The Educational Attainment of Young People in Care

Funded by
The Nuffield Foundation

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Educational outcomes of children in care

- Persistent gap in educational attainment between children in care and other children

- Gap is bigger at end of secondary school than at end of primary school

- Project aim:

  - To identify key care and educational factors associated with the attainment of children in care at the end of Key Stage 4 (KS4; end of secondary school/Year 11/age 16)

Educational outcomes of children in care

- Rees Centre/University of Bristol study, funded by The Nuffield Foundation

- Linked national data sets on the education (National Pupil Database) and care experiences of looked after children in English schools Year 11

- Interviewed 26 young people (high- and lower-progress) in six local authorities and with their carers, teachers, social workers and Virtual School staff

The Educational Progress of Looked After Children in England: Linking Care and Educational Data

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REES CENTRE — Research in Fostering and Education — University of Oxford Department of Education — UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD — University of BRISTOL

http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/research/educational-progress-of-looked-after-children/

Measuring outcomes through databases

- Linked NPD and CLA databases for 2013 KS4 Cohort

- Retrospective study

- 8 best outcomes (GCSE + equivalents)
  - A* = 58 points; maximum 464 points
  - 6 points = 1 grade on 1 exam

- Groups for analysis:
  - CLA-LT: A longer-stay group of Children Looked After (those in care for 12 months or more continuously at the end of KS4)
  - CLA-ST: A shorter-stay group of Children Looked After (those in care for less than 12 months at the end of KS4)
  - CIN: Children in Need at the end of KS4 but not in care
  - Comparison group: Children not in care and not in need at the end of KS4

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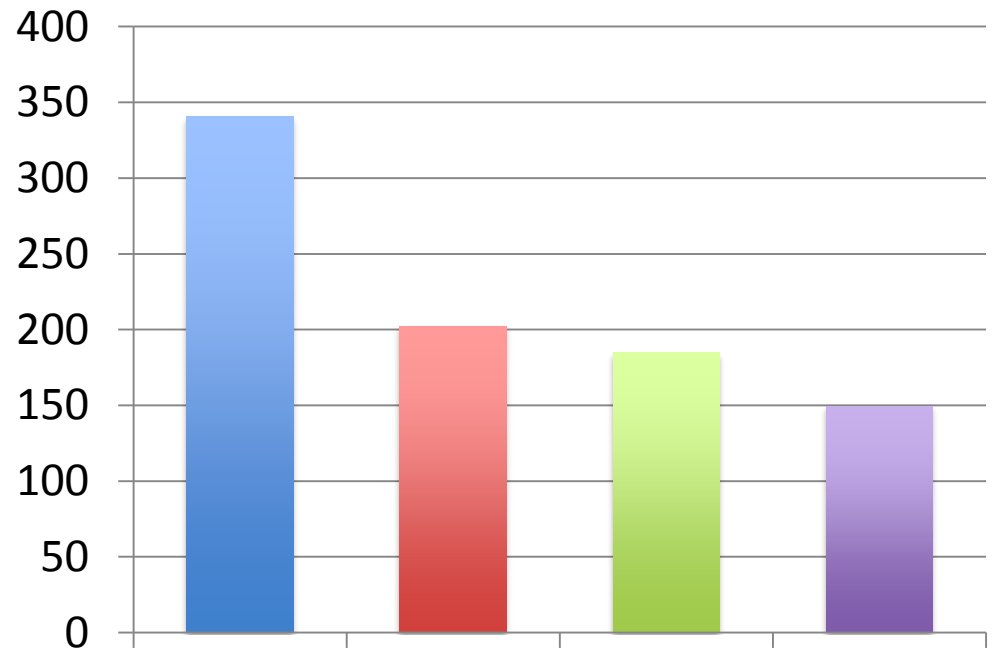
Comparing outcomes

Of those in Year 11 in 2012-13:

A. 4847 had been in care for at least a year

B. 1387 had been in care less than a year

C. 13,599 were 'Children in Need'

D. There were 622,970 other young people

WHO SCORED WHAT?

