

Behavioural difficulties and learning disabilities among children looked after in institutions in Greece.

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Previous research has established high rates of mental health problems among institutionalized children. As early identification of any problem behaviour is crucial for diagnosis and treatment, this study aims to examine professionals' perceptions of the emotional and behavioural difficulties, as well as of the learning difficulties of school-aged institutionalized children. Professionals working in orphanages in Athens completed the following questionnaires for 52 children, aged 7-14: a) The "Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire" (SDQ; Goodman, 1997) for screening mental health problems and b) a questionnaire conducted by the authors screening for the learning disabilities of institutionalized children. The results revealed that 21.2% of the children faced emotional and behavioural difficulties, 23% encountered conduct problems and 13.5% were presented with attention and hyperactivity problems. Almost 50% of the children had learning difficulties and 46% had repeated class. Of those children having learning difficulties, 72.5% had emotional and behavioural difficulties and 71.5% were presented with inattention and hyperactivity. To conclude, children living in institutions have elevated levels of mental health and educational needs. Mental health professionals should be informed about these needs for better mental health and educational outcomes for the children.