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## Editorial

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Editor

### Welcome to the autumn 2023 issue of the Scottish Journal of Residential Care.

Regular readers will notice a different appearance to articles: we have adapted the template a little so that key indexing information stands out better in a sidebar on the front page of each article, and articles have been individually categorised as original research articles, short articles, book reviews etc. We continue to be mindful of our responsibilities to make articles accessible to all readers; *SJRCC* articles are not behind a paywall, thanks to our publisher, CELCIS, and the text of articles is presented in a single column using an easily readable font. We hope readers approve of these changes and of course, the editorial team welcomes feedback.

The conflicts in Ukraine and Sudan continue to seriously damage the lives of children as a result of family dislocation and interrupted schooling, and an earthquake in western Nepal has destroyed houses, schools, and health centres. Many thousands of children have been killed or maimed since October 7 in the conflict affecting Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank. The spokespersons for the various actors involved in conflicts present their cases to the world's media, and journalists risk their lives to report from the heart of war zones, with the effect that we watch on our TV screens helplessly the plight of the injured, the homeless, and the grieving. I was immensely moved by an interview conducted by journalist Matt Frei<sup>1</sup> with Rachel Goldberg, mother of Hersh Goldberg-Polin, who is understood to be among the hostages taken by Hamas fighters. Goldberg said: 'If you only get outraged when one side's innocent children are slaughtered, then something is broken in you'.

The aim of this journal is to provide a service to those who work directly with children and youth who have experienced trauma, in whatever context that occurs, and particularly those who become looked after in alternative care as a result of conflicts. The power of research and the exchange of ideas about practice in child and youth care represent a glimmer of hope in a generally unsettling world.

It remains important to keep an eye on what is happening in Scotland. CELCIS has published a major report on the views of the children's services workforce in Scotland on how services for children are managed, commissioned, and delivered (McTier et al., 2023). The report, based on an online survey, focus

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<sup>1</sup> Channel 4 News broadcast in the UK on 1 November 2023



groups and interviews, represents the fourth strand of broader research requested by the Scottish Government in the context of its proposal to include children's services within a National Care Service. The report highlights a workforce that is exhausted following the COVID-19 pandemic, a cluttered legislative, policy and funding landscape, and serious gaps in provision, particularly in relation to early intervention, specialist health services and help for children with additional support needs. There were also more positive findings, including evidence of a passionate, committed workforce focused on wanting improvements that benefit children and young people.

In the last issue, I noted the publication of Volume 1 of a report of the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry's findings on the child migration scheme, a government-sponsored programme in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries by which children in care in the UK were migrated to Canada and Australia, mostly without their or their families' consent. The second volume of this major report was published in September (2023). While the first volume presented the testimony of former migrants, Volume 2 is concerned with the history of child migration, its legal basis, and the responses of various organisations involved in migration and still operating to questions put by Lady Smith's inquiry team about these organisations' involvement in child migration. The long litany of abuse listed in the report makes shocking reading. What is more shocking is that the poor standards of care and the physical and sexual abuse of children boarded out, typically in rural farms, was reported during the life of the scheme – notably by Andrew Doyle in Canada in 1875 (see Bagnell, 2001) – but dismissed or ignored. Lady Smith notes: '...despite persistent governmental knowledge of the dangers of the practice and despite development of improved standards of childcare practice in the UK, child migration was actively pursued as a policy, and was only formally ended [in the 1970s] long after the last child migrant had left Britain's shores' (p. 8).

During the annual 'Care Experienced Week' in October 2023, advocacy charity, Who Cares? Scotland published a report calling for lifelong rights for care experienced people. The report says that a high proportion of young people leave care before they feel ready to do so and that the experience leaves them feeling unsupported. The charity says almost 40% of callers to their helpline are aged over 26 and therefore not entitled to aftercare services from their local authority. The report marks the start of a campaign by the charity and its care experienced members to gain extra protection for the right to access support to be enshrined in Scots law, and for provision of 'independent, relationship-based, lifelong advocacy for every Care Experienced person in Scotland who needs it' (p. 19).

### **The autumn 2023 issue**

In this issue we publish three long-form original research papers. The first of these is an account of research in Malta by Kevin Borg and colleagues from the Foundation for Social Welfare Services describing the health characteristics of looked after children and young people on the Maltese Islands. Based on a study of 200 children aged under 18 living in 25 residential/community homes, the



research found that 31% had incomplete immunisation records, 94% had a least one physical health problem, the most common being dental health issues, and 60% had at least one mental health problem. The authors conclude that early intervention in appropriate health care is important, together with including health care issues in care plans, as well as having better structures to collect health data about countries' populations of looked after children.

Next, we feature research by Matilda Steele and Sarah Elgie, psychologists with the Keys Group, providers of residential care based in England. The authors conducted a systematic review of the literature related to the use of routine outcome measures, such as questionnaires, to monitor progress of mental health interventions with looked after children and young people. They were interested in studies which explored the attitudes of children, families, and clinicians/practitioners to the use of routine outcome measures. Fourteen studies met their inclusion and exclusion criteria. The authors conclude that in general the use of routine outcome measures is regarded favourably by professionals and therefore question why more use is not made of them. They also found a paucity of research about the attitudes of children on the use of outcome measures to monitor their progress and say that more research is needed which includes young people in giving their views about the use of questionnaires and other outcome measures to review clinical interventions designed to improve their wellbeing.

