult, and – in the case of children under the age of legal maturity – taking into account the recommendation of the guardian (public guardian), the guardianship office provides for after-care provision. This applies if the short- or long-term care of the child terminated upon reaching legal maturity, and s/he cannot support him or herself, is in full-time education, is a full-time student in higher education, or is waiting for admittance to a social welfare institution. Since January 1, 2010, young adults can apply for after-care up to the age of 21 if they work or are seeking work, up to the age of 24 if they study, and until the age of 25 when they take part in full-time post-secondary education.

In Hungary, TEGYESZ agencies (Regional Child Protection Agencies) have a number of functions, according to Act 31, 1997 on the protection of children and guardianship. The country has 19 TEGYESZ agencies, one in each county, and one in the capital. According to the Child Protection Act, during the process of taking a child into temporary or permanent protection, and following a provisional placement, a TEGYESZ prepares a personality profile of the child, and has the task of issuing an expert opinion and recommendation for placement, preparing an individual placement plan at the request

of the Guardianship Authority, and appointing foster parents, a children's home, or a foster home, for the child. TEGYESZ operates the foster care network. Their legal obligations include the professional preparation for adoption, and the declaration of a child in temporary or permanent care as adoptable. In addition, they give professional and methodological advice, and operate a special guardian, financial guardian, and professional guardian network.

Child-protection statistics for the year 2007 show that the number of children and young adults placed in care is a total of 20,988 people, nationally. The number of young adults who receive after-care is 4068. Within the child welfare system, the number of authorised places in children's homes was 11,113 in the investigated year, out of which 9,492 places were occupied. Some 11,496 children were placed with foster parents. Persons receiving after-care are placed roughly equally in children's homes (altogether, 2,050 in various types) and with foster parents (2,018). The majority (85%) of those placed in foster care are entrusted to traditional foster parents, i.e. only a fraction of them are placed with professional foster parents, of whom there are few.

The Hungarian education system

Education in Hungary is compulsory between the ages of 6 and 18. Generally primary school lasts eight years from 6 to 14, and secondary education four years from 14 to 18. To enter tertiary education one must obtain the school leaving certificate ("érettségi") which consists of a series of examinations at the end of high-school. The school leaving certificate also serves as the entrance examination to higher education. There are three main types of school at secondary level: "gimnázium" (high school), which is part of the normative pathway to tertiary education, "szakközépiskola" (vocational secondary school), which can also provide the school leaving certificate in addition to an occupational qualification, and "szakmunkásképző" (vocational training school) at which the main goal is obtaining a job qualification and which does not lead to the school leaving certificate.

In 2007, a total of 9532 children in care attended primary school, primary school for the mentally disabled, or elementary school for workers. Most children placed with foster parents and attending primary school (3,261 children) attend the grade that corresponds to their age, meaning that they have not had to repeat a year, while the opposite is true in the case of those living in children's homes, where the majority are overage for their school class (their number amounting to 2,490). In the 2006-2007 school year, the most common destination for students looked after in the child protection system leaving primary school and planning to continue studies, was vocational training school (1,014) and, with a much lower incidence, vocational secondary school (275). The smallest group of children participated in vocational training outside the school system (28). The number of those not studying at all is relatively low (135) and they usually do not have a permanent job. After leaving primary school, 153 children living in children's homes attended general secondary schools, 230 attended vocational secondary schools, 1,509 attended vocational training schools and 46 participated in educational programmes accredited within the National Record of Qualifications and provided within the school system on 31st December of the given year. Children placed in foster care are more likely to continue with their studies in school types offering better chances both for further education and entry into the labour market, than are their peers who live in children's homes

Based on data from 'Ifjúság 2008'[9] we can state that acquisition of a secondary school leaving certificate does not provide protection against unemployment. In the youth age group (15-29 years), the majority of the unemployed are graduates of primary school, i.e. did not continue in education beyond this point (35% unemployed), while 29% of vocational school graduates, and 28% of secondary school graduates are unemployed. Unemployment among university graduates however is only 8%.

4.2 What did we know at the start of the study and what questions did we need to ask?

During the preparation of the literature review and the secondary analyses of available national data we found that we have very little information in Hungary about the educational pathways of young people in care and their participation in higher education. This means that at present we do not have any insight into the studies of students within the child-protection system, at higher educational levels. The biggest obstacle proved to be that the national educational statistics contain very few data about students in the child-protection system and that statistical data collection concerning child protection does not give enough detail on individual children's school careers or performance. In the secondary analyses we were able to use three data sources: "Statistical Yearbook of Education 2007/2008", "Child Protection Statistical Guide 2007", and "Competence assessments (2008)"

National child protection statistics show that only a small number of young people who engage in further studies after primary school do so at high school or a vocational school that could pave the way to higher education. Children in care are over-represented in vocational training and trade schools. However, certificates acquired through this form of education do not secure a safe position in the labour market. Among students living within the child-protection system there are twice as many vocational training school students (15.9%), whereas the rate for remedial vocational school students at 9.4% is ten times the rate within the general population.

The data clearly indicate that students raised within the child-protection system perform much less well in education than others. They belong to the group which is known to have the worst prospects of achievement, with parents having a lower level educational background and a disadvantaged labour market position. Two-thirds of the parents of students growing up in their own families have a permanent job, whereas this rate is 50% among students living with foster parents, and a mere 38% in the case of students living in children's homes.

Parallel to the data of the Statistical Yearbook of Education, there is a significant difference regarding plans for future study: some 41% of students living in children's homes prefer a vocational training school certificate, whereas this was only indicated by 11.3% of students living with their own families. 55% of students living with their own families intend to obtain a certificate of higher education, compared with 26% of students living with foster parents and a mere 15% of students living in children's homes. Of those raised in child protection, about 6% study in higher education

[9] Ifjúság 2008 – Preliminary report (2009: Ed: Szabó, Andrea Bauer, Béla) Institute if Social Affairs and Labour, Budapest, pp.27

With the YiPPEE study we sought answers to the following questions to address these inequalities: what further education opportunities exist for young people raised within the child-protection system? What are the main barriers and facilitators to study beyond compulsory schooling? Which paths do they take within the education system and what are their characteristics?

4.3 How the research was carried out

Following the state of the art literature review (WP2), the next stage consisted of secondary analysis of national statistics on children in care and their educational attainment (WP3) and a survey of all 20 Regional Child Protection Agencies (TEGYESZ) authorities (WP4). From these, four local authorities were chosen for closer study and agreed to participate. Selection of the four TEGYESZ agencies was based upon the country's territorial and developmental characteristics, and the number of young people being raised within the child-protection system. In the sample were included one county from the western region (Vas County), one from the country's northern region (Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén), one from the eastern region (Hajdú-Bihar), with the capital also included in the sample as the fourth area. In terms of economic development, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county is located in a disadvantaged part of the country, Vas County comprises more affluent areas, while Budapest is considered to be a region with the best attributes in all aspects. The number of those raised within the child protection system is the highest in the capital, while Vas County shows one of the lowest figures in the country.

In the four selected counties, we asked the local TEGYESZ agencies for help in finding interviewees and to hand out a screening questionnaire to those who were between 19 and 21 years of age, have lived under the child protection system at age 16 and show "educational promise". "Educational promise", at this point, was only defined as a determination to study, or a plan for further study, and we did not impose criteria on the level of studies.

An SPSS database was created from the returned questionnaires, and we selected those who proved to be educationally promising. To do this, the following steps were used during the selection process, using items in the questionnaire:

- s/he participates in higher education
- s/he has the secondary school leaving certificate (i.e. has completed the studies necessary for higher education), and wants to study further
- s/he has secondary school leaving certificate (i.e. has completed the studies necessary for higher education)
- s/he is getting a secondary school leaving certificate, and wants to study further
- s/he has no secondary school leaving certificate, but wants to study further

The above steps were performed in that order, extending the circle, until we had a range of potential interviewees. The interviewees were first contacted by telephone, during which conversation we summarised the research topic and asked them if they wished to participate. Those who agreed were asked to nominate an adult who had been supportive of their education.

Thirty five young people and 34 nominated adults were interviewed face-to-face. The nominated adult was usually a foster parent or an after-care provider; the main reason for this may be that these young people ware still receiving after-care. The second interview with the young people (a follow-up, one year later) – was conducted via by telephone, given that, in this case, a shorter and more structured conversation was necessary.

All face-to-face and telephone interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed using SPSS and the Nvivo qualitative data analysis package

4.4 The views of child care professionals and foster parents

Child care professionals and foster parents try to support young people raised within the child-protection system in their further studies. The support system has several levels. Apart from the immediate support of studies, i.e. helping with homework, finance, emotional support and encouragement are also provided. On a critical note, however, we should say that, child-care professionals do not regard higher-level qualifications as a reachable goal for this target group, so they tend instead to guide them towards obtaining a secondary school leaving certificate and a skilled occupation. They try to protect the young people from failure, even those whose school performances show that they should, evidently, be heading towards getting a degree. In some cases, this approach means that the professionals disregard personal achievements and merit and, thus, fail to provide encouragement and an emotionally-supportive background.

Based on our research results, we can establish two groups of factors influencing further study after the youth has reached the age signifying the end of compulsory schooling. The first group of factors contains so-called endogenous factors that can be grouped into the following 3 subgroups showing the following characteristics: 1) will, perseverance, individual commitment, a strong feeling of wanting to break out, 2) regarding knowledge as value, good school performance, balanced school career, talent, special field of interest, 3) desire to establish a secure future, taking responsibility for personal actions and decisions, assessment of the labour market position, the realisation of childhood dreams and desires, future-oriented approach.

The second group consists of the so-called exogenous factors that can also be grouped into three subgroups, as follows: 1) stable place of care, emotional support, motivation from child-care professionals, supportive person in the immediate environment (sibling, child-care professional, foster-parent), 2) good school-atmosphere, good relationship with fellow students, support of studies, nurturing of talent, monitoring of school career, child-care professionals' help in career planning, 3) provision of financial support.

4.5 Young people's experiences

A holistic approach was taken to the research questions, locating the young people's educational experience within the overall context of their lives, in and out of care. The areas covered were young people's lives at the time of first and second interviews, their current concerns, educational engagement and attainments, social relationships and

informal learning and leisure activities. Exploration of their past experiences covered life in their birth families and ongoing relations with relatives, childhood events, care careers and educational lives during the compulsory school years. How much support for education was provided by birth relatives, teachers, social workers, foster parents, residential carers and others? What were the young person's own hopes and dreams and to what extent were they fulfilled? Most of the young people were interested in the study and very positive about contributing to it.

Present lives

At the time of the first interview, all the 35 young people were studying (this is due to the selection method – see above – as we selected those who showed educational promise). One third of the young people were attending higher education institutions. As for the others, 12 had already obtained a secondary school leaving certificate but, instead of continuing their studies, were attending some kind of professional course. Six were trying to obtain a secondary school leaving certificate, and five were attending vocational training school. Apart from studying, many were also working, five regularly (and one holding a full-time job alongside attending a university correspondence course), although, during the interview, others also talked about taking up student jobs during the summer or on an occasional basis.

As each young people was in the system – received after-care provision – most of them lived in some form of accommodation provided by the child protection system: continue to use after-care provision at foster parents; utilise after-care places provided within institutional care; or live in some kind of residential care together with other youths with a background in the child-protection system, or live in after-care homes.

The young adults identified finding accommodation as being their biggest problem once they leave the after-care provision system. They believe that employees within the after-care provision system do not or are unable to provide effective help in this matter.

Young adults primarily have external (not from the care system) relationships, and they really try to keep it that way. Relationships with those being brought up within the child welfare system are much better described as "camaraderie" rather than friendship. The most common place for friendship formation is the school. Many of the interviewees recounted negative experiences from both school and the community of children. As a result, they developed a particular defence mechanism – hiding their pasts, their family backgrounds, and the living conditions in which they were raised. Many of them have faced discrimination due to their care status or their Roma ethnic origin, especially those living in institutional care.

Table 4.1: Main activity of intensive interview sample at T1 and T2

What are young people doing at time one?