Average points in 8 best exams (0 – 464)
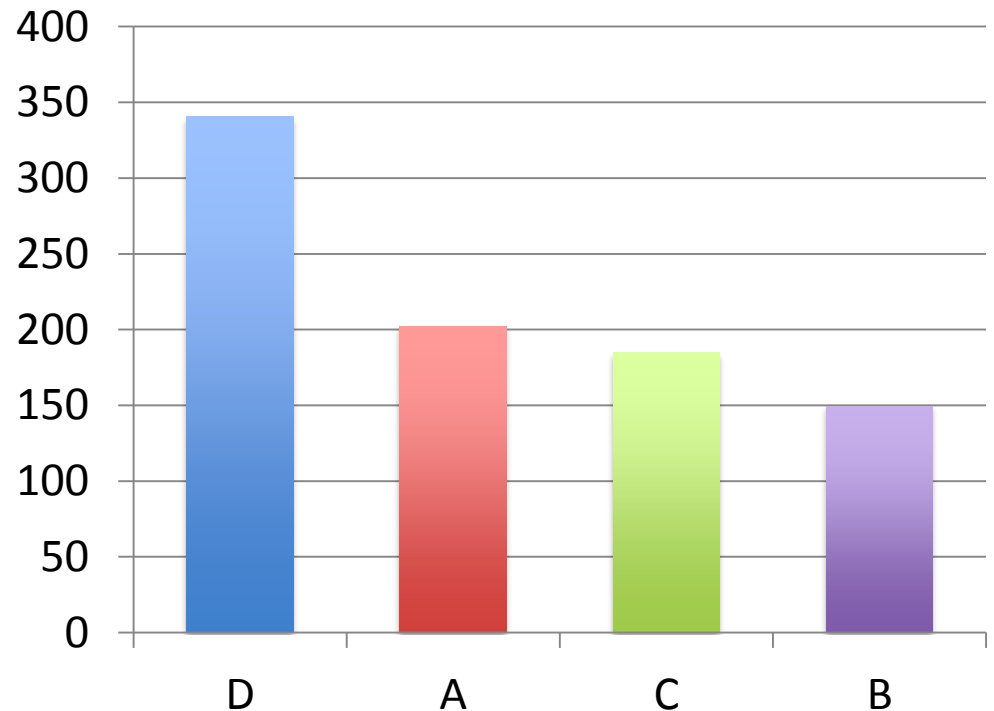
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What might explain different outcomes?

- Children in care over-represented in many types of disadvantage
  - More similar to Children in Need than general population

	Not in care or in need	In Care 12 months +	Children in Need
Eligible for FSM in previous 6 years	23.3%	36.6%	58.0%
SEN (any): School Action + or Statement	15.7%	71.7%	59.0%
Behavioural, Emotional, or Social Difficulty	4.4%	36.1%	18.9%
Autism Spectrum Disorder	1.0%	3.9%	7.3%
Severe or Multiple Learning Difficulties	0.3%	4.7%	9.9%
Non-mainstream school at end of KS4	11.0%	39.0%	35.0%

Outcomes: Attainment vs. progress

	Mean KS4 points	Controlling for KS2
Not in care or in need	340.59	341.66
Children in Need	185.14	249.77
In care for under 12 months	149.52	200.38
In care for 12 months or more	202.41	267.46

- There is already an attainment gap by the end of KS2 (age 11)
- Controlling for KS2 scores gives us a measure of progress

Using databases to predict outcomes for CLA-LT

EARLY ENVIRONMENT

FSM at KS1

Home language at KS1

IDACI at KS1

Care career type

CARE PLACEMENTS

Placement changes since KS2

Length of time in care

Home language at KS4

Placed out of authority at KS4

Length of latest placement

FSM at KS4

In non-foster placement at KS4

IDACI at KS4

INDIVIDUAL

Gender

Mean SDQ score

Ethnicity

Primary SEN

KS2 scores

RELATED TO SCHOOLING

School changes in Year 10-11

In non-mainstream school at KS4

Unauthorised absences

Fixed & permanent exclusions

66% of the individual differences in KS4 scores can be explained just using these variables

