

Editorial

Dr Graham Connelly

g.connelly@strath.ac.uk

Welcome to the September 2017 (Vol 16, No 2) issue of the *Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care (SJRCC)*. In the last issue, we reported that our publisher, CELCIS (Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland), would be launching a MOOC (Massive Open Online Course), 'Getting Care Right for All Children: Implementing the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children.' This free course ran for six weeks in May with more than 5,000 people taking part, including this Editor. The course was truly global in nature: as you can see from this [interactive map](#) people from 172 of all 195 countries in the world took part. And together they posted 15,290 comments, and viewed the course's 47 videos 34,845 times! The course will be repeated, so if you were unable to take part this time, you can register your interest by [signing up to hear about CELCIS training and events](#).

An important contributor to the MOOC is Nigel Cantwell, a major world figure in championing the human rights of children. Nigel had a crucial role in the development of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and led the international consultation and subsequent drafting of the text of the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, which were unanimously welcomed at the UN General Assembly in 2009. Nigel was recognised for this work and for many other significant contributions to children's wellbeing internationally at a graduation ceremony in the University of Strathclyde when he received a Doctor of the University degree *honoris causa*. In his acceptance speech, Nigel addressed new graduates in social work, psychology and related disciplines, giving customary advice to students about to make their way in the world. In this quote from his address, he spoke about the influence of 'words'.

'We always say that actions speak louder than words. But words shape actions. Words influence what is done. Words influence what you do. Words have an enormous impact on the things that we decide to do, the things we carry out, the things we implement, and the way we go about them. Let me give you just two very quick examples, 'children's rights'. Just the term "children's rights". In the 1970s children's rights were characterised by a conflictual attitude. It was children's rights against adult rights. It was particularly children's rights against those of persons in authority - parents, teachers, the forces of law and order, that kind of situation. And it was very much making claims for greater independence, a term that remained very vague at the time. But it was conflictual. And we know that human rights

are not conflictual in that sense. They don't pit one group of persons against another group of persons. They don't pit children against refugees, or children against persons with disabilities, or children against women. They are a body of international law wherein obligations are recognised towards all human beings, including children. And that is why I so often refer more to the human rights of children than I do to children's rights. Because I think that that is vital in shaping the kind of optic that we take when we are working on children's issues and, in particular, on the promotion and protection of their rights, which, of course, covers essentially all children's issues. So that's why I think words are important in that sense.'

Laura Beveridge ([see Vol. 15, Issue 1](#)) also spoke powerfully about the importance of words in the care-giving relationship in her Ted Talk, '[Kids in Care: Let's Start a Revolution](#)' in Glasgow in 2016. Laura, speaking from personal experience of the care system, described the conflict for carers in everyday situations such as comforting a distressed child, considering their reactions as sensitive humans or as 'workers,' employees mindful of professional boundaries. Laura's particular message is that carers need to feel free to express love for the children in their care because this is a basic human need. This is an obvious topic for further discussion and we would be pleased to receive short contributions (of up to 2,000 words) for potential publication in future issues of the *SJRCC*.

We intend to include a fuller account of Dr Cantwell's views on the establishment of orphanages for commercial gain in the April 2018 issue, but for now you can watch a film of the honorary degree presentation by Professor Jennifer Davidson and Dr Cantwell's acceptance speech, available on [YouTube](#).

Another development of interest to our international readers is the recent launch of the [Institute of Inspiring Children's Futures, bringing together](#) CELCIS, CYCJ (Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice) and academics and staff across the University of Strathclyde and beyond. The Institute aims to have an international reach to support children and young people in achieving their potential in life. Led by Professor Jennifer Davidson and with Professor Andy Kendrick as research leader, the initial themes are: stigma and childhood; economic and financial challenges in addressing children in adversity; improving young people's educational outcomes; technology and children; and international activities.

Turning to the present issue, I am pleased to introduce a collection of four peer-reviewed research articles, three shorter commentaries, a paper previously published in the India-based journal, *Institutionalised Children: Explorations and Beyond*, and two book reviews.

The first paper by Denise Carroll and colleagues presents research on health assessments of young males in a residential care centre in Scotland. The researchers found that the health of these young men reduced significantly after 24 weeks of being in the care of the centre: while 61% of the young people had a healthy body mass index (BMI) on admission, compared with the Scottish average of 72%, this reduced to 50% within 24 weeks. Most of the young people had worries about their body development, had missed sexual health education or said they needed STI screening.

Phillip Mendes and Jade Purtell report on an evaluation of housing outcomes in young people transitioning from out of home care in Victoria, Australia. They found that the Stand By Me (SBM) programme, which involves a long engagement period prior to exiting care that allows workers to develop rapport with young people, 'seems to have been effective in facilitating positive outcomes for most of the SBM cohort in housing and other key areas such as health, education and family relationships.'

Jenna Bollinger and colleagues consider placement stability in out of home care in Australia, concluding that both in policy and in the literature there is 'insufficient evidence that placement stability has been effectively defined for residential care.'

Kenny McGhee's paper presents findings from a qualitative study of residential child care practitioners' views about implementing new 'staying put' and 'continuing care' entitlements in Scotland. He concludes that there is a vacuum as a result of 'the lack of a co-ordinated implementation plan, adequate resources, clear guidance and effective monitoring and accountability [which] allows local authorities to interpret and apply policy and legislation in a way which leads to a continued variation and inconsistency in local provision.'

In the first of three shorter articles, Kristina Moodie and Debbie Nolan discuss the complexity of responding to incidents of offending behaviour in residential provision in Scotland, finding that 'there were multiple, often irreconcilable, factors influencing decision-making. Fouzy Mathey Kikadidi addresses stigma in childhood from a very personal perspective by reflecting on her own experiencing of sexual abuse as a young child, the reactions of those around her at the time, and her later decision to take action and fight for human rights. Anuja Bansal discusses the concept of family-based support work provided from residential group centres by SOS Children's Villages India.

At SJRCC we value our developing relationship with the journal *Institutionalised Children: Explorations and Beyond*, which is supported by the charity Udayan Care and published by Indian Journals. With their permission, we re-publish a paper by Hiranthi Wijemanne on child rights for children in alternative care.

Finally, as usual, we conclude the issue with book reviews. Linda O'Neill has reviewed *Inspiring and Creative Ideas for Working with Children: How to Build Relationships and Enable Change* by Deborah M. Plummer and Jimmy Paul has reviewed *Doing Relationship-Based Social Work: A Practical Guide to Building Relationships and Enabling Change* by Mary McColgan and Cheryl McMullin.

Happy reading! We will return in December with a special issue on the theme of history, guest-edited by historian, Dr Alan Macquarrie.

Graham Connelly

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/)