

## Editorial

### Graham Connelly

Welcome to the first issue of the SJRCC of 2016, a bumper collection of articles, varied by topic and geography. In this issue we are delighted to be publishing for the first time the text of the Care Leavers' Annual Lecture, sponsored by Who Cares? Scotland, as well as a related podcast interview with the speaker, Laura Beveridge.

In the December 2015 issue, we included a debate on the topic of the 'Named Person' scheme, which aims to provide every child under 18 in Scotland with a publicly appointed guardian. The scheme, already operational in some local authority areas, is due to come into force throughout Scotland on 31 August 2016. But at the time of writing (March 2016) the differences of opinion in the professional sphere articulated by Mike Burns and Maggie Mellon in our debate were also featuring in general media circles, particularly as a result of an appeal to the UK's Supreme Court brought by three individuals and the Christian Institute, Family Education Trust, The Young ME Sufferers ('Tymes') Trust and CARE (Christian Action Research & Education). The general tenor of the collective appeal by the ['No2NP'](#) alliance (which includes Ms Mellon) is that the Scheme constitutes unnecessary state interference with family life.

In an intervention in the case, [Clan Child Law](#) (Community Law Advice Network), a charity which provides free legal advice and representation to children and young people, argued that the Scheme breaches Article 8 of the European Convention on the Rights of the Child because the information sharing between professionals and agencies permitted by the Scheme would mean children could have no expectation of privacy or confidentiality. Clan's case differs from that of the No2NP alliance in that it is not based on worries about intrusion into family life, but on the change to the legal test for intervention introduced by lowering the threshold for sharing information from being 'at risk of significant harm' to concerns about wellbeing.

The five judges (two of whom are from the Scottish legal system) heard the submissions over a two-day session on 8-9 March 2016. They will give their decision at a later date. SJRCC readers who are interested in hearing the advocates' arguments as presented to the Court can do so by visiting the [Supreme Court website](#).

One of the groups in the appeal (the Christian Institute) commissioned a poll by [ComRes](#) whose researchers interviewed 2,030 'British' (i.e. excluding Northern Irish) adults online between 2nd and 3rd March 2016. The poll was covered widely in the UK press. Typical of the headlines was this from The

Scotsman: 'Majority of Scots against the "intrusive" Named Person proposals'. The raw data published by the pollster are more nuanced. Only one of the four statements presented to respondents refers to the Named Person, and it does not appear to be a neutral one: 'It is right for every child to be assigned a Named Person to monitor their wellbeing, whether their parent(s) wants one or not'. Here are some of the findings. Of a total of 2,030 responding to this question, 181 live in Scotland where the Scheme is being implemented. More than half of all respondents have no children but ComRes does not report how many of the 181 Scots are not parents. Of the 181, 91 (52%) disagree, 48 (27%) agree and 38 (21%) don't know. This Journal does not take a stance on the Named Person Scheme, and accepts that there are different views in public and professional spheres.

Meanwhile, in this issue we are publishing correspondence in response to the debate received by the Journal from two readers.

In the first of two full-length peer-reviewed articles we publish in this issue, Christopher Robinson and Alicia Brown consider the physical environment of residential children's homes which they say is a neglected area in understanding the aetiology of sensory processing in children affected by trauma. The authors say that the residential context is where children's 'established vulnerabilities give rise to behaviours and emotions that challenge carers and often compound earlier traumas' (p.9). Their research used an adaptation of the Environmental Checklist for Autism Spectrum Conditions to structure observations conducted in three children's homes. Their findings are presented alongside recommendations for modifying the living environment. The authors say, for example, that: 'the aim of surveying therapeutic children's homes from a sensory perspective is to help achieve an optimum background environment by removing those features that, whilst unplanned and often unnoticed, can nevertheless have a significant sensory impact' (p.16). They also make the important point that: 'the cost in terms of surveying and adapting environments to account for this can be slight or substantial, but should not be prohibitive' (p.16).

The second peer-reviewed article, by Robbie Huxtable, presents the findings of interviews with eight young people aged 12-14 which focused on their views of what it means to be successful at school. As the author points out, there have been deliberate efforts at the level of social policy to create the conditions for improving the experience of education and attainment of looked after children in Scotland, as in other countries in recent years. But what do young people themselves think would make a difference to their lives? The research found that young people understood success in three arenas – Learn, Achieve and Live – and that teachers were perceived as having a narrower view in respect of achievement. Interactions with teachers, opportunities for success, and high expectations were regarded by the young people as being critical to their learning and being successful.

