

## Editorial

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Welcome to the autumn 2022 issue of the *Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care*, a special issue published in celebration of 20 years since the journal was established.

Introducing the first issue in autumn 2002, then editor, Professor Andy Kendrick of the University of Strathclyde, set the context for a specialist journal about residential child care in a year which had seen the publication of the first national standards for social care in Scotland, the establishment of Scotland's care regulator (the Care Commission) and a new professional registration body, the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC).

Andy hoped that the *SJRCC* would help break down barriers between research and practice: 'Research needs to impact on policy and practice in residential child care and residential workers need to be "research-minded"', he wrote. This aim continues to govern the journal's mission, exemplified in our explicit editorial policy to publish both long-form original research papers and shorter accounts of and commentaries on contemporary practice.

The original publisher of the *SJRCC* was the Scottish Institute of Residential Child Care, established in 2000, and now incorporated into CELCIS, the Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection. A conference on residential child care is organised by CELCIS annually and in recent years the *SJRCC* has published an autumn issue to coincide with the event, calling in advance for short papers on the conference theme.

An international outlook was also envisaged from the beginning. Andy signalled the desire to have 'contributions from practitioners and researchers in other countries so that we can learn from a wide range of residential contexts, traditions and settings'. In this way, Andy wrote, 'we hope to promote and enhance the development of positive practice in residential child care, both in Scotland and in the wider world'.

In recognition of the *SJRCC*'s increasing international outlook, in 2021 the strapline: 'an international journal of group and family care experience' was added to the journal's title. An important way in which the *SJRCC* has developed its international outlook is through membership of the international editorial advisory board. Board members act as advocates for the journal in their own countries, ensuring that the journal has a broader reach and attracts authors from outside Scotland. Editorial board members also provide an essential quality assurance function by reviewing articles submitted to the journal; they are volunteers, and, as editors, we pay tribute to their valuable contribution to the journal's success.

### **The autumn 2022 issue**

This issue's leading article was specially commissioned to celebrate the *SJRCC*'s 20<sup>th</sup> year from James Anglin, Emeritus Professor of Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria, Canada. Describing the *SJRCC* as 'a journal like no other', Jim quotes from an analysis of the journal's entire back catalogue of more than 400 articles conducted by CELCIS colleagues Gemma Watson and Craig McCreadie, and judges that 'the journal has been highly successful in attracting contributors with diverse backgrounds and allowing them to speak in very personal ways about their learning, their struggles and their engagements with young people and the complex systems that have evolved to address children's needs'. The most common theme in articles over the 20 years turns out to be 'staffing issues/practice'. Jim kindly ends his article with some plaudits for the journal's editorial team: 'To everyone who has been even a small part of creating and maintaining this unique and valuable journal, I say on behalf of all your readers, 'Well done, and thank you'.'

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Also contributing an article in celebration of the *SJRCC*, Iain Mathieson of Massey University, New Zealand marks the anniversary by discussing '19 other residential child care developments over the last 20 years from across the world and in particular Europe, North American and Oceania', ascribing to the journal the accolade of being one of the sector's 'collective achievements and strengths'.

In the first of four long-form, double-blind peer-reviewed papers we publish in this issue, Dan Johnson and Lily Burnard of Kibble Education and Care Centre in Paisley, Scotland review the literature to identify themes for young people and residential care staff in relation to self-harm support and management, finding that positive relationships between staff and young people emerges as a predominant theme.

Lucy Abraham and colleagues of Cardiff University Centre for Human Development Science researched the views and experiences of people working in residential child care based on focus group interviews with 22 workers at five residential centres in England and Wales. They identified three core themes: a rewarding profession but one that is neither well understood nor valued by society; that many factors can be barriers to the residential workers being emotionally available to the children in their care, but other factors help promote resilience; and workers recognise that their confidence and skill impact their ability to successfully manage challenging behaviours.

Katy Ervine of the Institute of Integrated Systemic Therapy in London has investigated the understanding and management of self-harm in a children's residential therapeutic community in England. She found that 'the terms 'risk', 'intent' and 'level' can have different meanings to different individuals and may vary between children and contexts, even within the same context'. She concludes that, 'such fluidity in definition and terms can make self-harm a challenging subject to understand... compounded by the idea that self-harm is often seen as a taboo subject, uncomfortable to look at or discuss'.

