

Editorial

Welcome to the December 2013 issue of the Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care (SJRCC). This issue is going live a bit later than we had hoped (it is now February 2014), but the process of meeting a new aspiration often unfolds differently than planned. As Graham Connelly indicated in the June 2013 editorial, we have aspired to increase our output to three issues annually and we are pleased to have achieved this.

This issue of the Journal marks some other changes as well. This is my first issue in the role of joint editor and it has been exciting to support the process of bringing it to publication. The issue holds a wider range of article style, allowing for a broader variety of voices to join the discussion about residential child care. This is another change for the journal, and I will offer a bit more about the articles themselves shortly.

First, however, it is important to note another big change that has come about at the same time as (and not completely unrelated to) the publication of this issue. On 6 January, the Scottish Government (2014) announced that, under new provisions of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill, looked after young people who turn 16 while being accommodated will have the right to remain in care, whether residential, foster or kinship care, until the age of 21. The change comes into effect in April of 2015 and annual funding has been earmarked for it until 2020. This comes on the back of the Scottish Government's recent commitment to extend the age at which care leavers can receive additional supports from 21 to 26. The Scottish Government also announced 'a further, longer-term ambition to allow those care leavers who may need it the opportunity to return to care, up to the age of 21' and offered some details about their plans for implementation. This can be considered a significant reform of our care system, and Scotland is a pioneer in what it is doing.

Looking southward, we can see a similar effort underway in England to extend care and support to the age of 21 for looked after young people, but at the moment only for those in foster care. A campaign to rectify this is developing momentum (see Every Child Leaving Care Matters, <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/equality-of-leaving-age-for-all-children-in-care>). This campaign and the concerted efforts of several organisations to elicit the change in Scotland have something very important in common, and that is the powerful influence of care leavers. The aforementioned campaign in England was initiated by care leavers and care leavers were highly involved in arguing for the recent changes in Scotland. I have been impressed by their leadership and compelling contributions, and I strongly suspect the current and forthcoming achievements of extending care would not be possible without them.

I mentioned that the recent change announced by the Scottish Government was not completely unrelated to the publication of this issue, and that is because our first article, by Duncan Dunlop of Who Cares Scotland?¹, is a polemic against current practices of ejecting young people from care when they are not ready. It was written before the Scottish Government announced its decision to extend provision of care and reflects the cogent arguments behind the recent reforms. I use the term 'polemic' deliberately to highlight the importance of giving space for exploration and argument, including

¹ Who Cares Scotland? was actively involved in campaigning for the changes here in Scotland and they also facilitated care leaver involvement in the process.

controversial arguments that challenge conventional opinions, doctrines or practices. Perhaps to our readers, Dunlop's argument itself is not controversial but it does certainly challenge the status quo. And indeed, as our collective thinking becomes more informed and hopefully more enlightened, consensus sometimes emerges around something previously deemed controversial. Instead of accepting the derogatory connotation associated with the polemic, it is a good time to consider its important role in bringing about change. We should be achieving consensus about things that are important through a process of considered argument and exploration rather than osmosis or uncritical acceptance; we want the SJRCC to be a place for such processes.

A central theme of Dunlop's article is that relationships matter and that long-term, stable, loving relationships should be promoted and supported in the lives of young people. This theme is further reflected in the article by Jenny Molloy, a care leaver and inspirational speaker who offers a passionate account of the profound significance of love to her experiences of residential child care. The place of love in our work is not without controversy and it is important that we do more to include care leavers' perspectives in our considerations of what is acceptable related practice.

In our third article, Kiaras Gharabaghi and Carol Stuart provide exciting developments in life-space theory and how this should inform practice, including a re-thinking of our current boundaries around care, engagement and relationship. While they introduce a novel approach to thinking about what life-space actually is, their use of illustrative examples, metaphor and concrete implications for practice make the article practically accessible as well as theoretically advanced.

Alastair Reid shares some theoretically informed reflections on his learning and practice in our fourth article. In it, he tries to pin down the "X factor" he has observed in those colleagues with an outstanding capacity to convey a sense of calm, understanding and safety under challenging circumstances.

Finally, we have an inspiring article by Iain Mitchell about a programme aimed at raising the awareness and aspiration of looked after children to go to university. His account highlights some key components of good practice in supporting the educational development of young people and reinforces the importance of counteracting 'a culture of low expectation while at the same time maintaining a level of realism' (p. 27). One of the realities illuminated by this article is that young people can blossom well beyond what we might anticipate if (coupled with tailored, targeted support) our aspirations for them are also raised.

May all of these articles raise your awareness and aspirations for the positive impact you can have in your work.

Three books are discussed in our review section. First, Miguel Debono reviews *Therapeutic residential child care for children and young people: An attachment and trauma-informed model for practice* (2012) by Barton, Gonzalez and Tomlinson. Second, Jackie Schiller reviews the second edition of *Working with Young People* (2013) edited by Curran, Harrison and Mackinnon. Our third review has been reproduced by the generous permission of Children Webmag and is part of their Key Text series. This series comprises digests (slightly extended reviews) of books that have been influential by introducing new ideas or informing practice in child care; this which aligns nicely with our aim to provide a review of a seminal text in each issue of the SJRCC. The book this month is *Love is not enough: The treatment of emotionally disturbed children* (1950) by Bruno Bettelheim and the digest was written by Robert Shaw.

Happy reading.

Laura Steckley
Joint Editor

Reference

Scottish Government. (2014). *Greater rights for young people in care*. [press release]
Retrieved from <http://scottishgovernment.presscentre.com/News/Greater-rights-for-young-people-in-care-818.aspx#downloads>.