EARLY ENVIRONMENT

FSM at KS1

Home language at KS1

IDACI at KS1

Care career type

CARE PLACEMENTS

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Mean SDQ score

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KS2 scores

RELATED TO SCHOOLING

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We can look at the unique role of each of these: for example…

EARLY ENVIRONMENT

- FSM at KS1
- Home language at KS1
- IDACI at KS1
- Care career type

CARE PLACEMENTS

- Placement changes since KS2
- Length of time in care
- Home language at KS4
- Placed out of authority at KS4
- Length of latest placement
- FSM at KS4
- In non-foster placement at KS4
- IDACI at KS4

INDIVIDUAL

- Gender
- Mean SDQ score
- Ethnicity
- Primary SEN

KS2 scores

RELATED TO SCHOOLING

- School changes in Year 10-11
- In non-mainstream school at KS4
- Unauthorised absences
- Fixed & permanent exclusions

Or...

EARLY ENVIRONMENT

FSM at KS1

Home language at KS1

IDACI at KS1

Care career type

CARE PLACEMENTS

Placement changes since KS2

Length of time in care

Home language at KS4

Placed out of authority at KS4

Length of latest placement

FSM at KS4

In non-foster placement at KS4

IDACI at KS4

INDIVIDUAL

Gender

Mean SDQ score

Ethnicity

Primary SEN

KS2 scores

RELATED TO SCHOOLING

School changes in Year 10-11

In non-mainstream school at KS4

Unauthorised absences

Fixed & permanent exclusions

Which ones count? ('significant predictors')

EARLY ENVIRONMENT

Disability
-18.2 pts

CARE PLACEMENTS

Each change since KS2
-2.3 pts

Home language at KS4 not English
-18.8 pts

Each extra month in latest placement
+0.09 pts

Foster or kin placement KS4
+37.3 pts

INDIVIDUAL

Male
-7.6 pts

1 pt higher on SDQ
-1.7 pts

ASD -38.2 pts
MLD -10.4 pts
SMLD -87.6 pts

Each extra point in KS2 scores (range 2.5-8.0)
+39.6 pts

RELATED TO SCHOOLING

Change in Year 10 or 11
-33.9 pts

Special -87.6 pts
PRU -88.2 pts
AP -121.4 pts

10% absence (unauthorised)
-25.5 pts

Each day excluded
-1.08 pts

What can the databases tell us?

- Controlling for pupil- and school-related factors, children in care make better educational progress than do Children in Need

- Late adolescent entrants into care make poorer educational progress

- Both school and care factors are related to educational outcomes

- Instability (school or care) is an important factor particularly in KS4

What can the databases not tell us?

- How the statistics are reflected in young people's experiences
  - How do young people tell their own story?
  - Day-to-day experiences in care and education
- The role of the birth family
  - Pre-care
  - While in care
- The role of key adults
  - Foster carers
  - Teachers
- What else are we not capturing in the databases?

Interview findings on outcomes

- Overwhelming view that becoming looked after had positive effects educationally and overall

- Continuing birth family influence for nearly all

- Foster carers' level of educational support seemed more important than their educational qualifications *per se*

- Teachers most important educational influence

- Young people's *agency*

  - Choose to engage with education once certain preconditions met

Measuring educational outcomes

- Databases told us which factors could predict attainment
    - but not everything is measured
- Interviews told us about **perceptions** and **experiences**
    - and identified factors that are not in the databases

Overall messages:

- Entering care can be beneficial where this is the right decision
- Stability is important for attainment and well-being
- Support for young people needs to take account of individual differences
- Ongoing issues may not be apparent from the databases
- Key adults can create the conditions needed to learn

In conclusion

- Are we measuring the right outcomes?
  - Attainment vs. progress
  - Longer term perspective – some young people take longer to make significant progress
- Are we making the right comparisons?
  - Children in Need as an additional comparison group
- National datasets can help predict outcomes
  - What extra data could be collected? – e.g. on foster carers
- Mixed methods give a fuller picture
  - And can establish which outcomes are important to young people

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