

Editorial

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Welcome to the spring 2022 issue of the *Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care* (SJRCC). This year marks the journal's 20th anniversary. The journal was first published, in hard copy, in autumn 2002 under the leadership of editor emeritus, Professor Andy Kendrick, who has contributed an article to the current issue. We have exciting plans to mark this important milestone in and around the autumn issue.

COVID-19 continues its grip on our daily lives in varying ways. The WHO¹ reports more than six million people worldwide have died and that number is likely to be an underestimate. UNICEF estimates that 0.4% of these deaths have been children and adolescents, but children are affected in other serious ways, particularly in low and middle-income countries, with UNICEF noting: 'concern that the indirect effects of the pandemic on mortality in these age groups stemming from strained health systems, household income loss, and disruptions to care-seeking and preventative interventions like vaccination may be more substantial'.²

Children's rights under the UNCRC face substantial challenge, because of armed conflict, family displacement, and denial of access to education – as is currently the reality for young women in Afghanistan. The terrifying nature of modern warfare, and potentially crimes against humanity, genocide, and aggression, play out on our television screens and social media in reports from Ukraine. One month after the start of the war, around 4.3 million children, about half of

¹ <https://covid19.who.int>

² <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-survival/covid-19/>

Ukraine's child population, had been displaced, within the country, or across international borders. UNICEF's executive director, Catherine Russell, said: 'The war has caused one of the fastest largescale displacements of children since World War II'.³ CELCIS has a commitment to support those working with migrant and displaced children, and in response to the present crisis has published a new resource, 'Supporting Child Refugees and their Families'.⁴

Recent months have been a particularly active time for child and youth policy in Scotland. For the benefit of readers outside Scotland, I make brief reference to some significant development and discussion taking place here. The Scottish Government's 'Programme for Government 2021-22' is committed to bringing forward legislation on a National Care Service, with a draft Bill expected by June 2022. Originating in the response to the review of adult social care carried out by Derek Feeley which reported in February 2021, it was a surprise to many that the proposals included incorporating services for children and young people, community justice, alcohol and drug services, and social work. As an aid to parliamentarians and other interested parties considering the implications of reorganisation, Lynne Currie of the Scottish Parliament's Information Centre (SPiCE) has prepared a very comprehensive introduction to the care system for children and young people in Scotland.⁵ Concerns raised in the consultation on the proposals include the potential loss of voice of people accessing services, and their carers, and the loss of local accountability in a centralised national service.

On 30 March, the Scottish Government published a 'Care and Justice Bill consultation'⁶ which covers potential legislative reforms with a 'particular focus

³ <https://www.unicef.org.uk/press-releases/more-than-half-of-ukraines-children-displaced-after-one-month-of-war-unicef/>

⁴ <https://celcis.org/knowledge-bank/protecting-children/supporting-child-refugees-and-their-families>

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<https://digitalpublications.parliament.scot/ResearchBriefings/Report/2022/1/20/d4917102-57bd-4f9a-af79-c8165e8e75ca-1#d7911d6e-92d4-496c-a419-ccf24e307a0a.dita>

⁶ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/childrens-care-justice-bill-consultation-policy-proposals/>

on children coming into contact with care and justice services or who come into conflict with the law'. One of the consultation questions relates to the use of restraint of children in care settings, and questions whether guidance and the law should be made clearer around this matter. The Scottish Government is also reviewing the use of restraint and restrictive practice within education settings, with guidance expected to be released for consultation later in 2022. Ending the use of restraint is a pillar of 'The Promise,' the prospectus for change arising from the review of children's care in Scotland, with its authors saying that 'Scotland must become a country that does not restrain its children'.

Also on 30 March, the Scottish Government published a 'Keeping the Promise Implementation Plan', which includes a commitment to end the placement of 16 and 17-year-olds in Young Offenders Institutions (i.e., youth prisons) 'without delay'. Ministers said: 'We will fund care based alternatives to custody and consult on new legislation in Spring 2022. This will provide the support children need in very difficult circumstances, shifting the approach from one of punishment to one of love and support'. Concern about the use of inappropriate prison accommodation for children involved in the justice system was the theme of the 2022 Kilbrandon Lecture given by Dr Claire Lightowler, the transcript of which we publish in this issue.

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The first of five full-length, peer-reviewed articles in this issue, is an account of original research by Catherine Nixon and Gillian Henderson which examined how being cared for in residential care before the age of 12 affects children's health and emotional wellbeing. Using administrative data held by the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration, the research was based on the case files of 135 children subject to compulsory measures of supervision. The authors conclude that: 'being cared for in residential care was associated with a reduction in the number of behavioural difficulties displayed by children, and an improvement in their mental wellbeing'.

