

YOUNG PEOPLE’S EXPERIENCE OF THE MATCHING PROCESS WHEN PLACED IN FOSTER CARE IN SWEDEN

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The concept of matching refers to the process when the social services select a foster home to fit an individual child for placement. The study’s aim is to investigate young people’s experiences of the matching process when placed in foster care. The empirical data is based on 9 semi-structured interviews made in 2023-2024, with young people having experience of placement in out-of-home care by the social services, more specifically foster care. Participants have been recruited from various parts of Sweden. The research questions are: How did the young people experience their participation in the matching process? What do young people express as possibilities for a stable and continuous placement? As theoretical concept, we have been inspired by Hart’s Children’s ladder of participation (Hart, 1992), based on Arnstein, 1969. Preliminary findings indicate that young people would like to feel more welcome and that the foster family shows an interest in the foster child. A wish for belonging to and being part of the family is expressed for, but the young people rarely feel this is the case. Often there is a lack of a matching process altogether. Findings indicate further that what seemed to be a well-matched family early in the process, turned out not to be the case, after some time. Recurrent and unexpected visits to the foster families to secure the young person’s well-being are participants’ suggested measures for the social services, as is a greater focus on the family and the young person, building a relationship.

Nyckelord: matching, participation

REFERENSER

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