	Where is s/he studying?	Working alongside studying
Studying at a higher-education institution	*12	4
Attending a higher-education course	2	0
Attending a vocational course	**10	0
Obtaining a secondary school leaving certificate	6	1
Obtaining a profession	5	0
Total	35	5

*one also has a full-time job
**one has taken an academic leave-of-absence, from college, for one year

What are young people doing at time two?

	Main occupation	Working alongside studying
Studying at a higher-education institution	12	2
Attending a higher-education course	2	
Attending a voc. course	4	
Obtaining a secondary school leaving certificate	3	1
Obtaining a profession	*3	
Total of those studying	24	3
Working	4	
Looking for a job	4	
On maternity-leave	1	
Total	33	
Missing	2	

*two are studying to become members of the police force. Although the institution they are attending counts as a vocational secondary school, a secondary school leaving certificate is a prerequisite

Family and care lives

In most cases, there were complex, long-term problems in the family, including ill-treatment and neglect originating from alcoholism. Financial problems were mentioned in almost all of the narratives, but only very rarely were these the only problems a family had. It is also clear, from the interviews, that the young adults spent long years under unsettled conditions, being hurt physically and mentally, and lacking parental love and care. The birth-parents are, typically, lower-educated people: many have not even managed to complete the eight grades of primary-school, and there are many unemployed and inactive people (living on disability pensions) among them.

The interviewees indicate that there is typically no or very intermittent contact with the birth-parents. With two exceptions, interviewees' relationships with their birth-parents were superficial and irregular or they had no contact with them at all. Those who have no contact with their families do not intend to gather information on them either. They have steered away from this since childhood, and they despise their parents because of the parents' lifestyle and situation.

Fourteen young people entered the system before the age of 4, whilst 16 of them entered between the ages of 10 and 16. Based on the experience of child-care professionals, the group who enter the system at a later age are most at risk of not

continuing their studies. . According to the professionals' opinion, children who are older when they enter the system have accumulated extensive disadvantages for which the system cannot compensate.

The majority of interviewees made positive statements about child-care professionals working within the institutional care system. Those who were raised by foster parents tend to have a close relationship with the foster family and said that the foster parents did not differentiate between them and their own children and that it was easy to fit into the family. Several young people mentioned that, during their time spent within the child welfare and after-care systems, they got to know a professional whose personality, lifestyle and general views served as a good example and to whom they could turn with their troubles. However, they believe that these professionals are not typical. According to their experience, this type of co-operative ability, openness and helpfulness is not characteristic of all professionals within the system. Some youths who were brought up within institutional care do not believe that they can trust child protection professionals and complain that, as young adults, they are not treated as partners. A common problem for these young people that they do not feel they can confide in professionals, or discuss everyday troubles and their ideas for the future with them.

In general we can say that they are thankful for the support – mainly financial support – and for the help provided in relation to their studies. It definitely should be noted, however, that the main reason for remaining in the after-care system after reaching the age of legal maturity is the fact that, in most cases, the young adult has nowhere to go, since s/he has no stable family relationships, so the system provides the only secure place. In many cases, they also take into account the convenience of remaining within the system – since they are provided with accommodation, clothing and support for studies and, last but not least, in terms of cost, it is much more economical to stay in the system than to live independently.

Educational lives

Child-care professionals and foster parents try to support young people raised within the child-protection system in their further studies. However, as we found earlier, expectations are very low and there is more emphasis on avoiding failure than on enabling the young person to reach the highest achievable educational level..

The most notable characteristic of those studying at a higher-education institution is persistence: the majority were still studying there at the time of the second interview. Only two had quit the higher-education system, in both cases the main reason being their having obtained a job (thereby achieving financial independence).

Altogether twelve young people were attending some type of vocational training provided outside the school system. These vocational courses are very popular among those brought up in the child protection system, because they provide the opportunity to obtain an occupational qualification in one or two years. There are various motivational factors characteristic of these youths. Some start attending such a course after an unsuccessful entrance exam, whilst others want to supplement their original qualifications with additional qualifications – believing that the more they have, the better their chances are in the labour market. (National employment statistics suggest that they may be mistaken). After successfully completing one vocational course, many

continue their studies by moving on to other vocational courses: nine young people out of 12 were still studying at the time of the second interview.

The young people who were attending vocational training school showed the biggest "setback" or delay in relation to their age, as well as when compared to other individuals. On a percentage basis, this group contains the largest number who have actually stepped outside into the labour market and tried to find a job. Only one of them is continuing studying and trying to obtain a secondary school leaving certificate.

The overall majority of our respondents did not miss any long periods of time from school. Those respondents who got into a higher-education institution had typically made it to the end of secondary school without a significant period of absence. However, fourteen out of the 35 respondents, completed secondary school later than the customary age of 18-19. Some of our respondents had faced a difficult time before they entered the child protection system. During that period, they lived with their birth parents and, due to family conflicts, neglect, or frequent changes of accommodation, they could not perform well in school. Apart from that, we mostly saw drifting and the premature leaving of further-education courses in the period following the completion of secondary school. A typical reason for drifting after completing secondary school is that they do not really know what they would like to do and often lack informed guidance.

Informal learning and leisure

Concerning leisure time activities the respondents mostly mentioned activities done alone at home, or types of activity, like "going out with friends" that are usually characteristic of every young person. They generally regard studying and leisure time as being opposites with no connection. However, in some cases, interpersonal relationships formed during leisure time activities can actually create an important background and even some advantages. In addition, sometimes the hobby – in itself – can develop into an activity that could launch a lifetime career.

In the case of child-care institutions and foster-families, we observed that those youths who attend higher-education institutions were brought up in homes where several others also attended higher-education institutions. We believe that the direct personal experience of these positive role-models greatly influence whether or not the youths dare to set tertiary education as a goal. If their environment contains peers who are already attending a higher-education institution, they tend to go for this opportunity more easily than those youths who do not know what it actually means to be a university student.

An important function of the different hobbies and sports – mainly for those brought up in an institution – is that these provide an opportunity for them to "break free" from the strict, daily-schedule. Therefore, this is one of the most important factors contributing to the young peoples' desire to have some kind of hobby and leisure time activity.

In the case of youths brought up by foster parents, there is no professional provision or guidance regarding extra-curricular classes and sports. This is unlike the case in institutions (where attending various extra-curricular activities is typically supported and there are no restrictions concerning choice of activity, so they can try out several

kinds.). Therefore, in foster care the particular family's traditions and lifestyle decide what opportunities a young person has, and what sorts of activity the family will support. Concerning youths raised in a child-care institution, it is important to mention that, although they seem to prefer "classical" hobbies and leisure time activities, this may be because the system actually makes it impossible for them to participate in spontaneous activities with friends

Looking ahead: hopes and dreams for the future

The most dominant argument put forward by the young people in support of the importance of studies, is that studying is important in order to enable them to be better than their birth-families. They deem that further studies offer the chance to break away from their past, and ensure better, more financially-stable lives than their parents lead. The strong feeling of wanting to break out and consciously separate from the past has been an important motivational force in their lives. They mostly associate positive characteristics (being appreciated, respected, having a high-prestige job and a good salary) with the image of an educated person.

Short-range plans (what they expect to be doing in one year's time) related to studies are organised around three alternatives: 1) to continue courses already begun, 2) to start further studies after finishing the present course, 3) to find a job, after finishing the current studies. In the case of those youths who are attending a higher-education institution, the short-range plans also include scholarship-applications to study abroad, finding a job, and the further development of language-skills. It is a general plan among young adults that they intend to continue to use after-care provision. Those who continue their studies may have after-care provision until the age of 24/25. They regard this as a very important time period in the preparation for a self-sufficient life and establishing their financial situation.

Following the completion of studies, their mid-range plans are mainly focused on work. Therefore their main concern is to find a good job after they obtain their degree or their professional qualifications. Considering life ten years from now, the young adults' plans are basically focused on family life. They imagine that, by this time, they will have secure accommodation and work, and they will be living in a stable, intimate relationship in which they can also have children.

4.6 Conclusions and implications for policy and practice

Our results show that most of those brought up within the child-protection system wish to learn some kind of skill or trade. One factor playing a major role in this is that, for many young people growing up in care, starting an independent life as soon as possible is a priority. Typically educators and foster parents also consider this to be important, and often they consider a secondary certificate as the highest level realistically achievable by these young people.

Young adults, as they tend to consider learning, and obtaining suitable, competitive qualifications as important, most often highlighted personal ambition, perseverance, and willpower as helping them in their studies. However, in the young adults' view, a supportive background was also essential. The young people highlighted their financial situation as the most inhibiting factor, many having to contribute to financing their

studies – which strains their savings and makes starting an independent life more difficult. Another problem that, usually, there is no named, responsible person in the child's life who can help him or her, and child-care institutions have no strategic plans to follow and motivate children in their studies. In the lives of these children, there are no appointed persons who are responsible for their school careers, from the time they are admitted to care until they leave the system forever. A consequence of this is that these children have no real prospects, and they experience difficulties in the course of career-planning and future orientation.

It is important to note that significant differences can be found between the academic careers of those studying at graduate and secondary levels; generally, the vast majority of YiPPEE students in higher education had never taken long breaks from their studies – they went straight through secondary school and obtained a certificate. Among those who did not continue into higher education, however, repeating classes, or changing schools, is not uncommon. Generally, their experiences with the school system, teachers and peers, were shaped by this: more successful students never faced prejudice because of their child-protection background, and had a good relationship with their teachers and peers. In contrast, many of those with a less smooth academic career reported negative experiences because they were known to be in the child protection system and young people with an ethnic Roma background were most likely to encounter prejudice.

To summarise the after-care system, we can say that the young adults consider the possibility of using care services to be important, particularly so that they can study and have extra time for laying the foundations for their futures, delaying the transition to fully independent adulthood. TEGYESZ staff and key persons also report that if a young adult would like to obtain higher education – based on previous school performance, individual ability and motivation – the care provider and the local TEGYESZ agency try to provide every material and moral support. However, it is important to note that there are significant differences in the financial position of TEGYESZ agencies, care providers, and forms of care (institutional care, foster parents), and, hence, in the level of support they are able to give to young adults. Generally, after-care recipients in the capital, or those who make use of institutional care, get more financial support.

We have to note that the provisions of the Child Protection Act, effective as of 1st January, 2010, have significantly transformed the after-care system. Those unable to support themselves (whether working or unemployed) may stay within the system but only until 21 years of age. Lowering the upper age limit of care to 21 years, without strengthening the foundations of professional work, poses the danger that precisely those who cannot start an independent life, because of low income or having no income, will leave the system earlier. The foundation of professional work concerning the almost 30% who apply for after-care under this title is also urgent, because there are concerns that these young people – having left the child-care system – will appear in the social welfare system – due to their low levels of education, weak labour market position, and small network of connections. In the case of this target group, extending care eligibility until 24 years of age, there is a risk of full-time studies becoming preferred even when it is not appropriate for the young person's ability and interests because of the associated accommodation and provision; i.e. in order for the young person to remain in the system, s/he must continue studies.

4.7 Recommendations to national and local government

- Academic performance is affected by a number of factors other than individual capabilities, such as traumas, and educational disadvantages accumulated before the time of entry into the child-care system. Child protection has a huge responsibility to ensure that children find stable care locations, and that the principle of aiming for final location (permanency planning) is kept in mind during the selection of care placements. In addition, children should be directed to the various forms of care, such as institutional and foster care, according to personality and individual needs, rather than based on available capacity.

- It is an important requirement that the child's school performance should be documented and tracked in a standardised format from the first day of special care. There should be a written plan regarding academic career or pathway, and there should be a person who takes responsibility for shaping the child's life, and who, thereby, can monitor changes in his or her academic trajectory. This means a shift in approach within the child-protection services, creating a focus on planned assistance in academic progress, and preparation for a conscious career choice, in order to lay the foundations of the child's future.

- Professionals should support qualifications that are suited to the individual's ideas and skills, and foreseeable labour market demands. It might be useful to set higher expectations (e.g. vocational secondary school and secondary certificate, instead of vocational training school), because experience has shown that by aiming for a higher level of education, one progresses further in the educational system.

