

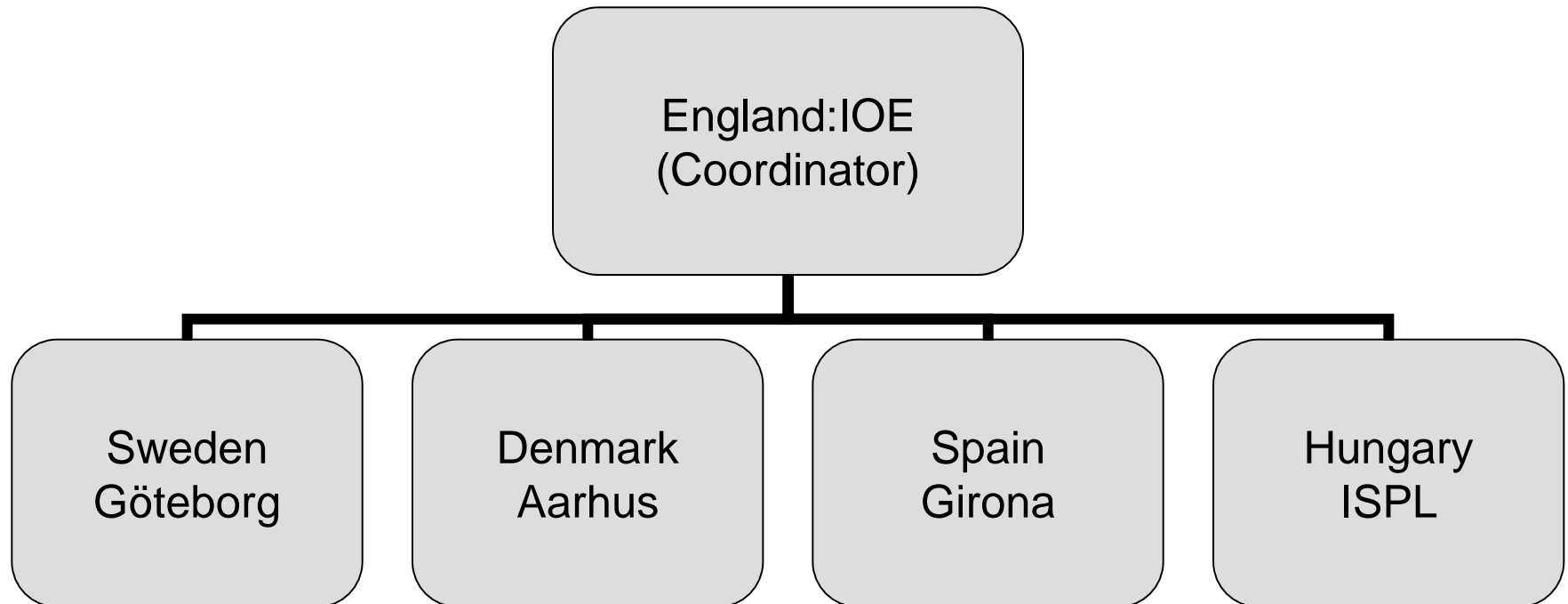
Looking Ahead and Aiming Higher

Making education a priority for
children in out-of-home care

Findings from cross-national research

The YiPPEE project

EU F7Program: Youth and Social Inclusion



Welfare regimes

| Country | Type |
|----------------|-----------------------|
| Denmark/Sweden | Social democratic |
| Spain | Familial/conservative |
| Hungary | Transitional |
| England | Neo-liberal |

Aims of the research

- Explore educational experiences and outcomes of young people from a care background in different European countries
- Find ways to give them more equal opportunities with other young people
- Raise their participation and completion rates in post-compulsory and tertiary education

Progress?

- Institutional care provided by state or religious organizations – few return home
- Smaller children's homes – more individualised care
- Foster family care preferred
- Contact with birth family encouraged
- Emphasis on reunification, normalisation

But some unintended consequences

Linton Workhouse Cambridgeshire still used as children's home in the 1960s



Why prioritise education?

