

## Guest Editorial

### Welcome to the Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care

In the period since I took up my post at SIRCC in October 2005, I have been involved in a range of projects which have been inspirational although perhaps none more so than the development of a manifesto for children and young people in care. This manifesto, which is called *No Time to Lose* (Elsley, 2006), is the first in the UK which has been developed specifically to consider children and young people looked after away from home.

Throughout my experience working in this sector, I have encountered extraordinary commitment and drive from those involved in providing services and support for children and young people in residential care. There is a genuine desire to improve outcomes for children and young people, although at times it can appear that there is insufficient coherence in our approach. *No Time to Lose* represents a call for change which has achieved an unprecedented breadth of consensus across the sector. The manifesto not only highlights the challenges that confront service providers, children and their families, but also recommends action that can be taken to make a real difference to children's lives.

Since the launch of *No Time to Lose* in September 2006, changes are evident already. The report *Looked After Children and Young People: We Can and Must Do Better* (Scottish Executive, 2007) accepted several recommendations put forward in the manifesto, and outlines key actions to improve the education and broader outcomes of children and young people in residential care. This should be celebrated.

*No Time to Lose* was developed by six Scottish organisations with expertise in looked-after children and young people. These organisations are Aberlour Child Care Trust, British Association for Adoption and Fostering, the Fostering Network, the Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum, Who Cares? Scotland, and SIRCC. The steering group continues to meet regularly and are committed to taking forward the actions recommended in the manifesto. During the development of the manifesto, I was struck by the desire to end to the mismatch between policies and the actual experience of children. All of those who expressed views wanted high quality services to be provided which are wrapped around the needs of individual children, not just the nearest empty bed when there is an emergency. It was recognised that there are many complex issues which are impossible for individual organisations to resolve in isolation. Of the many actions recommended in *No Time to Lose*, one of the most difficult to achieve is potentially the most significant in terms of impact across the sector. This is the development of a National Strategy for children and young people who are looked after away from home. Such a National Strategy would provide leadership and vision for all services in Scotland. It would also provide an opportunity to end the mismatch between policy and reality. As the title says, there is indeed 'no time to lose' as we must continue in our drive to improve the experiences, lives and outcomes of children and young people who find themselves in residential care.

There is an opportunity for any individual to demonstrate their commitment and support to improving the outcomes for children and young people in residential care

through *No Time to Lose*. This is a personal invitation to add your name to the growing list of those who support the manifesto.

You can access this opportunity on SIRCC's website :

<http://www.sircc.strath.ac.uk/manifesto/index.html>

Elsley, S. (2006). *No time to lose: a manifesto for children and young people looked after away from home*. Glasgow: SIRCC.

Scottish Executive, (2007). *Looked after children and young people: we can and must do better*. Edinburgh: The Stationery Office.

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