- Support for extensive statistical surveys and child protection-related research is necessary in order to gain a deeper insight into the situation of the target group. The present child protection statistics contain minimal data on the educational participation of children of compulsory school age within the system. We have no information whatsoever regarding the level and scope of studies of those who have reached their legal maturity and who are still receiving after-care provision. Regarding studies in higher-education, we only have estimates. A further problem is that data-collection is performed at an institutional level, so we do not have child protection data available at the individual level. Furthermore, the collected data on the education of the base population does not contain a breakdown for those living within the child-protection system.

- Children should be presented with stories of reference so the life stories of former child-care recipients who have successfully integrated into society and are high achievers can serve as a model for those currently being raised within the system. It is very important to set a personal example; so face-to-face meetings with successful former child-care recipients can be useful means of sharing experiences concerning further education.

- It is important to keep in touch with the family, as an ever-present, emotional support from parents can act as a motivating force in both the child's

development, and their pursuit of studies. This potential resource does not often seem to be used.

- Continuation of studies after the age of compulsory education is largely determined by whether the children at risk in their families receive all the necessary assistance from child care to overcome their disadvantages, and compensate for failures at school, and whether children who are taken out of their families have access, within the child care system, to the support necessary to help them deal with the separation from their families and their familiar environment, and recover from any traumas they have experienced.

- Psychosocial support for children is also important for this target group, both at school and within the child-protection system. To this end, it is important to have fewer children per professional in child protection institutions, so that they can be provided with personal care.

- Professionals with special knowledge (e.g. developmental teacher, psychologist) should be included in the staff of child-care institutions.

- It is necessary to strengthen the basic education system, and to prepare teachers better to understand and support young people within or leaving the care system. It is recommended to incorporate child protection and child welfare modules into teacher training. Basic competences should be developed more, and practical education should be emphasised over lexical knowledge within the educational system.

- It is important to specify the foundation of professional work for the periods before and after majority age, and to publish it widely, according to the protocol for care in children's homes, foster homes, and after-care, developed by the Institute of Social Affairs and Labour, in 2010

CHAPTER 5: SPAIN (CATALONIA)

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The research, conducted between 2008 and 2010 has involved collaboration between country partners in three major stages. At the end of each stage a national and an overall consolidated report has been produced, as follows: (1) State of the art literature review (referred to as Work Package 2 Report – henceforth WP2); (2) a survey of local authorities (WP3-4); and (3) case studies in each country. The Spanish case study (WP8) includes the results of interviewing (i) 35 young people from a care background, (ii) social services managers and (iii) adults nominated by these young people. The area selected in Spain for the fieldwork was the Autonomous Region of Catalonia. All completed reports are available at http://tcru.ioe.ac.uk/yippee/.

The present paper summarises the findings of the YIPPEE project in Spain, more details of which are found in the three previous national reports (WPs 2, 3/4 and 6, and includes some conclusions and recommendations.

5.1. The national policy context and brief outline of care and education systems

Education

In Spain, education is compulsory between the ages of 6 and 16. Education is planned according to a decentralised model which distributes responsibilities between the central government, the Autonomous Regions, local authorities and schools (EURYDICE, 2009) (for more details, see WP2 report).

The 2006 Education Act provides basic regulations for the general structuring of the Spanish non-university education system. This covers pre-primary education (3-5); compulsory education - divided into two levels: primary education for ages 6 to 12, lower secondary education for ages 12-16, and for ages 16-18 either Bachillerato (upper secondary education)or Intermediate Vocational Training (CFGM). Students who complete lower secondary education passing all subjects at this level are awarded the Certificate of Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO), which gives them access to Bachillerato or CFGM (both are considered post-compulsory secondary education). Students who are not awarded this certificate receive a Certificate of School Attendance. To gain admission to university education, candidates must pass an entrance exam after doing Bachillerato or Advanced Specific Vocational Training (CFGS).

As regards academic achievement in Spain, more women completed their studies at all levels of education than their male counterparts. The comparative figures are 77.5% and 63.7% for the first stage of secondary education, 52.5% and 36.7% for the second stage of secondary education, 21% and 11.9% for 3-year university degrees, and 22% and 14.9% for 5-year university degrees (NAPin, 2008-10).

In the 2008-9 school year, 13.5% of students in post-compulsory education were not born in Spain, almost the same proportion as in compulsory education.

Among the Roma population in Spain, 71% aged 16 and over do not complete compulsory education and only 1.3% of the Roma population goes into further education. There are significant difficulties in getting the young Roma population to enrol and remain in secondary and further education (NAPin 2008-10).

In 2007 the net rate of the overall population obtaining the ESO certificate (compulsory secondary education) in Spain in 2007 was 69.1%, this figure being a little higher in Catalonia (72.8). The net schooling rate at age 17 was around 75%, with 11.7% still in compulsory education and 63.2% in post compulsory education. More students were on the academic track than the vocational one. Over 40% of the population finished upper secondary education (academic, not compulsory) (www.educacion.es). The average early school leaver rate that is the percentage of the population aged between 18 and 24 who had not completed upper secondary education and were not in any type of education or training) was 14.8% for the EU-27. Spain shows one of the highest rates: 31% in 2007 (www.ec.europa.eu/eurostat).

As in other countries, unemployment rates among people with any level of educational achievement up to lower secondary education are higher than the mean unemployment rate. According to Labour Force Survey (www.ec.europa.eu/eurostat) data for the first quarter of 2008, unemployment among the illiterate economically-active population stood at 24.5%, compared with 5.8% among people with post-secondary education.

A 2004 international comparison of public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP highlighted that Spain invested less than any other of the 27 countries of the European Union, with a difference of 0.8 percent in relation to the EU mean (4.29% and 5.09% respectively).This is also true for expenditure on social protection and family policies, which is among the lowest in Europe: this figure was 20.8% in 2005, compared with 27.4% for the EU-25) (NAPin,2008-10) and is clearly related to the Spanish welfare regime, discussed in Chapter 1.

Children in care

On a national level in Spain we currently have the Ministry of Health and Social Policies. However, the decentralisation of the Spanish child protection system in 1987 meant that this Ministry now has almost no competences with regard to children in care other than producing statistics (for more details, see Casas, 1994a). Each Autonomous Government is required to have an appropriate administrative body responsible for the protection of all children in the region. In Catalonia, the legal framework is based on a recent law, the **Children and Adolescents' Rights and Opportunities Act**, adopted by the Catalan Parliament on 12th May 2010. This new law introduces a proactive approach towards the child and adolescent population as a whole, and is not focused only on those at high social risk. It also provides new mechanisms for children and adolescents to become involved in decision-making that affects them.

Over the last 25 years, Spanish and Catalan services for children living away from their families have evolved from a 'charity' model characterised by large institutions, long-term placements and uncoordinated services, to a Social Services system and the promotion of family foster care as a desirable placement within the child protection system. Changes to the protection system were initially based on the normalisation principle (Casas, 1994b; 1996; 1998), which means keeping children in their family

environment, or when this is not possible, providing an alternative family setting. However, the fact that 48% of children in care are currently in residential homes reflects the lack of success this system has had in complying with the principle of normalisation and guaranteeing children care in family settings.

Over recent years, the Spanish protection system has experienced a rise in the number of children in care. According to official statistics (www.msps.es), in 2006 there were 37,161children under legal custody; 74.2% were in guardianship and 25.8% were accommodated children. Disaggregated figures by type of placement showed 48% of children in residential care and 52% in family foster care. However, of those in family foster care, only 15% were with nonrelated families and 85% were with relatives. Official statistics for 2007 reveal there were 7,289 children in care in Catalonia.

As far as the characteristics of children in residential care are concerned, there is a significant presence of foreign children. They are also predominantly male and older, with most over 12. Furthermore, 6.1% of children in the Catalan child protection system are unaccompanied foreign minors, most of whom are in residential care. Although the Catalan Government has attempted to meet the needs of the increasing number of children in care, this effort has so far failed to prevent the progressive overloading of the system, with some homes now accommodating more children than they were designed for. One of the reasons for this is the scarcity of alternative resources, such as foster families.

Most residential homes have a ratio of between 3 and 4 children per professional. Figures confirm an increasing trend in the number of residential homes with capacity for over 20children. This indicates that the need for more places in the system is met by increasing the size of the homes. It should also be noted that larger residential homes have higher child -professional ratios, higher employee turnover, etc.

Despite recent growth in the number of foster families in Spain, the figure does not match the rise in the number of children in residential care and there is therefore an insufficient number to cover real demand. Kinship care has also increased in absolute terms and constitutes one of the pillars of the Spanish child protection system (Montserrat, 2007), with recent research suggesting better outcomes in comparison to other types of placement (Del Valle et al, 2008). Nevertheless, the latest recommendations of the Catalan Ombudsman (Sindic de Greuges, 2009) included the need to address the absence of a comprehensive database for children in care, including data on processes and results.

Furthermore, a great heterogeneity is found in working conditions and criteria for making proposals regarding child protection measures among the 47 interdisciplinary child protection teams working in the different regions of Catalonia in terms of children at risk of intervention (Casas & Montserrat, 2002).

An analysis of the budgets assigned to services responsible for child protection show that for every euro spent on care for the child's own immediate family in 2006, two were spent on care for the extended family, two and a half on foster family and pre-adoptive care, 24 on residential homes and 30 on emergency centres (Sindic de Greuges, 2009).

Leaving care and transition to independence

Data on transition to adulthood in Catalonia provided by the Youth Secretariat (2008) show that only 15.8% of young people in the 20-24 age group no longer live in the family household. 84.2% do still live at their parents' home as do 54.6% of those aged 25-29. In Spain, young people leave the family household considerably later than in other European countries.

With regard to the care system, although children should legally leave care at 18, if they live in either family foster care or kinship foster care they usually continue to stay if both parties (the young person and the foster family) agree, though normally without any financial or other support (Del Valle et al. 2008). The Spanish welfare model does not include any benefits or financial support for continuing studying or becoming independent when young people reach adult age, with the exception of universal study grants, which are scarce. Catalonia is one of the few Autonomous Regions that provides a support service for care leavers when they leave the protection system, comprised of housing benefits, assistance with labour market integration and economic help, among other forms of support. This service (ASJTET) was first introduced 15 years ago and developed agreements with various foundations and NGOs to provide support programmes for young care leavers aged between 16 and 21, especially from residential homes.

5.2. What did we know at the start of the study?

The statistical invisibility of children in public care and more specifically the invisibility of their education in Spain go hand-in-hand with a lack of research into their inclusion at different stages of education (see WP3-4 Spanish national report for further details). One of the goals of the YIPPEE project was initially defined as establishing a baseline of postcompulsory educational participation among young people who have been in care. No national or regional systematic statistical data has been found for Spain or Catalonia with regard to participation in either further or higher education by young people from a public care background, or participation in secondary education by children in care. Such a gap in the available statistics made it impossible for the Spanish research team to develop a secondary analysis of official data. The Spanish research project therefore began with no information regarding the rate of participation of young people in post-compulsory education. The review of the scientific literature (WP2 Spanish report) included a summary of the relatively few studies available on young people in residential, foster and kinship care, but very few data were found concerning their education. It seems therefore that this research is the first study conducted on this issue in Spain.

The second project report (WP3-4) proposed a system for routinely collecting relevant data to monitor the situation of both the in-care and post care populations in relation to their educational pathways. The aim here was to provide a basis for future progress and an incentive for action. In other words, we proposed the establishing of a system of indicators comparable across European countries, something we regard as essential for providing the required baseline.

In an attempt to demonstrate that action is possible on a national level, the Spanish team entered into an agreement with the Catalan Government to collect data over two

academic years (2008-2010) in order to start producing systematic data on the educational pathways and outcomes of 16-year-old students in care. Analysis of the data thus obtained showed that only 20% of the in-care population obtains the Certificate of Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO) at the expected age compared to 60% of adolescents of the same age. This initiative, not foreseen in the initial research proposal, has symbolised a first step along the path towards positive action. It is essential that data collection now be continued in order to analyse the real delays and obstacles in the educational pathways of the in-care population, and in order to address inequality in their educational opportunities.