According to longitudinal cohort studies, adult well-being on all measures is closely correlated with highest level of education achieved

- In a few years they will be asking for upper secondary certificates or university degrees you know. And if you have only done compulsory secondary education then you will be like those who today don't even have that.

Oscar, 19

- I really like studying because educating yourself is THE BEST...knowing more every day...

Bea, 20

Research methods

- Literature review
- Analysis of national statistics
- Interviews with social service managers, pedagogues, social educators, teachers and carers
- Biographical narrative interviews with young people aged 18-21 & 1 yr follow-up
- Interviews with nominated adults

Interviews in each country

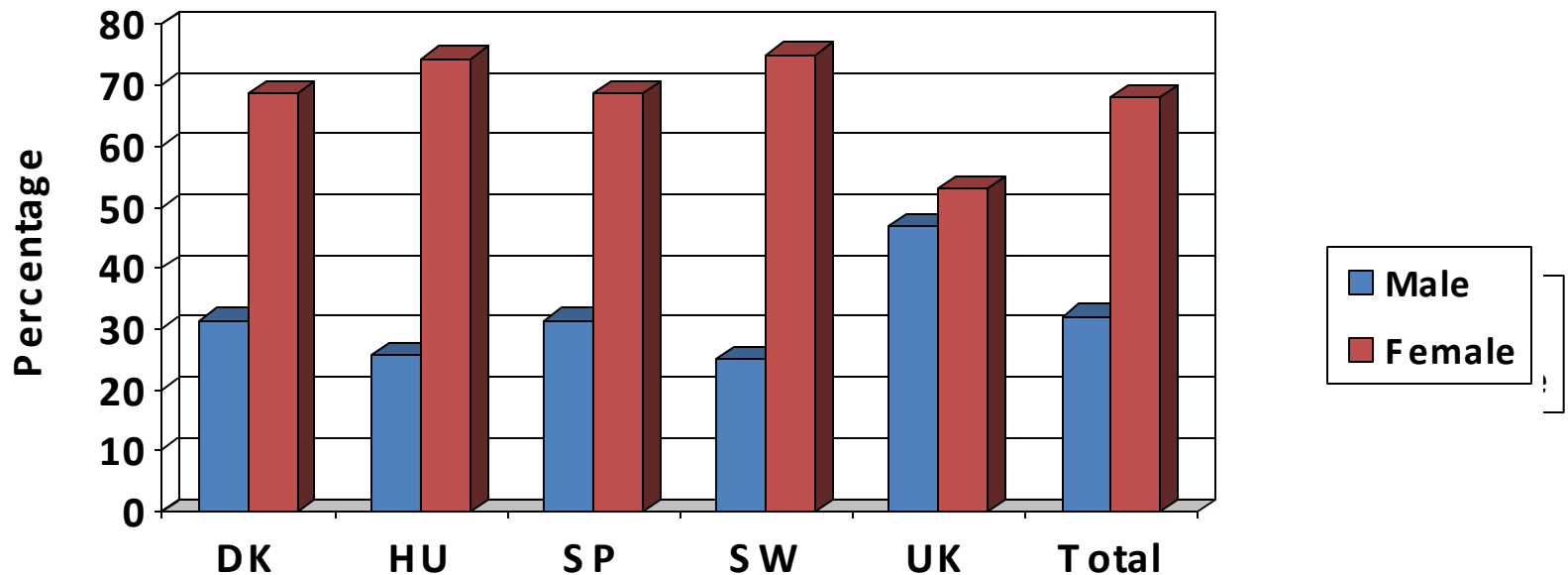
| | Dk | Eng | HU | SP | SE | Total |
|---------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| Professionals | 5 | 9 | 4 | 13 | 6 | 39 |
| Telephone screening | 75 | 74 | 133 | 132 | 53 | 467 |
| YP in-depth T1 | 35 | 32 | 35 | 35 | 33 | 170 |
| YP T2 | 29 | 27 | 33 | 28 | 26 | 143 |
| Nominated adults | 14 | 18 | 34 | 20 | 25 | 111 |
| TOTAL | 158 | 160 | 239 | 228 | 145 | 930 |

What did we find?