Amanda Ferguson's paper reports on interviews with six child and youth care workers with the aim of understanding better the demands and challenges of their role. She found, for example, that workers place value on the relationships they develop with young people and recognise that their own personal strengths help them to maintain relationships with young people.

Martin Power and David Power's paper aims to explain the drivers and challenges voluntary residential providers in Ireland face. The authors consider whether there is a future for voluntary residential children's providers in Ireland. They conclude that residential providers 'face the greatest threat to their long existence as a cornerstone of children's residential provision in a context of the expansion of private providers and marketisation of services', noting 'the irony that market mechanisms are often valued for notions of providing choice seems hard to reconcile with reducing the diversity of provider types in children's residential care'.

Dawn Simpson's research used semi-structured interviews to ask three mothers about their experience of having their children go into care in Scotland under a provision of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 known colloquially as 'Section 25', a term taken from the section of the statute which outlines the legal terms for 'voluntary' admission to care. Dawn found 'a disparity between the language of the legislation, guidance, practice, and parents' experiences'. All three parents 'expressed a wish to have a partnership approach with social workers', but only one had 'professional support to advocate for her and inform her of her rights' and had 'a clear narrative about what happened and reported the best working relationship with her social workers'.

Kiran Modi and Gurneet Kaira's research paper considers aftercare provision in India. The paper is based on a mixed methods study conducted in 2018 of 435 young people aged over 18 who had left care institutions in five states in India and 100 child protection key informants. Identifying unmet needs for support, particularly in respect of emotional wellbeing and mental health care, the authors propose the introduction of an Individual Aftercare Plan, 'in order to ascertain their unique needs and thereby determine the nature of aftercare services that shall be required keeping in mind the voices of the care leavers'.

Danielle Day, Sara Elgie and Christopher Robinson examined 12 assessment tools often used in conducting assessments of children in care, finding that most are deficit based and only four are strength-based. They say that: 'It is important that the tools used to assess looked after children are sensitive to the adversity and trauma they have experienced prior to moving into care' and concluded that: 'Of the measures highlighted, the ACA [Assessment Checklist for Adolescents] is the only measure that originates from the looked after children population'.

We include three short-form articles in this issue. Andrew Kendrick has contributed a paper on the historical origins of residential care services for children and young people in Scotland, from the establishment of Heriot's Hospital in Edinburgh in 1659 to the orphanages and industrial schools of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Reflecting on the relevance for today's services, he says: 'The intrinsic tension between care and control continues to confound residential work with children and young people, and create barriers to their empowerment and their voice being heard'.

Bethany Jay writes about a diary study used to explore residential child care practitioners' emotion management that was part of her PhD research. 'Diary methods', she says, 'can reveal rich data on sensitive and important matters like practitioners' emotions in residential children's homes'. They 'also raise ethical challenges for the researcher to manage'.

Kenny McGhee and Sarah Deeley explore concepts of emerging adulthood and what these might mean for people who care for young people. Acknowledging the informed and creative thinking surrounding the review of children's services resulting in *The Promise*, they argue that: 'if Scotland wants to be truly transformational in its practice and approach, consideration must also be given to an applied understanding of emerging adulthood as both a psychological and sociological concept'.

This issue also includes the transcript of the 19th Kilbrandon Child Care Lecture, hosted by the University of Strathclyde, and provided by webinar. The lecture, 'A Rights-respecting Approach for Children who Offend', was given by Dr Claire

Lightowler, former director of the Children and Young People's Centre for Justice (CYCJ), and the text published here includes responses by Professor Ursula Kelly of University College Cork and Ruth Kerracher of the Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum (STAF), and a vote of thanks given by the Minister for Children and Young People, Claire Haughey MSP. A recording of the lecture can be found on the 'Kilbrandon Lectures' archive.⁷

We end a very full issue by including two book reviews. Dan Johnson reviews 'The Criminalisation and Exploitation of Children in Care: Multi-agency Perspectives' by Julie Shaw and Sarah Greenhow, and Emma Young reviews 'The Children of Looked After Children: Outcomes, Experiences and Ensuring Meaningful Support to Young Parents in and Leaving Care' by Louise Roberts.

The *SJRCC* will return in November with another very full issue to mark our 20th year; in the meantime, enjoy the current issue and watch out for our occasional 'From the Archive' series of previously published articles selected to coincide with events, special days, and contemporary issues.

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.

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<https://www.strath.ac.uk/humanities/schoolofsocialworksocialpolicy/thekilbrandonlectures/>