

Transcript of the Introduction to SIRCC 2020 Online by Joanne McMeeking and John Ryan

Joanne McMeeking:

Hello everyone, I'm Joanne McMeeking, Head of Improving Care Experiences at CELCIS, and also Chair of the SIRCC committee. And welcome to SIRCC 2020 online - the extraordinary ordinary, which we're really excited about, but at the same time, it's tinged with a level of sadness, because we know that we want to be meeting with you. And that we would be wanting to sit together and talk about residential child care, talk about the opportunities, talk about the challenges, talk about the new evidence, talk about what practitioners are telling us, what children young people are telling us, and also think deeply about the promise as well in Scotland, which is usually significant for all of us. And as you know, the independent Care Review, compiled their recommendations. So our job together, and my job, particularly in CELCIS, is to have the Independent Care Review. And the realisation of the Promise is at the front of our minds and at the front of my mind. So if you think about the shape of the programme, at a glance, on the 29th of September, it begins. And then it finishes on Friday, the 9th of October, you will see a very strong thread of the Promise running through this. And if you look back to the recommendations of the Independent Care Review, you're note quite clearly that residential child care is setting quite firmly in there. And it's also seeing the importance of holding the hand of the workforce to hold the hand of the child. And that's the job for us in the next two weeks, to think really deeply about that. And that's something that I'm really excited about, and I know my colleagues are and my partners are who pulled this together. And also my co chair, John Ryan, who's the assistant director at Aberlour will be joining me through the two weeks. And this is an opportunity to move in and around this programme in a flexible way. So you don't have to be sitting at your desk or sitting in the house and working your way through the programme you can dip in and out over the two weeks. And the hope for us is that we're able to put a lot of this information online that you can tap into later as well. What you do have to do is book in for the webinars and some of the discussions but you'll have that on the programme and some of the instructions will be really clear for you. So as I said, and you probably can feel and kind of sense that I'm really quite excited about it is really strange that I'm kind of talking to you in this little box and I can't be together with you on the conference floor in the workshops, chatting together at lunch. But that's just something that that we've had to acknowledge recognise is not going to happen. I hope you have a really great time. I hope that it stimulates conversation. It stimulates a better understanding of what children young people have been going through during COVID, but not just COVID, about residential childcare practice, about the challenges that we have ahead of us, about how we realise the Promise about how we work closer with children, young people and families to hear their stories and understand their experience of residential child care, because their wisdom is what tells us is going to make a difference, and how we adapt our practice to make a difference for children, young people that we care for.

John Ryan:

Thanks very much, Joanne. So really, really energetic, enthusiastic and determined introduction into this year's conference programme. As Joanne said, my name is John Ryan, I'm an assistant director with Aberlour Child Care Trust, I also chair Social Work Scotland's residential child care subgroup. And I'm always excited to come along to the conference because it gives us an opportunity to focus on what we see as ordinary, but indeed, it is extraordinary within the context of residential child care in Scotland. I've been in residential child care since 1986. And every year the conference reminds me of the progress that we're making. Of course, there are challenges, but the determination and the willingness of the residential child care sector to stop and reflect, and have a view to the future is never, never ever lost at conference time and this year I'm sure, there's no reason why that shouldn't happen. We are living and working and really, really unusual circumstances and circumstances that we keep hoping are going to come to an end.

I suppose as we move into this conference, there is a reflection for me about, what, living in and working in COVID-19 times has meant actually, and one of the managers and Aberlour's children's houses, Simone Gillespie said that actually, as we moved on to the space what she realised very very quickly was at the imposition of guidance, of restrictions is something that the children we work with every day, are expected to get on with and they manage that. So if there's crumbs of comfort to be taken it is that COVID-19 has allowed us to experience the world that our children have experienced and for many, many years for ourselves and that's no bad thing. Certainly COVID-19 has been really, really challenging. It's been absolutely challenging for us. However, I've been amazed and not surprised through my work in Aberlour and even Social Work Scotland of the determination in the sector that has entered to care sector and the workforce, to continue to shine. And to continue to do the ordinary as we see it, which indeed, is extraordinarily. I'd like to say thank you at the start at this conference to everyone who has been part of this journey and to knowledge, that it has not been easy for many, but we can hope that we can use the learning experience to take us out of the other side of this, whenever that may be. The other thing that Joanne alluded to was the Promise. And I'm really, really excited about the the Promise and the realisation of the Promise. We have a time like no other and to make the ordinary, or the extraordinary ordinary, through the Promise. Having seen and having been part of the Care Review, and having contributed to the Care Review, I was really, really pleased in the way that Fiona and the Care Review Team gave real agency because it was to be a review like no other. And I'm really, really pleased that the review team really does have agency to the children and the families in Scotland that we work with every single day. The key message for me is that residential child care has a place in the tapestry of services that children will need to keep them safe and hopefully reunite them with their families in the future. It's really important for us that we realise and we hope that children should always be living in a family where it's safe to do so. And that should always be what drives us. We want children and the families to live together. Where that's not possible. residential child care can be one of the ways in which children can you continue to enjoy

success and be safe. Thank you to you all in advance for the contributions. Thanks for taking the time to join when you can. And that's one of the beauties of doing things remotely. You can pick and choose in a way that you can make, participating in the programme as part of your day in a way that having to be physically at a conference may not be possible. And also to thank the children, young people as well, for making the work that we do really, really special.