School teachers providing information about the educational pathways of in-care 16-year-oldsin their classroom were asked to answer an open question reflecting their opinion of how the young person was doing at school. Their responses were used in the Spanish case study report (WP8), thus furnishing us with a broader range of perspectives from different social agents involved in the care of young people (Table 1).

Table 1: Catalonia: academic year 2009-10

	Overall population	In care (aged 15-16)
Expected level at age15	69.4%	31.7%
Repeat year during Compulsory Secondary Education	9.1%	64.5%
Graduated at age 16	60%	20.6%
Graduated when in Year 4 of ESO	81.9%	59.6%
Special Education School	1.1%	10.6%

5.3. How the research was carried out

Following completion of the literature review for Spain (see WP2 report), the second stage of the research consisted in administering a set of interviews to key informants: managers of post care services, child protection teams and local social services. The aim here was threefold: (i) to determine what information was available for rates of participation in further and higher education by young people in care and young people leaving care (see WP3-4 report); (ii) to explore key informants' views on leaving care and the educational options for young people leaving care; (iii) to provide the research team with contact details of young people aged 19-21 who met the inclusion criteria for the study. The criteria for this were that the young person was in care at the age of 16, had been looked after for at least a year and had shown some sign of educational promise (i.e.: obtaining the Certificate of Compulsory Secondary Education and showing motivation to continue in post compulsory education).

A large sample of 132 young people was selected by the services according to these criteria. In the third stage of the research project (see *Table 2*), an in-depth face-to-face interview was administered to 35 young people at the end of 2008, and 28 of them were interviewed again one year later. They were asked to nominate an adult who had been supportive in their education and 20 of the nominated people were also interviewed, either face-to-face or by telephone. In the Spanish case study, those nominated for interview were mainly social educators. All interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed using the NVivo qualitative data analysis package.

This comprised the material for the third stage: the case study (see WP8 report). The first interview with young people took a life story approach following the interviewees' lead, but with a list of areas to be covered and including a 'lifeline', which helped the researchers to map the young person's care and educational career. The second interview was more structured, although using open-ended questions.

Table 2: Structure of case studies and number of interviews in Spain

	Number of interviews
Professionals in charge of welfare services	13
Young people interviews at Time 1	35
Nominated adults	20
Young people interviews at Time 2	28
Total interviews	96

By comparing the characteristics displayed by the 35 young people interviewed and the overall in-care population in Catalonia, we could observe that in our sample there were:

- No differences regarding type of problems with birth family, type of abuse, average number of years in care, year of entry, or number of placements.
- A higher percentage of young women, possibly explained by the selection criterion of showing educational promise.
- An over-representation of young people who had been in a residential home, possibly because more of them were likely to have been in contact with post care services.
- A higher percentage of unaccompanied foreign minors and of foreigners in general.
- A much lower percentage returning to their birth family upon reaching adulthood. In fact, none of the young people in our sample lived with their parents (Del Valle et al., 2008; García, Barriocanal et al, 2007).
- A lower percentage of early school leavers, again due to the criterion of showing educational promise.

Furthermore, many of them are able to study because they receive support from the post care service.

5.4. Views of service managers in contact with young people leaving care

We collected the views of key informants from the following services: the post care service for young people leaving care, the local Social Services and the child protection teams. We also had the views of some social educators from residential homes, as they were the adults nominated by the young people. With regard to the responsibilities, plans of action, duties and support provided by the services, the professionals interviewed agreed that those young people leaving residential care who cannot return to their birth family or stay longer with foster parents are usually referred to the post care service (ASJTET). They tend to be directed to the service by the residential home where they are or were living or by their child protection team, with a written proposal and plan for work and review, which must be agreed between the young person and the post care service.

Key informants also agreed that young care leavers are not usually referred to the local (adult) Social Services and that if they do go, it is of their own accord and in the capacity of an ordinary citizen. In these cases, intervention is not systematic and there is no protocol for action; young people are assessed on an individual case basis.

With regard to the educational options available to young people in and from public care, all of the social agents interviewed agreed that the in-care population suffers from a significant disadvantage and these young people usually start working as soon as they are legally allowed to. The services consulted also stated that it is easier to offer young people with difficulties non-formal training resources (without continuity in the formal education system) as they are more likely to assimilate them. They further point out that it is difficult to keep them in education, partly due to the rigidity of the system, which affects not only young people in care, but also children with social and family difficulties in general. They suggested that difficulties already exist for these young people in the compulsory education system, particularly at secondary school. Problems they have experienced with their families, instability and changes of school, accumulated deficit, and labelling are all factors associated with failure. They agreed that no problem exists in theory, but that in practice only very few continue studying after 16, and if they do, it is in short-term occupational training, mainly for jobs related to construction, the hotel and restaurant trade, or hairdressing.

The key informants also agreed that education is not clearly prioritised within the protection system, but it should be. The expectations of the child protection services with regard to education are usually too low. Social educators discussed whether the guidance they give young people to steer them away from the academic pathway is related to economic circumstances or the lack of skills and abilities that adolescents in care seem to show with regard to studying.

On the other hand they believe that the time young people spend in the child protection system improves their educational possibilities in comparison with the time they spent with their birth family. They were also aware of the admirable resilience of some of these young people and believe that more transitional and ongoing support services are required. It is worth highlighting the growing will and conviction to offer better educational opportunities to young people in contact with the post care services. Proof of this can be found in Catalonia in the increase in the number of study grants for care leavers or in the recent inauguration of a students' residence for care leavers.

5.5. The experiences of the young people themselves

Present lives

Generally speaking, the young people interviewed stated that they were satisfied with how their life was going and believed that they were doing better than most people who have been in care. Their concerns focused mainly on economic and work considerations, the lack of time to study and family responsibilities.

With regard to the highest level of education attained, five were at university, 12 had started or completed advanced vocational training, five had started or completed upper secondary education, 10 had started or completed intermediate vocational training, one

had obtained the Certificate of Compulsory Secondary Education and two the Certificate of School Attendance (Table 3).

There was a predominance of those who had opted for fields dedicated to helping others (i.e: social, health or education). There were generally more girls than boys at the higher levels of education.

Table 3: Maximum level of education reached (completed or in progress)

Compulsory Secondary Education (certificate or attendance only)		Intermediate Specific Vocational Training		General Upper Secondary Education		Advanced Specific Vocational Training		University
Att. Only	Cert.	Qual.	In prog.	Qual.	In prog.	Qual.	In prog.	In prog.
2	1	7	3	2	3	2	10	5
3		10		5		12		5
1 female/2 male		7 female/3 male		2 female/3 male		10 female/2 male		4 female/ 1 male
3 born abroad (2 unaccompanied foreign minors)		8 Spanish/ 2 born abroad (1 unaccompanied foreign minor)		3 Spanish/ 2 born abroad (1 unaccompanied foreign minor)		7 Spanish/ 5 born abroad (1 unaccompanied foreign minor)		5 Spanish

One-fifth of the sample had left education and were working or looking for work. Half were working full-time and some managed to combine work with study. The type of work they were doing was mostly still basically unqualified. For some, work represented personal success in their lives, and for others it was education.

At the first interview (ages 18-21), almost half of the interviewees lived in accommodation for care leavers. Those who had been in family foster care continued to stay there, and 37% were living independently. They generally reported good health, although three of them were undergoing psychiatric treatment.

For more than half of the young people, one or both of their parents had died or disappeared. In cases where they could be located, the relationships were generally not very reciprocal: the young person visited them and looked after them but their parents did not represent any type of support for them. All but four of them had siblings. One-third assumed some kind of responsibility towards their younger siblings. Some of the young people had a partner, but none had children. They all felt that they had been well-accepted by their partner's family.

They spent their leisure time with friends and engaged in the same activities as any other young person of the same age. The responsibility of having household duties, looking after their birth family and combining work and studies did make them feel different from other young people. On the other hand, they did not feel different when it came to friends, partners or the use of their leisure time, except for the fact that they had very little of it.

Family and care lives

30 out of 35 suffered some type of neglect or abuse when living with their parents. The

remaining five were unaccompanied foreign minors whose motivation to come to Spain was to work. The situations of abuse coincided with parents' alcoholism or drug addiction, mental illness, being sent to prison, death or disappearance. When they talked about the time with their parents before entering care, they mentioned great instability and changes of residence, and this affecting their health. With regard to upbringing, the foreigners particularly highlighted cultural differences, and those who had lived with their grandparents, generational differences.

With regard to visits to their parents after going into care, many of them remembered the fact that visits were compulsory and did not view them in a positive light. In other cases, their parents abandoned them when they went into foster care and very few had positive memories of the visits. They generally had positive relationships with their siblings, with the additional load of responsibility, particularly before going into care. They were generally unhappy about being separated from siblings if this happened when they came into care. Those with extended family also had good relationships with them, and they represented a source of support.

For a few of the young people their birth family had expressed positive values with regard to education, transmitting the message to their children that they should study because they themselves had not been able to. The general attitude among parents, however, was to award little importance to school or academic achievement, giving the children little support in their studies and showing little concern about their attendance.

Most of the young people interviewed recalled a traumatic experience from the first time they were placed in care: it happened suddenly, with no clear information, without asking their opinion. They particularly recall the negative experiences associated with emergency centres: enclosed, mixed centres with very problematic children. Others complained that the services should have intervened sooner in their family problems.

There was a mixed evaluation of the residential homes and family foster care they had experienced, ranging from optimum situations to even some cases of abuse Most of them had been in residential homes. Of the six who had lived mainly in foster care, most of them were with extended family and viewed it as a positive experience. They generally highlighted the importance of having a key, stable and involved relationship with a social educator or carer. Homes with a lot of residents, many different carers and a shift system, made it difficult to establish a trusting relationship, as did changes of residential home and types of foster care. They also highlighted the importance of having good conditions for studying: extra classes when necessary, sufficient space and peace and quiet and motivation to continue in education.

They agreed on the importance of making friends outside the residential home, with school friends who study and are not in conflict with authority. They valued the support and acceptance they had received from friends' parents and the opportunity of continuing to study with the same group of friends. Some said they made friends at the residential home; others talked about the confrontational nature of the children at the residential home. Leaving the residential home was stressful and having accommodation for care leavers was viewed very positively. Their evaluations of being in care were generally positive compared to the conditions they experienced with their

birth family, but when compared to the general population, they feel their pathways were full of difficulties. According to them, many improvements are needed in the relationships between young people in care and child protection teams and psychologists.

Educational lives

Although 90% of the young people in our sample who obtained the Certificate of Compulsory Secondary Education did so at the usual age (16 years old), their post-compulsory studies took longer, usually with an increasing and ultimately lengthy delay, to the extent that 78% of those who did advanced vocational training (post-compulsory) did so later than usual. (Table 4).

Table 4: The delays in YPLC education

Academic level	At expected age or older	Delayed
Compulsory Secondary Education Certificate		*90%*
	Acquired at older age	10.0%
Upper secondary education	Expected qualification at 18	*42.9%*
	Acquired at older age	57.1%
Intermediate vocational education	Expected qualification at 18	*37.5%*
	Acquired at older age	62.5%
Advanced professional training	Expected qualification at 20-21	*21.4%*
	Acquired at older age	78.6%
University	Access at usual age	*40%*
	Access at older age	60.0%

We observed four post-compulsory educational pathways:

1- Those who began the formal academic or vocational track, sometimes repeating a year and therefore accumulating a delay, but without giving up on obtaining the qualification. Some of these were in higher education at the time of the second interview. Others were working towards a qualification. In general, this group had experienced few changes in family life and/or within the child protection system, the value of education had been transmitted and they had received support in their education. Having had key mentors also appeared as a factor contributing to their success in education.

2- Those who began the academic pathway but could not complete it, having left it and moved to the vocational pathway. They had interruptions and repetitions. None of these had yet reached higher education. Some of them had finally completed intermediate vocational training and started work.

3- Those who started an academic or vocational pathway and abandoned it without finishing. They were working or looking for a job at the time of the second interview.

4- Those who did not follow any formal pathway after compulsory secondary education, but took an occupational course. The last three groups had suffered more instability in their lives and had less support to continue formal study. Therefore, despite having the ability and motivation to study when they were 16, these young people had found themselves at an educational standstill due to difficulties related to supporting themselves economically, becoming independent and family problems affecting their lives before and after the age of 16. Living with their parents had mainly had a negative effect on their education: lack of attendance, changes of school, lack of support with homework. However, some of the young people interviewed developed coping strategies to continue studying despite the adverse conditions.