Our final long-form paper in this issue by Kiran Modi and Gurneet Kaur Kalra of the Udayan care agency in India outlines Udayan's approach to aftercare support for care experienced young people. The outreach programme is characterised by 'workshop modules had been designed on career opportunities, interview skills, CV writing, placements, emotional wellbeing, legal and financial literacy, resilience, and life skills'. The authors say that a key element in the success of the programme is collaboration with different stakeholders.

Earlier in the year we put out a special call for short articles (defined as comprising 500 words or more) concerning practice or policy issues related to care experience, and the editorial team was delighted by the response. Some of the articles are still in preparation and once they complete our review process will be included in the next issue. Eight articles are published in this issue. We repeat our open call here: we are constantly on the lookout for short accounts of innovative practice or commentaries on topical issues related to care experienced children, young people and adults from around the globe.

Vivienne Cree of the University of Edinburgh and Bob Mackenzie of the University of Chichester describe two years of co-research and writing about a subject in which they have both been participants: the social work agency The Guild of Service which became Birthlink, based in Edinburgh, Scotland. Vivienne's connection was as an employee, a social worker, and Bob's was as a child growing up in the agency's children's home, Edzell Lodge. Reflecting on their collaboration, they say: 'we have become less concerned with artefacts of the past ... and more concerned with the present, and within this, our shared relationship. We hope that others will take courage from our story and feel able to engage in their own exploration of their past in social work, from whatever



standpoint they are coming from, and alongside whichever “critical friends” are available to support them on that journey’.

Andrew Brierley of Leeds Trinity University explores the state of young offenders’ institutions (YOIs) in England. The author writes from direct experience, having spent 18 months in Brinsford YOI when aged 17-18. He reflects on that experience in the light of a subsequent report into Brinsford by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons which said there existed in the YOI a ‘level of neglect and lack of understanding of the needs of young prisoners that was “breath-taking”’. Andrew argues that there is a ‘crisis of visibility’ whereby the public and politicians are ignorant of the use of prisons for children. He says there is a ‘need to completely deconstruct the youth estate and rebuild smaller, purpose-built homes for children that can allow them to *be* and *feel* like *children*’.

David Stakes, a team leader in children and family social work with a Scottish local authority, explains the requirements for successfully bringing care experienced children and their families back to live together again. Good communication among carers, child, parents, and social worker is vital, including ‘maintaining links between the young person and carer which ‘might be as simple as a card on birthdays and festive occasions’.

Jade Purtell of Monash University and Christine Hawkes of the University of South Australia discuss record-keeping and children and young people’s rights in residential care. They conclude that records should ‘not only meet administrative demands but also honour and respect the stories they encapsulate and the wishes of young people’.

Sarah Deeley of CELCIS and Kyle Fleming of the Crossreach care agency explain how Reflection and Action Learning Sets developed by members of the Scottish Physical Restraint Action Group (SPRAG) helped staff in a special education setting to reflect on their practice in the context of implementing improvements.

Mary Morris of the Care Inspectorate in Scotland reports on her agency’s analysis of key factors of key performing services based on inspection visits. These are positive caring relationships, knowledge and understanding of trauma, careful matching of children to the resources that are right for them, and effective leadership. Mary’s assessment is that ‘The passion, energy, and commitment in our high performing services in Scotland is a very important reason to be cheerful and gives the sector hope and energy to move forward’.

Sarah Folman Hadjidemetriou is a psychologist at the St Mary’s Kenmure secure care facility in Bishopbriggs, near Glasgow, Scotland. In her article, she makes a case for formal cognitive testing as part of the assessment process. One of the reasons Sarah advances in support of a detailed cognitive assessment is that staff are thereby better informed and equipped to support young people.

Our final short article in this section is contributed by Nicola Glasgow, a Scottish police officer. She describes her work as a police liaison officer based at a large residential education and care centre, outlining four main aspects of her role: child protection; preventive education about online safety, substance abuse and



other harms; following up concerns raised about criminal activity by and towards young people; and being the first point of contact for missing children and young people. She also explains the philosophy behind the role and lessons learned.

In the book review section, we publish three reviews. Challenging the conventional wisdom about residential care for children and youth: A good place to grow by Bruce Henderson (Routledge, 2024) is reviewed by Jim Anglin of the University of Victoria, BC, Canada. Residential child and youth care in the developing world edited by Tuhinal Islam and Leon Fulcher (CYC Press, 2016-21) is reviewed by Jennifer Brooker of Melbourne Polytechnic. Dilemmas and decision making in residential care by Abbi Jackson (Critical Publishing, 2023) is reviewed by Dan Johnson of Kibble Education and Care Centre.

Amy Robinson of P JL Healthcare has contributed a detailed report about the Lovin' Care Gathering held in Manchester, England in May 2023. Jean Marshall submitted a delightful poem based on her experience as a foster carer. The poem is written in her own dialect, Doric, which is spoken in the north-east of Scotland, notably in Aberdeenshire. Jean has also provided a short commentary about her poetry and its place in her life. Finally, we end this issue by publishing Delyth Edward's (the University of Leeds) beautiful obituary of the courageous Care Experienced campaigner, social worker, and care inspector, Ian Dickson. It seems appropriate to end this editorial by quoting Ian's own words: care experience is 'a medal not a wound'.

We return in spring 2024 with another full issue.

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## About the author

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