

## Editorial

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Welcome to the autumn/fall 2021 issue of *SJRCC*. This is the second issue of our new two issues per year (spring and autumn) format. Regular readers will have spotted that we have a new strapline - 'an international journal of group and family care experience' – to emphasise our international reach and a scope that encompasses all care experience.

This issue is published to coincide with the Scottish Institute of Residential Child Care conference – 'SIRCC 2021 Online' – on 29 and 30 September. The theme of this year's conference is 'The Workforce' – highlighting the experiences, challenges, and opportunities of those working in residential child care - and several articles in this issue, as well as the transcript of the 2021 Kilbrandon Lecture, also included, specifically consider aspects of the complex task of providing care. The journal will have a more obvious presence at this year's event, by means of a virtual meet the editor and authors' session and in the exhibition space.

As our special series of articles, 'Reflections on Residential Child Care During the COVID-19 Crisis'<sup>1</sup>, shows, the workforce has faced the challenges of the pandemic in heroic ways, largely unknown outside the sector. We hope that the articles on workforce-related themes included in this issue serve to broaden understanding and recognition of the complexity of the work of child and youth care professionals. What is most striking about the articles submitted by our contributors is that authors have found time to reflect on their practice during the most challenging time in the recent history of the profession, continuing to

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.celcis.org/knowledge-bank/covid-19/reflections-covid-19>

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make everyday life for children and young people as full and stimulating as ever, and even innovating in the process.

In prefacing this issue, I want to highlight two important contributions which in different ways have highlighted the rights of care experienced people. April 2021 was designated 'Care Experienced History Month', a festival of commemoration and study of the history of care aimed at understanding 'why care is the way it is and how the systems we have in place today came to be'.<sup>2</sup> The month, planned to be an annual event, was the brainchild of University of Glasgow history and sociology student Charlotte Armitage, herself care experienced, and involved partners in several countries, a network which no doubt will continue to grow. We are delighted that Charlotte agreed to contribute an article about History Month to the current issue.

In July, a significant legal provision came into force in Scotland requiring local authorities to ensure that where it is safe for them to do so, brothers and/or sisters can live together or as near to each other as possible. The new requirement, a provision of the Children (Scotland) Act 2020, arose from a commitment in 'The Promise', the findings of the Independent Care Review.<sup>3</sup> Work to prepare and draft the guidance for practice, 'Staying Together and Connected', was co-ordinated by CELCIS to help with implementation (Scottish Government, 2021).

## **Autumn 2021 issue**

Opening this issue, and specifically on the theme of workforce and the learning culture of the workplace, the first of six peer-reviewed research articles published in this issue is contributed by Kevin Pollock and James Gillespie reporting on their study of the journey undertaken by a Scottish residential school, Kibble, to develop and embed an organisational resilience policy to anticipate and manage risk effectively. They review the significant organisational actions that support resilience and learning and explain how Kibble integrated

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.careexperiencedhistorymonth.org>

<sup>3</sup> <https://thepromise.scot>

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these into the organisation's strategy, structure, culture, and its people. They also discuss the requirements more generally for improving resilience and learning practice in care sector organisations.

Kiram Modi, Gurneet Kalra, Leena Prasad, Rajeshwari Narsimha and Jyoti Singh have analysed developments in alternative care in South Asia during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their desk review found that the pandemic is leading to the re-institutionalisation of many children due to government orders or the shortage of necessities in poor families, and that countries vary in respect of guidance that complies with the advice of major NGOs. The authors make several recommendations for practice interventions.

Terje Halvorsen presents a case for utilising philosophical discussions as a way of helping children in residential care and similar settings to develop their reasoning skills as a pre-requisite of advancing in education, and to help practitioners with professional reasoning. Amanda Keller, a PhD candidate at McGill University, has used narrative case study to explore the life course trajectories of two care experienced adults, allowing her to reflect on how residential foster care alumni describe their life history and the insights they can provide about adulthood and parenthood and their placement experiences. Among her conclusions is the observation that study of life trajectories 'highlights important and complex histories of loss and trauma, which suggests that recovery is a lifelong process, and that healing can emerge later in adulthood than that the period on which researchers currently focus'. Forensic psychologist Carrie Mclaughlin reports on her research about how 'distance' relates to young people's experiences of being looked after away from home. Her research used semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis, and Carrie says that 'the overarching message from this research was that whilst geographical proximity to a young person's home could impact on how close they felt from home, the importance of connections was significant'.

In the final peer-reviewed paper in this issue, Miriana Giraldi, Alexander McTier and Robert Porter present an argument for the added value that implementation science can bring to ensuring quality in residential care settings. Considering the concept of quality care, the authors say there is a 'need to move beyond the

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more immediately tangible factors of, for example, recruitment of certificated staff, child-staff ratios, and the presence of policies and procedures, to consider in greater detail the complex environments in which residential care workers operate in’.