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The SJRCC is delighted to have been given exclusive rights to re-publish the Care Leavers' Annual Lecture organised by the advocacy charity [Who Cares? Scotland](#). The 2015 lecture was given by Laura Beveridge at the University of Dundee during Care Leavers' Week on 30 October. Laura spoke movingly about her own care journey, and her escape to the inner world of enjoyment of Disney films. Looking back on her journey, Laura said: 'it was the little things that gave me strength. It was the teacher who gave me a lift to school in the morning or the teacher that kept me a sandwich for my lunch. It was my key-worker that gave me a hug when I needed it and my rights worker, Lorraine, who stood up for me and spoke up when I didn't have the strength to' (p.45). Laura later qualified as a social worker and worked in residential care – carrying her personal experiences into her work with children and their families – and is currently a development officer with Who Cares? Scotland, a role in which she proudly owns her care identity, 'because it's not something that should be hidden' (p.46).

The commentary, reflections and other articles' section includes five shorter articles. Iain Matheson, based in New Zealand, Graham Connelly, in Scotland, and Eavan Brady in Ireland describe the development of the LinkedIn 'Education of Children in Care Network'. Ruby Whitelaw and Dan Johnson of Kibble Education and Care Centre in Scotland explain the process and pitfalls of operating an ethics committee in a third sector (not-for-profit) child care agency. Katja della Liberia, Ramita Ratsathanuwati and Everdina Vermaat, students at UWC Robert Bosch College, Freiburg Germany (206 students from 88 countries), explain how many aspect of their daily lives are affected by the global refugee crisis. 'One thing we have all learnt – and were maybe surprised by – is that simply being present can go a long way' (p.69). Alison Gough of the Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice (CYCJ) at the University of Strathclyde outlines her work undertaking an independent review of secure care provision for children and young people in Scotland. Using a case study approach, Aileen Nicol of the Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland (CELCIS) reflects on the transitional journey of a child, unable to live with his biological parents, from living in a residential children's unit to living with a permanent foster carer.

As a consequence of the SJRCC's developing relationship with the editors of the India-based journal, Institutionalised Children: Explorations and Beyond, we are pleased to have been given permission to re-publish a full-length paper by Kiran Modi, Monisha Nayar-Akhtar, Sumedha Ariely and Deepak Gupta on addressing the challenges of transition from a children's home to independence. The authors say that India is 'falling far short of meeting international standards and best practices' (p.98). They describe the LIFE (Living in Family Environment) model that attempts to create familial relationships, consistent living circumstances, and social/educational support systems to help children move from the residential setting to independent living.

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Continuing our series of reflections on doctoral studies, Nazirah Hassan, a PhD student in the School of Social Work and Social Policy at the University of Strathclyde, writes about some of the challenges she experienced in carrying out research about bullying and victimisation. Nazirah's primary aim in writing is to share practical challenges raised during the fieldwork and explain how she addressed them.

Introducing the debate on the 'Named Person' in Issue 3 of Volume 14, we invited readers to engage with the related content. In this issue we include two contributions received: one from Hazel Whitters, a senior practitioner in a Glasgow voluntary organisation, who detected similarities in the views of the debaters, and urged 'policy makers, professionals, parents, and the public to remember our shared goals and our passion' (p.116); and one from Tracey Jarvis, a residential child care worker who is not convinced that the scheme is workable since the 'named person' is to be an appointed health visitor or promoted teacher rather than someone 'actively involved in the young person's life' (p.117).

Finally, we include three reviews. Michael Scanlin of Aberlour Sycamore reviews Paul Adams' (BAAF, 2015) book, *Dogs and Pets in Fostering and Adoption* which, he says: 'not only provides a balanced view of the benefits and risks involved in pet ownership, but, perhaps allows us to see that with careful consideration we can bring these benefits to the children in our care' (p.119). Fiona Buggy of CELCIS reviews research (KSO Research, 2015) on the operation of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library for looked after children in Scotland, observing that: 'For me, the single most powerful section of the report was "Perceived Impacts", which included details of a letter from a kinship carer "expressing how fantastic the books were and that they would not have been able to afford to purchase them otherwise"'. Buggy continues: 'I would have loved to have seen the voices of children, parents and carers included more explicitly throughout the report' (p.122). Jonathan Stanley reviews Whittaker, del Valle and Holmes' edited collection, *Therapeutic Residential Care for Children and Youth: Developing Evidence-Based International Practice*, noting that the book: 'is a good place to start if any provider were looking for examples of evidence based practice' (p.125).

As we publish this issue of the SJRCC online, we are also issuing a call for proposals for a special issue on the history of residential child care and related topics, for publication in December 2017, to coincide with a conference to be held at the University of Strathclyde in collaboration with the [Child Care History Network](#). We hope the special issue and the conference will attract interest from potential authors from the field of residential child care and also from historians with an interest in the history of child welfare.

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Joint Editor

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