The time they were in care had a positive impact with regard to regular attendance and more support with their studies, although there were differences between residential homes in terms of the support given. On the negative side we find that their carers usually had low expectations of them in relation to post-compulsory education and often advised them to enroll on short-term occupational courses in order to become economically independent at the age of 18. In some cases this had caused them to reject the academic pathway which they might have had the ability to pursue.

In general, they had a positive view of their relationships with teachers; they appreciated having been given special help, but they did not like to be labelled. Relationships with schoolmates were also generally good, and this was where they made their group of friends, although there were a few accounts of bullying due to their skin colour or physical characteristics. They had good memories of being accepted by friends' families. At school they wanted to be just another student, trying to hide the fact that they were in care. Some highlighted the compensatory role of the school as a refuge from their home circumstances, whereas others refer to the lack of understanding of their situation.

They usually valued education very highly, seeing it as a means of improving themselves, being better than their parents and other children at the residential home, and being able to get a qualified job, more income and a better life. Generally speaking, their attitude towards school was one of self-sufficiency, self-confidence and being able to do things themselves without asking for help. They had a sense of being competent, although they admitted that things went better for them while they were in compulsory education and that everything became more difficult thereafter. The nominated adults interviewed agreed that the sample of young people interviewed were an exception in doing better than other children in care in education and persisting with their studies despite the difficulties.

Informal learning and leisure time

School friends were important in facilitating social integration for the young people interviewed, as were some of their friends' families when it came to free-time activities. Having friends from the residential home was experienced as more stigmatising and most of them said that social educators encouraged friendships with people from outside the home. Friends have been and continue to be the main source of emotional support for these young people. Changes of school meant a loss of friends and this was viewed very negatively.

They took part in the same leisure-time activities as the rest of their age group. They generally took part in more formal activities during their time in foster care, and some of them associated entering the residential home with beginning to participate in organised leisure-time activities: sport, dance, after school club, etc. Some of them also did other extracurricular activities such as English or music, though many were prevented from doing so by the cost. They highlighted the compensatory protective role of some youth centres, such as after school clubs and in some cases sports clubs.

While they were living with their birth family the support they received for organised leisure activities was provided by professionals, and most of their spare time was spent playing in the street rather than in formal activities. When they were in foster care, this support was provided by the social educators or carers. Friends and their own abilities also influenced the choice of activity.

Difficulties in continuing to do leisure activities were due mainly to the problem of combining them with studies and work, particularly when they were older, as well as economic problems. Their friends and leisure activities gave them an opportunity to experience normality like other children of their age. They were also a form of liberation from the situation they were experiencing at home, and a source of fun, support and learning. At some youth centres they could also do their homework. Furthermore, studies were highly valued in most after school clubs.

Looking ahead: hopes and dreams for the future

The young people said that their aspiration after compulsory secondary education was to do post-compulsory education in order to get into higher education. Once they reached 18, obtaining a university qualification remained a short to medium-term reality for those who had followed the academic pathway. By contrast, those who followed the vocational pathway or stopped studying now saw the possibility of higher education as either very distant or unlikely. They generally aspired to have a more qualified job, economic independence and their own place to live, enjoying their friends and the leisure time they have. They also wanted their younger siblings to have a life with fewer difficulties than the life they have led. In the event that they should have children, there was a very strong desire not to repeat what was done to them and to become nurturing and protective parents. They felt the need to demonstrate that they would not be like their own parents.

They reflected a perception of internal control when asked about their future plans, although they were aware that economic difficulties and the lack of family support were against them. They said they believed in themselves and most of them stated that in view of what they had already achieved up to this point, they could continue to make progress with effort and motivation. Furthermore, they also expected future results from the effort that they had invested and were investing. Most of them evaluated the year between the two interviews positively. Some had continued studying, others had kept working and some had become independent. We could generally state that these were young people with a high degree of optimism, capable of adapting to different situations even when they were not initially desired. Above all, they thought that in the future, once they have cut their links with the child protection system, they will be able to live without the label of ‘care child’ or ‘person with social or family difficulties.’

Looking inside: their inner worlds

Their life has generally been filled with feelings of insecurity and fear, which still persist, due to having been forced to make decisions on their own and resolve dilemmas related to family, studies, friends, work, and housing. They had usually had to do all these things at a much earlier age than most children and young people in the general population. Their feelings towards their birth family were ones of suffering when they remembered their childhood or adolescence, and dislocation when they were in care. Once they became adults, some of them opted to break from their birth family and others felt a moral responsibility towards their parents and a duty to help them. None of them had a sense of their parents being a source of support, or felt that they had a family to turn to when in need; such feelings were associated with a perception of loneliness. In fact, most of them felt they could trust nobody but themselves.. Within their family they had developed, out of necessity, a strong sense of self-responsibility, and in some cases particularly, responsibility towards their younger siblings. The dilemma for them when they reached adulthood was how far they should continue to exercise this responsibility towards other members of their family.

Their time in the protection system was the beginning or worsening of a process of being socially labelled as a 'worthless' or 'oppositional' child, to the extent that they referred to the population who were not in care as being 'normal'. On the other hand, this also served as a life lesson, leading them to fight against the label and to demonstrate that they were neither pitiful nor drug addicts or delinquents. All too often they felt that this is what is expected of children from care backgrounds.

On the other hand, they agreed that being in foster care provided a feeling of relief, as they think that if they had continued with their birth family they would have failed. They therefore had a feeling of gratitude towards the carers and social educators that helped to raise them and thought they had provided them with an opportunity to get ahead in life. A further point worth highlighting is the fact that they remembered their entry into the system as traumatic but had a strong feeling of insecurity and fear when leaving the system as an adult.

With regard to their time in the education system, they recalled great instability when they 'lived with their family and more support when they were in care. For many, the school was a place where they could live normally and participate in leisure activities, and in the case of the young people in our sample it was evident that it represented personal success in their lives, because they had achieved good academic results. It was also the place where they made most of their friends and therefore found an important source of support in their lives. Some of them had a bittersweet memory of education due to not having been able to get into higher education as they wanted, but they felt satisfied and proud of where they were and what they were doing. They demonstrated self-confidence, a highly developed sense of responsibility for their age and tried not to ask for help; they were aware of all of this and in this respect felt different from young people in the general population, but also from many young people who have been in care. By contrast, they felt like other young people of the same age with regard to the youth cultures they participate in.

5.6. Conclusions and implications for policy and practice

The aim of the present project was to explore the educational pathways of young people in and leaving care and identify factors that facilitated or caused an obstacle which prevented them from continuing to study. The 35 young people interviewed had been in care for part of their childhood and adolescence and were selected because at the age of 16, while they were still in residential or family foster care, they showed a capacity and motivation to continue into post-compulsory education: this fact was confirmed by the young people themselves and the adults they nominated. After this point in time, what made them continue studying? Or what led them to abandon education? Above all, what is the reason why they gradually fell behind in the education system after the end of compulsory schooling, despite the fact that their potential at the age of 16 was at least at the same level as the average population? However, there is also the prior question of what facilitating factors enabled these young people to show educational promise when others in their situation tended to fail at school? These are questions we have attempted to resolve in order to provide recommendations at different levels.

The following facilitating factors were identified for the time they were in care:

- Stability of placement
- Staying at the same school
- Having a stable key adult in their lives
- The prioritising of education in their foster care
- The carer's high level of involvement in the issue of education
- The carer's high expectations with regard to education
- Carers and teachers transmitting the value of education: education is the key to leaving behind their situation of great social difficulty
- Inclusion in a group of friends outside the protection system and very much integrated in the education system. Such friends act as a reference group and also as a group to which the young person belongs, fostering a positive social identity and therefore to some extent neutralising the labeling effect of having been in care
- The involvement of the school: a sympathetic and friendly attitude adopted to children in care
- Participation in 'normal' leisure-time activities
- Maintaining relationships with siblings if desired
- Their opinion being listened to and taken into account, particularly in relation to: their preference regarding where to continue studying, especially when coinciding with their admittance into the protection system
- The support and conditions they need when they express unhappiness with the place where they are living, and relationships with the child protection team professionals and psychologists attending to them

All of the above conditions are easier to achieve in a smaller residential setting with few residents or in a foster family, although the type of placement in itself is not a sufficient condition to achieve these objectives.

The following facilitating factors were identified for after they had left care:

- Having a stable key adult to turn to
- The service that provides support making education a priority
- Receiving educational guidance that promotes post-compulsory education in accordance with their preferences and future aspirations
- The carer's high level of involvement and high expectations for the young person's education
- Carers and teachers transmitting the value of education, especially as the key to leaving behind the social difficulty of their former care status and associated problems
- Maintaining a group of friends outside the protection system who are very much integrated into the education system
- The involvement of the school in preventing the young person from abandoning education, taking into consideration their difficult circumstances
- The existence of housing support services, grants for continuing study and personalised ongoing support for those who require it, in order to reduce the fear and insecurity they feel when they reach adulthood without family support

Each of these factors points to recommendations and actions that can be addressed on different levels: the young people that have been in care, professionals in the education and protection systems, politicians, the media, other citizens, and researchers.

5.7. Recommendations

Three outstanding preliminary reflections arise from the results obtained from the YIPPEE project in Spain:

- The child protection system needs to reposition education, awarding it a more central and prioritised status with regard to its intervention for both the young people in its care and transition processes for leaving care.
- The education system must recognise these young people as a group with special educational needs, particularly due to their family circumstances and to other traumatic life experiences they have suffered. This means providing support beyond the compulsory education stage.
- The two systems need to improve their coordination in order to address the serious inequality in educational opportunities which may lead to a high risk of social exclusion for young people in and leaving care. In fact, this population group has been identified as the one with the highest risk of social exclusion during the period of compulsory education.

Using these general ideas as a foundation, the starting points should be as follows:

1. Prioritise education.
2. Accept this group as one with specific needs when it comes to educational support.
3. Avoid changes of care placement and school, and work intensively and in a coordinated way towards providing stability in their lives.
4. Increase close collaboration between departments and their respective services to

address such challenges.
5. Raise expectations of young people in care among all social agents involved.
6. Develop innovative actions on all levels to meet the current challenges posed by the child protection population.
7. Delay the pressure towards economic autonomy

5.8 Final considerations

- It is an urgent priority for the inequality of educational opportunities suffered by this population to gain statistical and social visibility.
- Comparable information and indicators are required from all European countries, allowing comparative monitoring of current status and improvements achieved through any actions implemented in each country.
- It is essential to use the knowledge of professionals, the young people themselves, researchers and the other social agents involved to reduce barriers and maximize opportunities for extending educational pathways.
- It is important to delay labour market integration processes and provide the support necessary to extend the period of education to equal that of the general population.
- It is essential to change our expectations of this population, which are generally low and stereotyped. This is a population that has more potential for resilience and to achieve success than is generally believed.

Young people who have been in care usually require more than average support over more time because their pathways to education are delayed in comparison with other young people of the same age. This is a population whose educational pathways often come to a standstill due to multiple incidents and traumatic experiences at different times of their lives. They often set themselves ambitious aims, such as reaching higher education but they can only achieve them later than the general population. If they are to fulfil their potential and achieve their ambitions they need a much higher level of support than they receive at present to compensate for this falling behind.

Significant political will is required for change: urgent coordination is required between the social protection system and the education system in order to guarantee actions to ensure greater equality of educational opportunity for this greatly disadvantaged group of young people.

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CHAPTER 6: SWEDEN

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6.1 The national policy context and brief outline of care and education systems

The Swedish education system

In Sweden, compulsory school begins at age 7 and continues until 16 years of age, with a preschool year before compulsory school begins. In the past 20 years the Swedish school system has been changed in important ways. The municipalities, not the government, have assumed responsibility for providing education. New grading systems, independent schools, a 3-year upper secondary school based on seventeen programmes, are major changes introduced in the 1990s.