The issue includes nine shorter articles reporting on practice or contemporary issues. This section begins with Charlotte Armitage’s inspiring account of the planning and implementation of Care Experienced History Month 2021. A student of history and sociology, Charlotte was working for the campaigning and advocacy charity Who Cares? Scotland when she pitched the idea of hosting a month of digital materials and events to honour ‘the legacy left behind by Care Experienced people no longer with us’. Her article explains the aims of the project, the international collaborations, the process of putting it together, and the flavour of the content. University of Glasgow history lecturer Christine Whyte has contributed an article based on her blog for history month about the training ship HMS Mars which was moored in the river Tay near Dundee between 1869 and 1928. The ship, part of an approach to establish industrial schools for poor, vagrant, and destitute children in Britain, was home to up to 400 boys at a time. Christine says ships were meant to house and educate the poor, but ‘in practice, children were sentenced to time in an industrial school by magistrates for things like begging, to being in the company of reputed thieves’. The article is especially poignant for this editor: my paternal great grandfather Thomas was, according to a report in the *Dundee Courier* of 8 December 1877, ‘A waif sent to the Mars’.

Melissa Hunt and Elaine Adams examine the delicate balance between protecting children from harm and ensuring that children’s rights are maintained in the context of the Scottish children’s hearings system. They highlight the importance of engaging with children and finding ‘creative and innovative solutions that protect children’s rights, ensure their voices are heard and increase their meaningful participation in all decision-making that affects their lives’.

On the theme of ‘Workforce’ Paul Gilroy and Lawrence Wareing have documented the change process for staff and children involved in the migration of a residential school, which operated for generations in a grand castle setting,

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to more homely, family-style living in local communities. Despite the many attractions of the rural setting, 'the relative isolation inherent in the building's physical environment could only ever result in a reinforcement of otherness and the experience of living with stigma'.

The UN Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child held 'Day of General Discussion' online on 16 and 17 September 2021. In her article, 'Why engaging on children's rights internationally matters at the local level', Miriana Giraldi gives the background to the days and the aspirations for the 2021 event.

Next up are a further three articles on the 'Workforce' theme. Jenna Bollinger, Philip Mendes, and Catherine Flynn write about staff's roles and needs for providing stability for children in residential care. Based on interviews with 13 staff in New South Wales, Australia, they find that stability 'appears to be related more strongly to a consistent placement with whom the young people can forge and maintain genuinely caring relationships that are supported by the management of the organisation'. Kathy Grant contributes a reflective piece on her own experience of social work practice during the pandemic and realises that she has 'missed the relational focus, therapeutic potential and fun of the lifespan'. Frank Ainsworth reflects on his own and Leon Fulcher's interconnected professional journeys as practitioners and academics who have contributed massively to the global literature on the theory and practice of residential care for children and young people. They take the view that while no child should be placed unnecessarily in residential care, 'some children and youth can benefit from a period in a safe, well designed, professionally staffed and managed residential care programme'.

In the final article in this section, Petra Roberts of Ryerson University considers transitions out of residential care from the perspectives of young women in Trinidad and Tobago. She says: 'I suspect that young women everywhere...face different challenges than young men as they transition out of residential care. It is time to listen to their voices and consider a more gendered approach to thinking about such transitions'.

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Also included in this issue, is the transcript of the 2021 Kilbrandon Lecture,<sup>4</sup> this year given by the journalist and author Madeleine Bunting whose book 'Labours of Love: The Crisis of Care' I reviewed in our last issue. In her lecture, Madeleine said that the provision of care, and its complexity, is 'often overlooked, it is often misunderstood or not understood at all'. There is, she says, 'a cultural undervaluing of care, which is so extensive, so pervasive, and in many respects so subtle that we are all involved and compromised by it. We are all caught in a value system which does not actually accord care with the significance that it rightly deserves'.

And finally, Kate Mackinnon and Rosie Moore have contributed a review of 'Child Poverty: Aspiring to Survive' by Morag Treanor.

The *SJRCC* will be published next in spring 2022, when we all hope for better news on the pandemic front. Meanwhile, we send our good wishes to all our readers. Keep safe and well. Look out for our planned feature of articles from the journal archive over the winter.

## Reference

Scottish Government, (2021). *Staying together and connected: Getting it right for brothers and sisters*. <https://www.celcis.org/knowledge-bank/search-bank/staying-together-and-connected-getting-it-right-sisters-and-brothers-national-practice-guidance>

## About the author

Dr Graham Connelly CPsychol is the editor of the *Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care* and an honorary senior research fellow with CELCIS and the School of Social Work and Social Policy in the University of Strathclyde. Graham's research interests have ranged over alternative care internationally and more particularly the education of care experienced children and adults. He is a non-executive

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<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.strath.ac.uk/humanities/schoolofsocialworksocialpolicy/thekilbrandonlecture/> for the archive of all Kilbrandon lectures.

director of Kibble Education and Care Centre and a trustee of the MCR Pathways school-based mentoring programme.