Martin Power draws on data collected as part of Social Care Ireland's 'recruitment and retention in social care survey' to examine the professionalisation of children's residential care. His findings include that 'social

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care workers are optimistic and positive registration about the potential benefits registration may bring' such as protection of title and placing social care workers on a more equal footing with other health and social professions. 'On the other hand, registration will likely increase individual costs for social care workers, given registration fees, continue professional development requirements and the need for professional indemnity insurance'.

Earlier in the year we called for short papers related to theme of the 2022 SIRCC conference – 'Resilience and Recovery in Residential Child Care: Supported Adults and Supported Children', and had a very good response, so we can now publish six articles on this theme.

Charlotte Wilson who is undertaking doctoral studies in the University of Strathclyde describes a brief history of secure care in Scotland, based on a literature review conducted for her doctoral studies. She notes that the aim of secure care was described in 2004 as providing 'a safe, containing setting by restricting the liberty of children and young people' and finds that this view has not changed much, despite the many changes in the sector, expressing a concern about the lack of research on the specific needs of young people with autism being cared for in secure settings.

The paper by historian Amanda Gavin of the University of Glasgow takes a historic approach to inspection practices and children's experiences of residential care in Scotland in the period 1945 to 1980. She says that 'many voluntary children's homes were not effectively regulated, and the [government] Inspectorate had little influence over day-to-day caregiving practices and therefore on children's experiences of care', concluding that 'a focus on children's physical needs by the Inspectorate contributed to the catastrophic failure of many voluntary children's homes to meet the emotional needs of the children in their care'.

Kayoko Ito, a professor at Osaka Metropolitan University who has been conducting research at the University of Glasgow, contributes a paper which considers 'how to respond to child abuse after the COVID-19 pandemic by identifying the actual situation of child abuse consultations in Japan and how

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these consultations were handled' based on a survey of 39 local authorities in Japan. The paper identifies five issues such as the 'need to change and devise the nature of the child and family consultation and support system', including overcoming weak IT infrastructure in social work settings in Japan.

Mary Morris of the Care Inspectorate in Scotland explores the changing experiences of siblings in Scottish residential child care services. She notes that: 'The Promise [the report of the Independent Care Review in Scotland] outlines that children should as far as possible be supported to live with their families, but if that is not possible children must stay with their brothers and sisters when safe to do so'. Mary says that translating the spirit of the report and related legislation into practice will need 'huge commitment and energy from everyone working in the [residential child care] sector' and she highlights the important influence of care experienced children and young people and advocacy groups such as Stand Up for Siblings.

Frank Ainsworth of James Cook University, Queensland, Australia and Paul Mastronardi of the Dunlea Centre, Engadine, New South Wales, Australia consider the claim by the former Central Council in Education and Training for Social Work (CCETSW) in the UK that residential child care work is part of social work and conclude that it is not. Using Great Britain and Australia as their evidence base, they argue that viewing residential care as an aspect of social work has led to a reduction in services available for children with complex needs and 'held back research efforts to design and tested urgently needed new therapeutic residential care (TRC) models'.

We provide our usual tailpiece of book reviews – 'Marginalised Communities in Higher Education', edited by Neil Harrison and Graeme Atherton (reviewed by Eavan Brady of Trinity College Dublin), 'The Great Pretender' by Susan Cahalan (reviewed by Graham Connelly), and 'Behind Closed Doors: Why we break up families and how to mend them' by Polly Curtis (reviewed by care experienced activist, David Anderson) – while noting that we have recently received some very positive comments about the value of our book reviews. Our book review editor, Leanne McIver, is always on the lookout for books to review – newly

published and classics - and readers to review them. The offer is there: we'd love to hear from you.

### **About the author**

Dr Graham Connelly CPsychol is the editor of the *Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care* and an honorary senior research fellow with CELCIS and the School of Social Work and Social Policy in the University of Strathclyde. Graham's research interests have ranged over alternative care internationally and more particularly the education of care experienced children and adults. He is a non-executive director of Kibble Education and Care Centre and a trustee of the MCR Pathways school-based mentoring programme.