Leaving certificates are issued when the pupil finishes compulsory school. The following scale is used: pass (G), pass with distinction (VG) and pass with special distinction (MVG). Beyond this, non-compulsory schooling for young people aged 16-20 consists of 17 national programmes. Although not required by law, upper secondary education is in practice considered obligatory. Each programme comprises three core subjects, a number of programme-specific subjects and a special project and work-place training in the vocationally-oriented programmes. A programme lasts for three years and to obtain a leaving certificate the young person must have been awarded a grade for all courses and for the project work. Pupils who do not have passing grades in Swedish, mathematics and English are not qualified to apply for a national programme. These pupils are offered the opportunity to study at an individual programme. As a consequence, nearly all young people are included in the upper secondary school system. However, among those born between 1972 and 1992, 18 percent did not complete upper secondary school

Children in care and their education

Out of home care within the child welfare system is an area of expansion with an increasing number of young people placed in care. In 2008, around 22,000 Swedish children and young people were placed in care at some point during the year. About two thirds were 13 years, or older (Socialstyrelsen, 2009). In recent decades, about 75% of all children and young people in out-of-home care have been placed in foster care. For young people over 18 years of age, the median time in care was over four years (Socialstyrelsen 2009). Although the law stipulates an age limit of 18 (or 21 in cases of mandatory care orders), young people often stay in care until they have completed their upper secondary school education. Thus, placements in foster/residential care are usually ended when young people reach the age of 19.

In Sweden, very little attention has been paid to the educational attainment of children and young people placed in out-of-home care. As with other countries, this has been overlooked in the child welfare system for decades. Vinnerljung (1998) questioned the lack of awareness of the importance of education for children and young people placed in care. There are no general systematised procedures for enhancing the educational

attainment of children and young people placed in care in the Swedish child welfare system.

In the Social Services Act, chapters 6 and 7, the legislation states that the social welfare committee shall ensure that children and young people placed in care receive 'appropriate education'. The guidance to the Act, further states:

> 'The direction that the social welfare committee shall work for an appropriate education implies an obligation to give proper advice and guidance, and if necessary, provide practical help to give the child a proper education according to the child's natural abilities and capacities' SSA, chapter 6, §7, (Norström and Thunved 2004 p 133)

Nothing further is said in the text about how this legal advice should be implemented. However, the law clearly states that all placements of children and young people in care should be thoroughly supervised by responsible social workers, and the local social welfare committee. Thus, the level of interest taken in educational attainment of children placed in care is dependent on local policies and/or the individual social worker's interest and awareness of the importance of school performance for placed children and young people.

6.2. What did we know at the start of the study and what questions did we need to ask?

In Sweden education has not been in focus within the field of social work, and placements in care have not been highlighted within the educational field. The ambition of joining the fields and creating a new area of interest, with all the difficulties implicated, was a great challenge for the team and the project as a whole.

The first stage of the research was to carry out a comprehensive literature review to find out what was already known (Höjer et al, 2008). In Sweden, research on children and young people has been very limited (Vinnerljung 1998). However, national registers cover the entire population. The data collected in these registers is based on the individually unique 10-digit personal identification number that follows every Swedish resident from birth to death. From register studies based on this data, we knew that educational achievements of children and young people placed in care were low compared to their peers. Children who were subject to intervention from Social Services before their teens, or had been placed in foster care, had a two or threefold elevated risk for entering adulthood with only compulsory education. For young people who experienced intervention during their teens, the risk was approximately fourfold (Vinnerljung et al 2005).

Thus, we needed to know more of how children and young people placed in care experience school, and about what support they receive from birth families, carers, social workers and teachers. As the aim of the project was to investigate the educational pathways of young men and women from a public care background, and to examine how more of these young people can be retained in education after the end of compulsory education, we also had to consider what happened to young people when they left a placement in care. Although continual support is frequent as long as young

people are placed in care, research shows that social services in many cases fail to give appropriate support to young care leavers in their transition from care to independent living (Höjer & Sjöblom 2010).

6.3. How the research was carried out

Together with the literature review, work packages 3 and 4 form the first stage of the YIPPEE project.

WP 3: Data from the National Board of Health and Welfare made it possible to identify those individuals who had been placed in care. Variables such as number of placements, length of placements, age at first placement, type of placement etc. were combined with data from the databases GOLD and UGU. GOLD includes all individuals born 1972-1992, who lived in Sweden at 16 years of age (N=2 184 866). This database contains, for example, data on parents' education, family structure and comprehensive information on the educational situation of the individual (all forms of schools, grades, programmes at university, exams, study financing etc). The database on education (UGU) contains data on nine cohorts of children of which eight will be used. UGU is constituted from a 10 percent representative sample, made every fifth year. The combinations of these datasets has made it possible to identify children and young people placed in care and their school performance, and to compare these with the majority population.

WP 4: In Sweden, we interviewed eight managers from the same local authorities used in work package 9. All interviews were transcribed and analysed, using the NVIVO 8 computer program. 111 managers were also interviewed by telephone in another research project based at the Department of Social Work[1], and specific questions from this project are also described and analysed in work package 4. We did not collect quantitative data in any of the managers' interviews, as we did not expect them to have such information. Our quantitative data is derived only from the national databases.

WP 9: We sent out letters to 333 young people in the local authorities, and finally found 53 young people willing to complete the screening interview. Of the 53 young people, 33 finally agreed to do an in-depth interview, 9 young men and 24 young women (others agreed, but did not show up at the time appointed for the interview). In the Swedish case, due to the small number of young people willing to participate, no selection has been done except for the matter of educational promise. Initially, we identified "educational promise" as "having a pass in the four key subjects from secondary school (at age 16)". In order to reach more young people, the team decided in May 2009, to use a new definition of educational promise for the in-depth interviews: instead of having passed all four subjects in ninth grade, the new definition included having passed at least one subject and showing interest in further education. All interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed using the NVIVO soft-ware program.

In the second round, we interviewed 26 of the 33 young people, which indicates that we were unable to reach seven of those who were interviewed in the first round. All interviews in the second round were made by telephone, and were recorded and later transcribed and analysed.

25 of the 33 young people who were interviewed in-depth nominated an adult, who had been supportive of their education and whom we could contact for an interview. 25 telephone interviews were performed with these nominated adults: three biological mothers, 13 foster parents (12 foster mothers and 1 foster father), six teachers (four from compulsory school and two from upper secondary), one counsellor and two residential home staff. All were pleased to have been nominated and happy to participate. However, as few of them had been part of the young person's whole life, they only had answers to some of the questions, which made it difficult to obtain a full picture.

The interviews with the young people and the nominated adults gave us a unique opportunity to share their experiences. We felt privileged to gain all this information, and are deeply grateful to all the young people and their nominated adults.

Table 6.1: Summary of empirical data (WP 4 and 9)

Type of interview	Number of informants
Screening, young persons	53
In-depth, young persons	33
Follow up, young persons	26
Nominated adults	25
Face to face, managers	8
Part of telephone survey, managers	111

6.4. Analysis of statistical data

In order to establish national level information on young people from public care backgrounds, the Swedish team analysed statistical data from the National Board of Health and Welfare, and from the databases GOLD and UGU (see separate WP 3 report from Sweden). Some results from the analysis of the data will be presented in this summary:[1]

- We found that almost 14 percent of children placed in care did not complete compulsory school – which implies dropping out of compulsory school before the end of 9th grade. The corresponding figure for children with no experience of being placed in care is three percent. Five percent of those who had been placed in care left compulsory school with no marks in any subject.
- When it comes to mean value of marks from secondary school, children who have been placed in care have significantly lower marks than their peers without experience of a placement in care.
- At upper secondary school, young people who have been placed in foster and/or residential care predominantly choose vocational programmes. As many as one fifth of young people placed in care start upper secondary school in the Individual programme (for those students who did not pass in the core subjects, and thus could not be accepted for the other programmes), and 60 percent (compared with 18 percent in the majority population) did not complete their three years at upper secondary school. Furthermore, marks of young people with care experience were lower than those of the majority population.

- 13 percent of young people placed in care were registered at college/university, compared with 41 percent from the majority population.

Altogether, these results indicate a negative situation for future access to higher and further education for this group of young people.

Table 6.2: Comparison of educational achievement between young persons with and without care experience

	No care experience %	Experience of public care %
Completed compulsory school at 16	97	86
Completed upper secondary	82	40
Registered at university	41	13

6.5 Analysis of interviews with care managers

Analyses were made both of the face-to-face interviews with the eight managers from the Local Authorities, as well as of the telephone interviews with the 111 managers in Västra Götaland and Stockholm region.

Table 6.3: Results from telephone interviews: Managers comments on barriers for further and higher education for young people placed in care

Categories	Frequency	Percent
Social problems, lack of motivation	22	20
Inadequate previous schooling	41	37
Inadequate support from family and network	13	12
Inadequate support from foster carers and residential staff	6	6
Neuropsychiatric diagnosis	4	4
Inadequate support from social services	7	6
Individual problems and limitations	7	6
Same barriers as for all other young people	10	9
Total	110	100
No answer	1	

A majority of the comments, in the eight face-to- face interviews as well as in the 111 telephone interviews, focus on the young people's difficult background, and their lack of support from parents, social networks and schools. Young people's experiences of abuse and neglect in their birth families are also mentioned as a barrier for education. Many managers also concluded that school issues have not been prioritised by social services, which tend to focus more on social and/or emotional problems than on educational achievement of children and young people in care. Several managers mentioned the presumed low level of foster carers' education as a barrier, and residential units are

described as having far too little focus on education. Thus, placement in care does not compensate for the lack of attention and interest in educational achievements that the young people have experienced in their birth families. Table 6.4 summarises the comments of managers on the factors that facilitate access to further and higher education for young people placed in care.

Table 6.4: Managers' views on facilitators for further and higher education

Categories	Frequency	Percent
Support from foster carers and residential homes	11	10
Support from social services	22	21
More access to individually shaped solutions	5	5
Adult education, special program at upper sec. school, folk high schools	10	9
Dependent on individual factors	11	10
Access to "ordinary" jobs	6	6
Same possibilities as anyone	15	14
Limited possibilities	27	25
Total	107	100
No answer	4	

As many as 27 managers stated that this group has limited possibilities to achieve well in school, and move on to higher and further education. Support from carers and from social services was mentioned as a facilitator, and also access to adult education. However 15 managers claimed that young people formerly placed in care have the same possibilities as "anyone" to move on to further and higher education – referring to the general system of access to study-loans.

6.6 Analysis of the interviews with 33 young people

A holistic approach was taken to the research questions, locating the young people's educational experience within the overall context of their lives, in and out of care. The areas covered were young people's lives at the time of first and second interviews, their current concerns, educational engagement and attainments, social relationships and informal learning and leisure time activities. Exploration of their past experiences covered life in their birth families and ongoing relations with relatives, childhood events, care careers and educational lives during the compulsory school years. Another subject for discussion was how much support for education was provided by birth relatives, teachers, social workers, foster parents, residential carers and others. Topics also covered the young person's own hopes and dreams. Most of the young people were interested in the study and very positive about contributing to it.

Present lives

Of the 33 young people interviewed, seven lived on their own, in their own apartment. One lived with a friend and 12 lived with a partner. Eight were still living with their foster families. Two stayed with professionals/paid carers, and three lived with their

birth family, or with members of the extended family. One was coded as "other" arrangements. Of the seven young people living on their own, six are girls and of the 12 living with a partner all are girls. The eight young persons still living with the foster family were all 18 or 19 years old.

Family and care lives

Twenty young people were placed in care when they were between 11 and 15. Three were placed before they were five years old, seven between six and 10, and one after 16. We had no information on age at first placement for two young people. 13 of the young people had only been placed once, six had been placed twice, seven three to four times, and four more then five times (no information for three young people).

The reasons for coming into care varied, but many described their lives in birth families as problematic, often characterised by the following:

- Young mothers, experiencing many problems, such as mental illness, drug and/or alcohol abuse and poverty
- Absent and/or abusive fathers
- The presence of a succession of "step-fathers", in many cases causing more problems in the family
- Often a heavy burden of responsibility towards mothers (and sometimes fathers) and siblings, which made it hard to concentrate on school performance
- Little, or no, support from mothers and fathers concerning school achievements
- Poverty created a feeling of being different from their peers, and made it hard to participate in school and leisure activities.

