

Editorial

Welcome to this last issue for 2015 of the *Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care*. If you are reading these words, then you will have likely noticed our new look. CELCIS (the Centre for Looked After Children in Scotland) recently launched a new and improved website, and with it, our new microsite. The changes we've made should improve ease of navigation around the Journal. We also plan to link into the CELCIS blog from time to time between journal issues to connect current events with content from the journal, and to stay connected, though the process of migrating all of the back issues is not yet complete. Many thanks to Kathleen Doyle, Anne Macleod, Janelle MacMillan and Graham Connelly for their ongoing hard work to make sure we have a website fit for purpose and populated with a legacy of rich contributions from these last 12 years.

We have another informative and thought-provoking set of articles, thought pieces and reviews for this issue, and in reading them I was struck by a recurring theme of roles and role clarity. This prompted me to think about the role of the Journal, and of professional writing more generally. For much of our history in residential child care, those who provided direct care learned their craft through watching more experienced practitioners and through *doing* care. Information was more often passed along orally and knowledge was acquired experientially. While I would still argue that experience is the central component in coming to really know anything, the importance of written knowledge for those providing direct care has gained increasing acceptance over the last 15 years or so. This shift has occurred in direct relation to the recognition of the complex and demanding nature of residential child care work - something the majority of front-line practitioners understood well before policy makers and the wider public.

While many have welcomed the increasing expectation that workers develop, maintain and continually build upon their formal knowledge, others have seen it as a threat. The most recent [announcement by the Scottish Government](#) of the forthcoming degree-level, minimum qualification for registration of workers, supervisors and managers in residential child care will surely be one example. In information sessions held by Scotland's relevant regulatory body, the [SSSC](#), some attendees expressed concern about the very high demand of a degree-level qualification and the insurmountable challenge this will pose for some workers - workers who are very good with children and young people. I have made the argument [elsewhere](#) that being good with kids is absolutely necessary but not sufficient for this work and so I'll not revisit it here. What I will say is that the role of writing is a central, though rarely articulated, concern in all of this. While there are many reasons for this concern, I'll only discuss two here.

One relates to the relevance of writing, and the other to the types of knowledge that get committed to writing; the *Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care* has a role to play in regards to both. By showcasing research, scholarship, commentary, debate and reflection all focused squarely on residential child care, we offer an open-access resource of relevant content. For writing to be relevant it must be accessible, not just in terms of access but also in terms of its use of language. I wouldn't argue that every article we

publish will be deemed relevant to every potential reader in our sector (or those interested in our sector), but I would say that the range of articles and our commitment to supporting and extending that range increases the likelihood that there is something here for everyone. Some might say we dilute our impact by aiming for both academic and practitioner audiences, but my counterpoint is there is (and should be) no clear line separating them. Moreover, in holding together in one place pieces by practitioners, scholars, managers, policy makers, students and researchers, we hope all readers' interest might get piqued by something they would not otherwise have come across.

Perhaps one of writers' most important roles, then, is bridging the gap between abstract concepts or untethered information and the readers' own knowledge and experience in order to make written content relevant and accessible. As importantly, and related to my second point, writers can encourage others to write and nurture their efforts to do so. This is essential if we are to honour and benefit from many different types of knowledge. The synergies afforded by such diversity, one that includes the voices of those in direct practice (both carers and recipients of care), is imperative for a formal knowledge-base to be relevant and actually inform practice. Alcott's (1991) seminal work raises important questions about whether any of us can actually give voice to others' experience, and while I think that some forms of research should continue to carefully try, we must also support the development of writing in those who would not otherwise find their voices and provide places where they will be read. Towards this end, I would like to remind readers of our mentoring scheme and ask that you spread the word and/or get involved yourselves. Encourage practitioners, care leavers and students to consider writing for the Journal and let them know that we can provide someone to support them. Conversely, if you are willing to guide and encourage another through the process of committing ideas, experiences and reflections to writing, please get in touch.

We start this issue with an article by Mark Smith about a six-country project to explore and enhance inter-professional working between mental health professionals and those providing direct care in residential child care (in some places, social pedagogues, in others, social workers, and here in Scotland, residential child care workers). The research found, across all participating countries, significant differences in status, expectations and ways of knowing between the two groups. The positivist tradition behind diagnosis and drug treatments, on the one hand, is different than the 'messier form of knowledge' that informs (for example) responding to challenging behaviour. Smith argues that the everyday nature of what residential practitioners do masks the sophistication and complexity with which they do it and suggests they need more confidence in their role in order for dialogue with mental health professionals to be effective.

Our next article is also about the residential child care worker's role, but this time zeros in on the 'complex duality' of the personal and the professional. Nadine Fowler reports on the findings of her study that explored whether workers considered their role a 'parenting' one, and found that while their views varied, all agreed that their roles were complex and difficult to define. Fowler identifies a central, related tension in holding together what, in many other parts of society, is clearly demarcated into separate realms of public and private life. She argues that further study is needed to understand how staff navigate the rocky territory of being 'professional' while also providing a family-like

environment, with all of the attendant feelings and dynamics that go with parent-like relationships. Fowler's article, however, is an excellent start.

