



A Comparative Exploration of Social Policy Relating to Teenage Pregnancy in Finland and Scotland:

Key Findings and Policy Implications

Alison Hosie

**Dept of Sociology & Social
Policy**

**University of Newcastle Upon
Tyne**

alison.hosie@ncl.ac.uk

0191 222 7921

Key Finding

- ✿ Any approach attempting to improve:
 - ◆ the sexual health of young people,
 - ◆ reduce the rate of unintended teenage pregnancy and
 - ◆ The rate of STIs
- ✿ **Must look beyond any one area of policy**

Choice of Countries

✿ Scotland – path of least resistance

✿ Finland - opportunity

Important constants

- ❖ Both countries have the same legal age of heterosexual consent.
- ❖ Both countries have similar rates of teenage sexual activity

Sexual experiences of Scottish (15-16) and Finnish (15) young people (%) in 1992

Sexual Experience	Scot (m)	Fin (m)	Scot (f)	Fin (f)
Kissing	73.3	69	84.2	78
Light petting	66.3	62	70.8	67
Heavy petting	48.6	41	53	52
Sexual intercourse	25.8	19	<u>31.2</u>	<u>31</u>

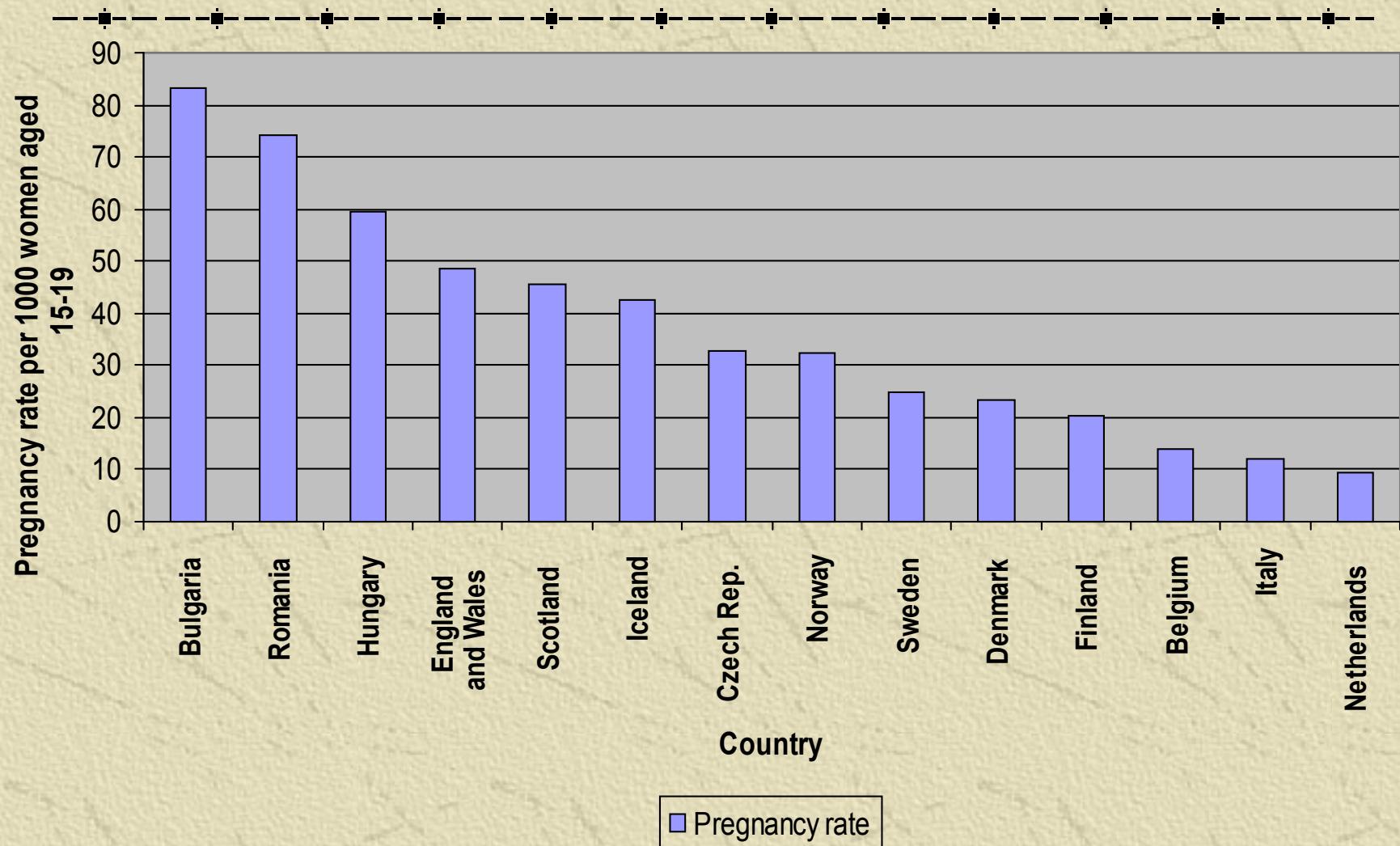
Sources: Currie & Todd 1993; Papp 1997.