Two of the young women interviewed were mothers, and one young man was soon to become a father at the time of the second interview. The young mothers considered their parenthood as a good thing, which had improved their lives, and the young man looked forward to becoming a father.

Educational lives

At the time of the first interview, eleven young persons were engaged in full time education, and four in part time education. Eight were employed, and two were occupied with training or an apprenticeship. Two were unemployed, and another two were on sick leave. Two had children, and were both on parental leave as their children were still very young. Two other young persons were engaged in other activities, not included in the defined categories.

Four young persons were still in upper secondary school at the time of the first interview. This is of course due to the age frame for the study; starting at the age of 18 which is an age when young men and women are "normally" doing the last year at upper secondary school. From those interviewed finishing compulsory school with basic qualifications seven had not (yet) continued their studies. One young person was enrolled in the special programme for students who do not have enough qualifications for any of the programmes in the upper secondary school curricula (Individual Programme). Three were studying in the local adult education programme, to complete their qualifications – or compensate for the lack of such qualifications - from upper secondary school, and two were studying at university.

At the time of the follow up interviews six of these young people had taken up their studies at a folk high school or in adult education. Another four had finished upper secondary school. At the time of the first interview two of the 33 young persons were studying at university. At the time of the second, about a year later, another five had entered university. Interestingly enough two of them are doing social work and two nursing. Six of the seven interviewees at university at the second interview are young women.

We could identify four different groups or pathways:

- The straightaway. Here we find 15 young persons, two males and 13 females. They have all finished compulsory school as well as upper secondary without major interruptions, some are presently at university, others are eligible to apply. Eight of them were only placed once, the others two to four times. Two were placed before starting school and, quite surprisingly, seven, almost half the group, had more than three months out of school. No one reports health problems. 13 of the 24 girls in our sample can be found in this group. 12 were placed in foster care (not kinship).

- Coming back. In this group we find those having dropped out of secondary school (or never started) but later taken up their studies again at adult education or folk high school. In this group we found eight young persons: two males and six females. The number of placements is lower for this group; they have "only" been placed one, two or three times (mean: 2). Only one of them reports long periods of absence from compulsory school.
- Detour or delayed. This group is represented by seven young persons; four males and three females who had finished compulsory school with basic qualifications but, for different reasons, had not (yet) continued to upper secondary. Some of them are working, some have had four or five different placements (a range from one to six) and five report long periods of absence from compulsory school. They were all born in Sweden and two of them were placed before starting school.
- Early interruption. In this small group we find three young persons; one man and two women, who had not (yet) managed to finish their compulsory education. They were all placed at the age of 15 and all three report having long periods (more than three months) of absence from school. Two of them have health problems. Two were born in a country other than Sweden.

Informal learning and leisure

None of the young people participating in the Swedish study explicitly articulated that their social and leisure activities were part of, or added to, their learning identity. In their opinion, leisure time activities were seen as free time from school or work. However, all those interviewed mentioned leisure time activities. Many report earlier activities that they have dropped, in most cases because they were too busy with school and/or work, or because life at the moment was so turbulent that it wasn't possible to engage in leisure time activities.

Looking ahead: hopes and dreams for the future

Most young people had an optimistic view of their future. Education had a very essential position in their thoughts about their present and their future. When they visualised

themselves some years ahead, eight of them see themselves studying at university. Seven wanted to attend adult education or vocational training. Ten picture themselves doing their "dream job". Six, mostly girls, want to start a family in the first place, but still have dreams of education and a good job later on.

The following figure highlights what the young people themselves perceived as barriers and facilitators for moving on to higher education in the future:

Figure 6.1 Barriers and facilitators for higher education

Barriers for higher education	Facilitators for higher education
Dysfunctional everyday life in birth families, which made school achievement difficult	Identifying oneself as competent and as a high achiever, having a "learning identity"
A feeling of being powerless, without understanding what is happening, unable to participate in decisions, and have a say	A strong will to do better than birth mothers and fathers – to prove that it is possible to create a good life for themselves
Bullying at school – by peers, but also by teachers	A will to help other people by using own experiences
Disruptions in life – changes of schools and/or placement, frequent moves	Support at school, being listened to and treated respectfully. Encouragement from teachers
Bad health – both physical and mental	Support from birth family, carers, friends
"Tug of war" between different authorities, where no one takes any responsibility for support of school performance	Not having to leave care after upper secondary school – being able to stay in care for some more years until they feel ready – like other young people
Poverty, lack of resources	Access to adult education
Leaving care prematurely; no after care support	Advice on financial and practical matters
Reluctance to take study-loans – fear of not being able to pay back	
Loneliness	

6.7 Analysis of interviews with nominated adults

Many nominated adults (foster carers) complained about lack of support from social services when the placement ended after upper secondary school was completed. In many cases they had wanted young people to stay in care longer, but this was often not possible, due to administrative procedures and costs. Furthermore, the nominated adults who were foster carers stated that there is no support, nor any resources or alternative solutions for young people who want to study at a higher level. This is a barrier for young people, who may hesitate to take the step and apply for college/university, even though they may have the ability to do so. Some nominated adults also pointed out that there is a general conception that young people placed in foster/residential care do not have the capacity to be high achievers. These low expectations or aspirations may be conveyed to the young person, and consequently make them less interested in aspiring to high achievement.

As a major facilitator for better educational attainment of young people in care, the nominated adults advocated a close cooperation between the school, the foster family and the local authority. In their view a good dialogue between all these stakeholders is of great importance. Working together with the young person in focus is a good strategy. Encouragement for education should come from everyone around the young person; school, local authorities and foster families.

6.8 Conclusions and implications for policy and practice

One of the most important themes is the strong wish to achieve and create a good life, shown by a majority of our interviewees. Several compared themselves with their mothers and fathers, siblings and other relatives who had not succeeded due to various problems, and stated that their life was going to be different. They were determined to find ways to make this wish come true. Education was an important part of these life-plans. Several of the young people were close to completing an education, and others were about to start. We were impressed by the strength and determination shown by these young people. Their capacity for resilience, in spite of a difficult start in life, was at times quite astonishing. An important factor in the ability to show resilience was access to support and encouragement from at least one significant adult. Those young people who had someone who could give them good advice, who believed in their capacity and competence, had managed to organise their lives and were on their way to reach their goal of "a better life".

Children and young people from dysfunctional families, where mental illness, alcohol and drug abuse, lack of resources and poverty prevent them from focusing on educational achievement, are in a very unfortunate and unfair position, compared to their peers. One of our recommendations is therefore to find a way to provide educational support to these children and young people, to compensate for the lack of support in their families. Such support could be given in different ways. However, one prerequisite is that politicians and policy-makers are committed to addressing the need for much greater educational support for children and young people from dysfunctional families, as they are the ones deciding on the financial allocations for pre-schools and schools.

In making the decision to place these young people in care, society has taken on a great responsibility. The parents of these young people have not, for various reasons, been capable of providing adequate care. Instead, parental care must be provided by society – through foster care and residential care. However, through the YIPPEE project, as well as from other studies on young people leaving care (see for example Vinnerljung et al. 2005, Stein 2006, Höjer & Sjöblom 2010), society is not always successful in its' task in loco parentis. Former welfare clients, with little or no support from birth families, are often left without support, and the outcomes of placements in care are not encouraging.

Evidently, society needs to be more aware of what is required to perform better "parenting" of young people in care, as well as of those leaving care. When it comes to the question of education, we are of the opinion that social workers, together with foster carers and residential staff, need to be more focused on the educational experiences and attainments of children and young people in care. Each child or young

person needs to have their individual educational situation evaluated and discussed with those professionals responsible for their placements. At the risk of simplifying a complex process, one might say that the interest and engagement from professionals in this respect should be equal to that of a parent.

It is also important to embrace a positive view of the opportunities of young people in care. As discussed previously in the report, professionals often tend to focus on risks and problems connected to the lives of children and young people in out-of-home care. To some extent this is inevitable: children and young people are taken into care because of risks and problems in their lives. However, as we see it, it is also important to recognise positive features, strengths and competences of these young people. This goes for social workers, as well as teachers. Focusing on educational opportunities and strengths would help young people to gain a positive learning identity. According to the accounts from the young people, those who have developed a perception of themselves as good learners and competent students have done so through their relationships with supportive and encouraging teachers, foster carers, and in some cases social workers.

Another important issue relates to the procedure when young people leave care. As explained previously, young people placed in out-of-home care usually leave care at 19, when they finish upper secondary school. Young people living with their birth parents are expected to leave home when they are ready to do so, not when they have reached the age of majority, or left upper secondary school. One of our recommendations is therefore to make it possible for an individual to remain in care up to at least 23 years of age. A young person in care should be able to leave care at a time when he or she is competent to live independently, not when reaching a certain age.

Many local authorities in Sweden are small, few children are placed in care, and the creation of specialised teams, as in the UK, would be hard to organise. From our point of view it is a question of recognising the complicated process of leaving care for young people, in relation to the prolonged transition to adulthood, and increased dependency on parents for all young people. Access to a competent contact person, who could provide practical advice and help, as well as emotional encouragement, would be a way to compensate young care leavers for the want of parental support. Such support could also help them to find pathways to higher and further education.

Access to adult education has been of great importance for several of our interviewees. Without such access, their chances of moving on to college or university would have been minimal. Therefore, maintaining, and improving, access to adult education for all young people is absolutely vital. Such access is one example of supportive structures that ought to characterise a democratic society.

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CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As the foregoing national summaries show, there are a number of significant differences in the ways that services are organised in the different countries in addition to their cultural diversity. Our initial hypothesis was that the educational trajectories of young people generally, as well as those in public care would be greatly influenced by the different welfare regimes of the countries in which they lived, and that was confirmed but perhaps not to the extent that we originally expected. What became clear in the course of the research and our cross-country meetings was how much young people separated from their families have in common. And perhaps most striking was their invisibility. In no country except England had this group previously been identified as so severely disadvantaged in terms of educational opportunities or as being at especially high risk of social exclusion in adulthood.

Detailed comparisons of findings from the five countries are to be found in the consolidated report (WP10). Here we return to our original research questions and look again at some of the themes that emerge from the individual country-level case studies (WP5-9)

7.1 Establishing a baseline of educational participation among young people who have been in care

As explained in Chapter 1, national statistics were only available in three countries, with some further information available in Catalonia. No national statistics on educational participation of young people who have left care are collected in Spain or Hungary. The findings for England, Sweden and Denmark are set out in detail in the consolidated report on Work Package 3, *Young People from a Public Care Background: secondary analysis of national statistics on educational participation* (Cameron, Hollingworth and Jackson, 2011. In summary, it confirms that in all three countries the levels of attainment at the end of compulsory schooling are lower for the care population than for those not in care. However, Swedish and Danish young people who have been in care are much more likely to complete compulsory secondary education with some qualifications than young people in England. In Sweden and Denmark the gap in achievement at this stage is about 10 percentage points compared with almost 50% in England, taking the lower standard of 5 GCSE passes at grades A*-G, and 44.1% at the higher level of 5 passes at grades A*-C. In Sweden 80 % of young people who have been in care enter upper secondary education but only 38% complete it compared with almost all young people in the general population. This still compares well with the English figure of 23%.

At tertiary level, the between-country differences decline while the comparison with all young people in the age group remains stark. In 2006, eleven per cent of young people from care in Sweden applied to enter higher education compared with 39% in the general population and just over half were accepted, meaning that overall six per cent entered higher education compared with 26% in the same age cohort not in care. This was exactly the same proportion as in England where the comparable figure for 2006 was also six per cent compared with 23.5% of all young people.

The Danish team carried out secondary analysis of statistics in relation to four different cohorts, including young people from a care background aged 27-30 (born 1976-89). This was to see if their participation in tertiary education might only be delayed However, the gap between those previously in care and others remained very wide. By their late twenties 7.3% of those formerly in care had completed a higher education programme compared with 34.7% of those never in care. At all stages and in all countries women performed better than men, both in care and not in care, with the difference most marked in Denmark and rather less so in England.