A transcript of the 13th Kilbrandon Lecture, delivered by Alexis Jay, is our next piece. Alexis Jay led the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham, South Yorkshire, and for those readers not familiar with the details of scandal, approximately 1,400 children were sexually exploited in Rotherham between 1997 and 2013. Jay's lecture is a compelling account of the leadership failures that allowed this to take place, along with some examples of courageous leadership in the face of toxic and dangerous cultures. What is particularly refreshing about this lecture is that culpability is squarely set upon the shoulders of those in power rather than, as has been the case in other inquiries, on some vague reference to residential care cultures. Indeed, the story that emerges is that some workers tried in vain to protect their young charges, only to be ignored or worse.

Next, Simon Duffy offers up an informative piece about Self-Directed Support and its implications for our sector. After providing some useful background information about its historic roots, he begins to unpick what Self-Directed Support means generally and how it might enhance practice in our sector. Many may feel this area of social policy irrelevant to their practice, but Duffy's article will challenge this assumption.

In our next article, Moyra Hawthorne charts the journey of a human rights approach to addressing historic abuse in residential child care. Like Duffy, Hawthorne provides useful background information about the emerging awareness of historic abuse here in Scotland and tells us about the InterAction, 'a forum for independent mediation and resolution ... within a human rights framework' that has taken place in Scotland.

Next, Iain Macauley provides an informative overview of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 with a focus on its relevance to residential child care. Macauley covers key areas of corporate parenting, aftercare, continuing care, the Named Person and the Child's Plan, and wellbeing - all the while making clear links to policy and practice. His section on the Named Person and the Child's Plan will be of particular interest to those of you unfamiliar with this part of the legislation, as it relates to our next set of pieces.

In the lead up to the Scottish Referendum, [we included debate](#) on the case for and against Scotland becoming an independent nation, in the particular context of services for children. This stimulated interest within and beyond our Scottish borders and Charles Sharpe of [Goodenoughcaring.com](#) was kind enough to link the debate with the forum function of his website so that people could discuss the issues further. In this issue, we present two opposing views about the Named Person scheme. In making the case for the Named Person, Mike Burns provides an added avenue for children and families to access assistance, and access it earlier. Arguing against the Named Person, Maggie Mellon counters that this scheme is an ill-informed, net-widening exercise that will not make children safer but may well violate families' privacy. We hope our readers will engage with this debate, whether located in Scotland or elsewhere. We very much want to hear your views, particularly as they relate to residential child care. Please email your

comments to sjrcc@strath.ac.uk , with Named Person in the subject line. We will publish a summary of comments received on the SJRCC website.

We have recently developed a collaborative relationship with Kiran Modi and Monisha Nayar-Akhtar of *Institutionalised Children: Explorations and Beyond*, a journal whose focus is also on care of vulnerable children, but in the South Asian Region. In order to extend the reach of information in our respective journals, and based on our mutual interest in practice around the world, we have agreed to republish articles we think relevant to our respective readerships. In this issue, we have republished an article by Aarti Thakkar, Daisy Mepukori, Kathryn Henshel and Tra Tran that explores attachment patterns amongst orphans in New Delhi. In it, the authors challenge the Euro-American, overriding emphasis on the nuclear family and the dyadic caregiver-infant relationship in many formulations of attachment theory. Their identification of the importance of peer attachments is reminiscent of Emond's work (see [Emond, 2002](#), [2010](#)), and the questions they raise about the impact of such attachments on current development and later functioning are highly relevant to us here in Scotland and beyond.

Our last article is part of an ongoing series of reflections on doctoral studies. These are often short pieces that, as Graham Connelly indicated in a previous editorial, encourage discussion and debate and allow a candidate to showcase his or her work. In this issue, Chrissie Gale tells us about her comparative investigation of deinstitutionalisation in Bulgaria and Ukraine. Gale's piece reflects not only her passion for the subject, but her comprehensive command of the research design.

Two book reviews round off this issue of the Journal. Mark Smith tells us about an ethnographic study of a secure facility for 75 young people in *Compassionate Confinement: A Year in the Life of Unit C*, and Carole Dearie gives a somewhat personal account of her reading of *Sisters of Pain: An Ethnography of Young Women Living in Secure Care*.

Finally as we head towards the end of our second three-issue year, we would like to thank our writers, mentors, peer-reviewers, editorial board, and those who have provided administrative and technological support. We are heartened by the growth of our role in serving the sector and are grateful to you in helping us achieve this.

As ever, if you would like to get in touch about mentoring, the debate, or anything else to do with the journal, please contact us via sjrcc@strath.ac.uk

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