Use of Contraception at First Intercourse Aged 15 (15-16 in Scotland) in 1992 (%)

Contraceptive use	Scottish (m)	Finnish (m)	Scottish (f)	Finnish (f)
Reliable method used	45%	87%	52%	80%
Non reliable method or	55%	13%	48%	20%
No method used				

Sources: McIlwaine 1994; Papp 1997.

Pregnancy Rate Per 1000 Women Aged 15-19 in a Selection of European Countries – 1996 or Latest Available Year



Three Pre-requisites

✿ Knowledge

- ◆ About sex and sexuality in general
- ◆ Contraception – how it works, why it might fail, where to get it...,
- ◆ That it **can** ‘happen to me’
- ◆ And what to do if it just has – emergency contraception - how it works, why it might fail, where to get it...,

Three Pre-requisites



Access to sexual health services

- ◆ Geographical location & Equality of access
- ◆ Suitable opening times
- ◆ Confidentiality
- ◆ Informal & User Friendly
- ◆ Positive professional attitudes to young people and their sexual activity
- ◆ 'Sex-speak' - youthful linguistics
- ◆ Inclusive access for and recognition of the needs of young men.

Three Pre-requisites

❖ Motivation

- ◆ To apply their knowledge,
- ◆ To access the services,
- ◆ To use the contraception
- ◆ And to have a desire to prevent pregnancy and parenthood at a young age.

Policy areas

❖ **Sex Education policy**

- ◆ knowledge

❖ **Sexual Health policy**

- ◆ ‘real’ access to sexual health services

❖ **Education policy**

- ◆ one means of aspiration/ motivation to avoid pregnancy/parenthood at a young age.

Policy Levels and data collection

- ✿ policy developed and implemented at both the national and local level
- ✿ through in-depth interviews with:
 - ◆ Government officials
 - ◆ Local authority/municipality officials from 3 areas
 - ◆ Head teachers and School (sex education) teachers from 4 schools (1 from each area + 1 pilot)
 - ◆ School nurses from the 4 Finnish schools
- ✿ And collecting relevant policy documentation, school curricula and action plans.



Key similarities in sex education policy in Finland and Scotland

- ✿ In neither Finland nor Scotland does a law exist stating that sex education must be taught,
- ✿ At the school level, in all schools studied in both countries, some degree of sex education was provided for young people,
- ✿ At the national and school level,
 - ◆ both countries provided sex education in mixed-sex classes,
 - ◆ teachers in both countries had the opportunity to undertake in-service training on sex education,



Key similarities in sex education policy in Finland and Scotland

- ✿ At the school level,
 - ◆ teachers in both countries used a combination of didactic and small-group based learning methods,
 - ◆ sex education provisions had central aims to increase knowledge and impact upon attitudes and behaviour of young people,
 - ◆ 'experts' in sexual health providing sex education were perceived as a valued resource for both teachers and pupils,
- ✿ At the national and school level in both countries,
 - ◆ the provision of sex education was perceived by teachers of sex education, Finnish school nurses and government and local authority/ municipality officials as an important duty of the school.