Despite the difficulties of comparison, the objective of establishing a baseline in the three countries was therefore at least partially achieved and provided ample quantitative data to confirm the hypothesis that the educational attainment and participation of young people who have been in care falls far below that of young people in the same age cohort growing up in their own families.

7.2 Identifying the barriers and facilitators for post-compulsory participation within the education and care systems

The data for this objective came from the interviews with care managers, social workers, social educators, pedagogues, teachers and foster carers and as well as from young people themselves and their nominated adults. Although there were differences between countries arising from the context, there was a very broad measure of agreement on what helps young people from a care background to do well and continue into higher levels of education and what gets in their way. These barriers and facilitators were categorised in various ways by the national teams. For example the Spanish team divided them into factors influencing in-care and post-care outcomes. The Hungarian team distinguished between endogenous and exogenous factors, that is those arising from the characteristics and experiences of individual young people and those that could be attributed to the legislative and policy framework and the workings of the care and education services. This perspective is represented diagrammatically in Figure 7.1 below.

The outer circle in this case represents the welfare regime and the philosophy which informs it and the five countries in the YiPPEE partnership were chosen to illustrate the impact of their different regimes on the study population. The second circle can be seen as the action at central government level that provides the framework within which services for children in out-of-home care operate. As the introductory sections of Chapters 2-6 show, countries vary considerably in the extent to which central government is able to control what goes on at local level. In England policy relating to children looked after away from home is centrally driven and, despite the rhetoric of localization, tightly controlled by legislation, guidance and allocation of resources. In Sweden the large numbers of small local authorities generally make their own decisions within a much less detailed overall framework.

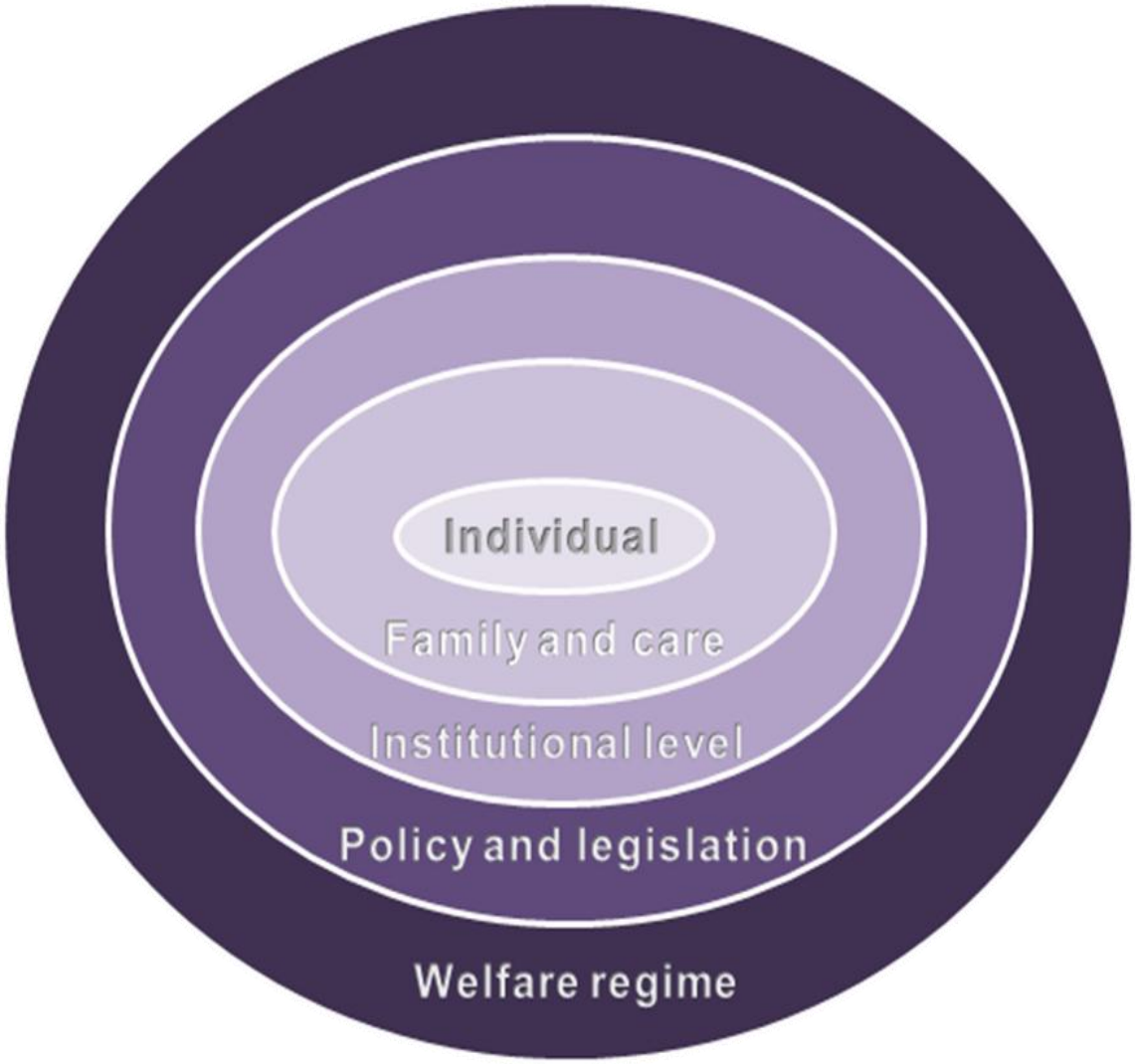
The third level, or circle, can be seen as the institutions through which government policy and legislation are delivered – local authority children's services departments, leaving care teams, schools, youth organizations, voluntary bodies and health services.

Fourthly, there are the professionals and carers who provide first hand care and education: parents, teachers, pedagogues, foster parents, social workers and residential care staff.

And finally there are the individual young people, all with their own history, personality, characteristics, motivation and different degrees of resilience or fragility.

Of course in reality all these levels are interlinked and interactive, but in thinking about implications for policy and practice it can be helpful to look at them separately. All the country summaries in previous chapters list barriers and facilitators which help or hinder for young people with a background in care from continuing their schooling after compulsory education.

Figure 7.1: Factors influencing educational attainment and participation



The following factors appear in all the country reports and the professionals and the young people themselves are largely in agreement:

Barriers

Individual level

- Low self-esteem and lack of aspiration
- Birth family does not value education
- Abuse and neglect before care leading to mental health and behavioural problems
- Disrupted schooling and long periods out of school
- Literacy and numeracy problems; lack of basic skills
- Feeling that nobody cares, being an outsider (*utsatthet* in Swedish)
- No role models

Care and education systems

- Division between child care/protection and education services
- Inflexible education system
- Lack of attention to education when selecting placements
- Placement instability (especially England)
- No provision for catch-up tuition after gaps in schooling
- Social workers giving little importance to education
- Education not prioritised by foster carers or residential workers
- Foster carers' low level of education
- Schools not understanding the care experience
- Lack of informed guidance at post-compulsory stage
- Low expectations of professionals and carers
- Denial of problematic situation of young people leaving care (Sweden and Denmark)
- Inadequate financial and personal support for continuing in education

Facilitators

Individual

- Strong motivation for a different life from parents
- Resilience and self-efficacy
- Respect for education/schooling in birth family
- Personal support and advice throughout placement
- Wanting to do well at school
- High aspirations and a future-oriented approach

Systems

- Care and education services work closely together (especially in England)
- Social workers give high priority to education in choosing placements
- Foster carers and pedagogues emphasise education as the key to future opportunities and 'a good life' and provide strong emotional and practical support
- Care and school placements are stable with few changes

- Mixing with people outside care system
- Role models in care setting and community
- Support for leisure activities and participation in community life

Leaving care and transition to adulthood

It was at the stage when young people were officially at an age to leave care that national differences became most apparent. Early leaving was more common in England. The official age of majority is 18 in all countries (corresponding with the UN definition of childhood) but in practice there was considerable variation in provision and uptake of continuing support. Being able to continue in education was strongly dependent on having suitable accommodation and adequate financial support. Across the five partner countries, managers interviewed were largely in agreement about the barriers to continuing education for young people from a public care background once they leave care. These were:

- Rigid education systems that do not permit non-standard pathways.
- Lack of economic support for adult education
- No-one there to 'root' for them: lack of a single sympathetic guiding figure in their lives
- Care professionals do not expect children in care to succeed in education; instead focus on housing and practical support
- Policy neglect of the particular needs of this group; seeing them as 'the same as anyone else'
- Focus on economic survival over acquisition of skills and knowledge.
- Care leavers, irrespective of ability, routinely advised to choose short-cycle occupational training in preference to longer academic or vocational courses leading to higher level professions

7.3 Recommendations

Each country team has made recommendations relevant to their own country context which can be found in the previous chapters.

The following recommendations appear in some form in all the country reports:

17. Reliable statistical information is an essential basis for improving the educational opportunities of young people who have been in care. **Comparative statistics bringing together care and education data should be collected and published by the EU and by national governments.**

18. The present lack of statistical data is one indication of the split between care and education which is highly damaging to the opportunities of young people in public care. It is essential that the services work closely together and develop clear protocols for financial responsibility with the welfare of the child as the main consideration. **Ideally care and education should be the responsibility of the same administrative body at both national and local levels, as in England.**

19. Child welfare services, child protection agencies and institutions such as children's homes should **collect regular and up-to-date information on the educational participation and attainment of individuals in their care as well as in aggregated form up to the age of 25.**

20. **This information should be broken down by age, gender, citizen status and, where possible, ethnicity.**

21. The child welfare/protection system should award education **a more central and prioritized status in relation to care and transition processes for leaving care.**

22. The education system must recognize these young people as a group with additional educational needs due to their family circumstances and traumatic life experiences they have suffered. **This means providing individual tuition and mentoring support to compensate for gaps in schooling and enable them to catch up with their peers.**

23. Young people who have been in care usually require more than average support over more time because their pathways in education are delayed compared with other young people of the same aged. **It is important to postpone labour market integration processes and extend their period of education to equal that of the general population.**

24. Expectations of young people's educational potential should not be based on the characteristics of their families of origin but on their own motivation and ability. **The assumption that young people in care are more suited to vocational routes and short-term occupational training rather than academic courses should always be challenged.**

25. Discussion of career and educational options beyond compulsory schooling should start early. **Young people in care should be encouraged to aim as high as possible, regardless of their care status.**

26. **Changes of care placement and school should be reduced to a minimum.** If unavoidable the new school should make special efforts to help the student adapt to their new surroundings.

27. **Foster care:** much more attention should be given to education in selection and training of foster carers. There should be checks on their knowledge of the education system, their ability to help young people with homework and to guide and support them along their educational pathways.

28. **Residential settings:** social pedagogues should give higher priority to education and ensure that it is always discussed at meetings with young people in order to motivate them to continue studying and to raise their expectations.

29. **School performance should be documented and tracked in a standardized format from the point of admission to care.** In addition to a written plan (PEP

in England) there should be a person with special responsibility for monitoring the child's academic process.

30. **Transition to independent living should occur when the young person is ready** and not when they reach some arbitrary cut-off point, such as 18th birthday or leaving upper secondary school. Continuing support should be available at least up to 23 years of age.

31. Because of delays and disruptions at earlier stages in their education, **access to adult education is absolutely vital**

32. **Leisure and social activities** should be actively promoted and efforts made to ensure continuity after leaving school and across placement moves. Young people should be assisted to use opportunities for leisure-based and volunteering activities to provide qualifications, income and work experience

Social workers and professionals tend to focus on the risks and problems in the lives of children and young people in out-of-home care. It is important to recognize the positive features, strengths and competences of these young people and their at times astonishing capacity for resilience. An essential factor to translate this into educational success is **access to support and encouragement from at least one significant adult, not necessarily a direct carer**, who can give them good advice, focus on the opportunities open to them and help them develop a perception of themselves as competent learners.

The Thomas Coram Research Unit (TCRU) is a multi-disciplinary research unit within the Institute of Education, University of London. Founded in 1973 by Professor Jack Tizard, its principal function is to carry out research of relevance to the health and wellbeing of children, young people and families.

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