- Huge gap in attainment and participation rates between yop formerly in care and others
- Few complete upper secondary education successfully
- Not identified as social problem except in England
- Almost no research, no stats in Spain or Hungary
- Education and care separate services, often in conflict
- Social workers and carers more interested in emotional and behavioural issues
- Family backgrounds and pre-care experiences very similar in all countries
- Girls do much better than boys

In care and post-compulsory education

- Girls do better than boys in all countries



Strong points - different countries

- commitment to equal opportunities (SP, EN)
- central and local policies that raise aspirations (EN)
- teachers in leaving care teams (EN)
- better educated foster carers and support (DK)
- social educators in residential care (SP, DK)
- early intervention (SP)
- stability (SP, HU)
- accommodation for students up to 25 (SP, HU)

What facilitates educational attainment?

- motivation & self-efficacy
- respect for ed in birth family
- continuity of schooling
- carers work closely with schools
- high expectations
- financial support and accommodation after 18
- flexibility and continuing opportunity

And what gets in the way?

- care and education split
- low priority to education from social workers and family
- instability, changes of placement and school
- lack of basic skills due to disrupted early schooling
- mental health problems arising from abuse/neglect
- lack of support – personal and financial
- class-based assumptions about destinations
- low aspirations, poor advice
- pressure to achieve early economic independence

How foster families help

- Keen interest in school and college experience and attainment
- Caring in age-appropriate ways
- Acting as role models and advocates
- Helping with homework – or getting help
- Arranging tutoring and language teaching
- Providing space and equipment, internet, stationery
- Supporting and funding leisure activities – sporting and cultural, celebrating success
- Discussing plans and seeking informed guidance
- Providing ongoing financial and practical assistance

Foster carers as advocates and enablers

- *The social workers didn't mention anything about education but my foster mother said 'If she's under my roof she's going to school (Sheila – aged 14 on arrival in England)*
- *She kind of pushes you to do your assignments and makes sure you're on track – whereas most of them just say 'You go to your bedroom and do whatever you want'*
- *My second set of foster carers had a massive, massive effect - one was a university teacher and the other a church minister*
- *My (foster) mother always helped me to achieve my goals, not necessarily with financial support but by consistent encouragement (Law student, 22 HU)*

The contribution of social educators

'More than a young person and an adult guiding them, it is more like they do their job but we are friends and we totally trust each other – they really help me and we are close'

'At that age you don't want to study – you'd rather spend time with your friends, watch TV or play video games. A lot depends on your social educator..or everything, almost... everything'

'In my children's home we spent two hours every afternoon doing homework and if you didn't have homework they reviewed everything you had done, so you were up to date, prepared for exams'

But 'they won't tell you what parents tell their children, to be an engineer, a doctor, to get a degree...they always advise you to do short occupational training courses, so that you can start earning money as soon as possible'

Messages from the research for social workers and carers

- Delay need not mean failure
- Educational pathways should be a focus of ongoing discussion in placements
- **Promote educational ambition over economic self-sufficiency**
- Take the long view in choosing options
- Be prepared for wrong turnings and fresh starts but never give up

Find out more

Website: <http://tcru.ioe.ac.uk/yippee>

Jackson, S. & Cameron, C. (2011) *Young People from a public care background: pathways to further and higher education in five EU countries* Final Report of the YiPPEE Project (WP12)

Casas, F., Monserrat, C. & Malo (2010), WPP8 Spain Case Study Report in English, Spanish and Catalan and summaries

Los jóvenes tutelados suspenden en todos los indicadores educativos, *El Periodico de Catalunya* 24.01.11

And see list of publications

Thanks to the YIPPEE team

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