Key differences in sex education policy in Finland and Scotland

- ❖ **Guarantee of provision**
- ❖ **Location of provision**
- ❖ **Status of biology**
- ❖ **Time allocations for sex education provision**
- ❖ **Class set-up**
- ❖ **Teaching methods**
- ❖ **Content of sex education**
- ❖ **Main aims of sex education**
- ❖ **Use of 'Experts' in sex education provision**
- ❖ **Overall status of sex education in schools**



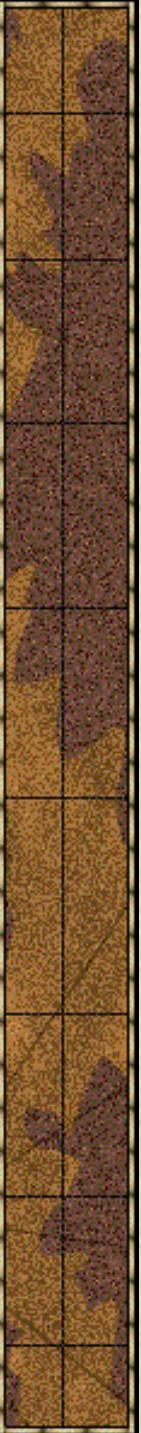
Key similarities in sexual health policy in Finland and Scotland

- ✿ In both countries,
 - ◆ primary health care facilities and family planning clinics provide sexual health services where young people can access advice and contraception.
 - ◆ these services are free (or low cost).
 - ◆ there are limited but growing numbers of clinics set up for the exclusive use of young people.



Key similarities in sexual health policy in Finland and Scotland

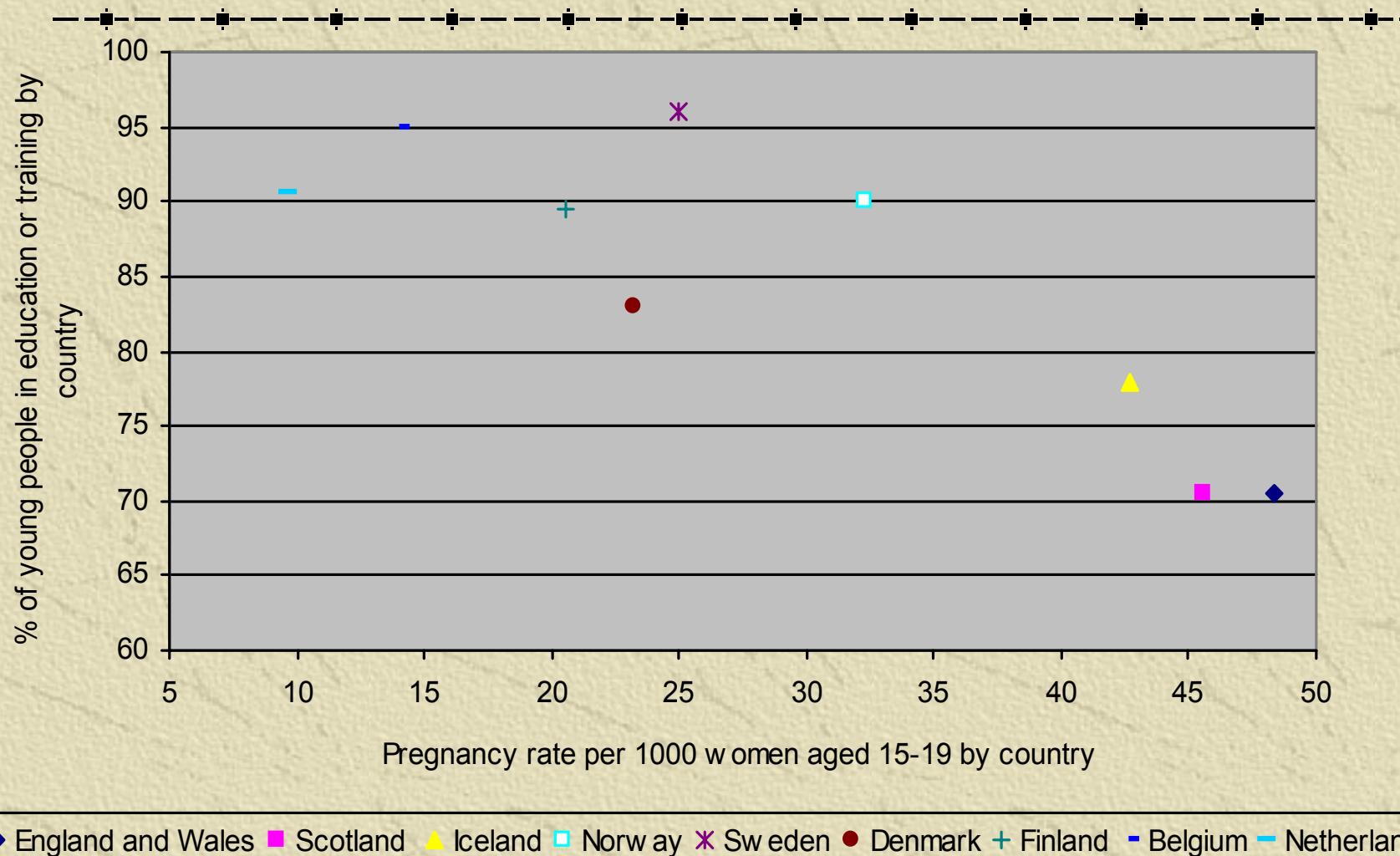
- ✿ In both countries:
 - ◆ abortion is available to young women under certain conditions but in neither country is abortion available 'on request'.
 - ◆ (in Scotland's case supposedly), consultations with medical professionals remain confidential regardless of age as long as there are no explicit concerns of child abuse.



