

# Editorial

## **Joanne McMeeking**

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I'm delighted to have been asked to write this editorial. This is a special issue of the Journal, published to coincide with and signify the importance of our annual Scottish Institute of Residential Child Care (SIRCC) conference. The conference is now in its 19th year and is a central part of the residential child care calendar in Scotland and internationally.

It's been an absolute honour to chair the SIRCC committee and conference over the last six years. I work with such wonderful people who talk and practice all things residential child care every day. It's a conference that places significant emphasis on grass roots practice, latest evidence, international contexts, and, most importantly, supportively challenges us all to keep pushing for the absolute best for children and young people living in residential care. It's about the stories, the work, and the learning of the people who are at the heart of this.

We go into this year's SIRCC conference with a strong theme and programme centred on the developmental approach for enabling children to reach their full potential, which is so important for current thinking about how best to support children and young people. And that's why I've enjoyed reading the range of peer-reviewed articles, commentaries and book reviews that are included in this special issue. Each article chimes with the theme of the conference, and demonstrates a strong children's rights approach. I'd urge you to read each

article as the quality and breadth is impressive and adds to our consideration of this essential theme.

We open with an article from Terje Halvorsen, in which he grounds us in the need to approach professional theories in residential care in a more usable way. This resonates with the principles of the SIRCC conference and our continued work in this area. David Woodier's article explores the place of a relational approach in education and the need for reflective space to nurture inclusive learning. Abuja Bansal's article, and the paper by Kieran Modi, Emaya Anbalagan, Radhika Shroff, and Nidhi Singhal, both refer to the numbers of children across the globe who are living without families, presenting a very stark picture. The numbers are worryingly high and these articles challenge us to ensure that children, no matter their care circumstances, are given the best possible opportunities to thrive and be happy. The reflective writing of Jim Gillespie, CEO of Kibble Care and Education Centre, returns us Scotland, offering a fascinating journey through the history and developments of a care setting that has been leading many of the changes in group living.

I could go on and on, but as readers of the journal know, it's all so good! So please read on and delve into articles on education, leaving care, peer relationships, ACEs, love, human rights and young people's participation. At this point it seems fitting to say, in the sage words of advice from a care experienced young person recently, 'participation is not an option, it's a necessity'.

I'd like to take the opportunity here to say a special thanks to our valued sector partners, who've contributed over the years to the Journal and to the SIRCC conference. The contribution of our committee members who give up their time

to plan and contribute to the conference, and most importantly, our practitioners and young people who bring all this work alive, is so greatly appreciated.

My thanks too to Dr Graham Connelly for allowing me to step into his shoes for this editorial. His leadership, passion and tenacity has taken the journal from strength to strength and his ability to get it consistently over the finish line is an absolute credit to his faith in the work – not least for this very issue!

### **About the author**

Joanne McMeeking is a qualified children and families' social worker with 25 years' experience in a wide range of local authority, voluntary and policy roles. Joanne heads up the Improving Care Experiences team at CELCIS which has a particular focus on core practice, assessment, planning and review for our looked after children.