Key differences in sexual health policy in Finland and Scotland

- ✿ Strength of political commitment to the promotion of young people's sexual health.
- ✿ The provision of school health services.
 - ◆ Role of the school nurse
- ✿ Access to abortion by young women

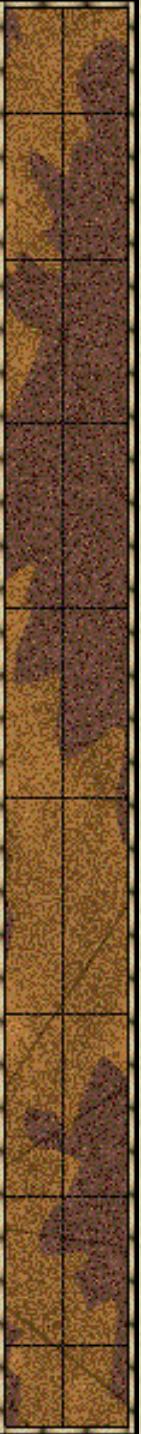
15-19 year old pregnancy rate and percentage of those aged 16-18 in education or training, by country in 1996 (or latest year). (Rs = 0.73)



Education policy – Finland & Scotland

School level stay-on rates 1996-7

	KP	TP	VP	AP	Finland
% 9th grade- HS/ VS	98%	95%	99%	99%	95%
% 9th – 10th grade	2%	5%	1%	1%	5%
% progressing in ed.					
as proportion of 9th grade	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	LSS	GA	SS	AH	Scotland
% S4 – S5	85%	86%	68%	85%	64%
% S5 – S6	80%	75%	78%	60%	80%
S6 pupils as a % of S4					
Cohort	68%	64%	53%	51%	51%



Key similarities in education policy in Finland and Scotland



Young people in both countries

- ◆ are legally obliged to be educated up to the age of 16
- ◆ this educational provision is provided by the state free of charge.
- ◆ are expected to sit certified examinations of equivalent level in their final year of compulsory schooling.
- ◆ pupils receive careers guidance (student counselling) at some point during their upper comprehensive level.



Key differences in education policy in Finland and Scotland

- ❖ Age at which compulsory schooling begins.
- ❖ Structure of careers guidance (Student counselling).
- ❖ Aims and Focus of careers guidance (Student counselling).
- ❖ The structure of post-16 education.
- ❖ Focus of post-16 education.
- ❖ Status of vocation education.
- ❖ Normalised progression route for post-16
- ❖ Welfare incentives

Key changes in Finland

- ❖ Cutbacks in sexual health services
- ❖ Cutbacks in sex education
 - ◆ Health Education and Family Education no longer compulsory – so schools removed 1 or both.



Key changes in Scotland

- ✿ 5-14 programme in 1993.
- ✿ School receiving 1st *useful* advice from local authority and government.
- ✿ Pre-service training for teachers across Scotland
- ✿ Acute awareness that in developing sexual health services and sex education
 - ◆ Need to *listen* to young people
- ✿ School nurse idea – under investigation
- ✿ The Scottish executive are focusing on improving *Teenage Sexual Health* – not just pregnancy.
- ✿ Local authorities developing local projects based on local young people's needs.



Key changes in Scotland

★ 5-14 programme – continuity link between primary and secondary education

- Schools already noticing more equality of educational level in S1 – reducing risk of disengagement through boredom or inability to catch up.

★ More vocational choice at school level

- Teachers noting as reason for increased stay-on rates.
- GSVQs providing young people, women in particular, with increased confidence and self-esteem.

★ Academic exams, now more work based.