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Residential Child Care: Between Home and Family

Policy & Practice in Health and Social Care (No. 17)

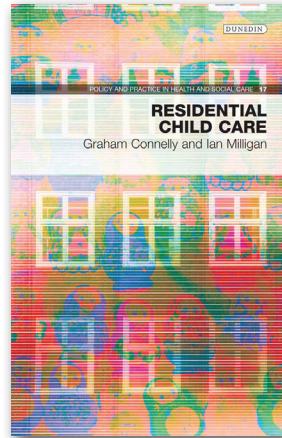
Graham Connelly & Ian Milligan

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Government statistics show that around 1,700 Scottish children and young people are in residential care at any one point in time. In addition several hundred others, including those with significant learning, physical and communication disabilities, receive regular periods of respite care in residential units. Residential child care has also been the focus of a considered amount of government policy-making. There have been changes in the average size and location of residential units, changes in staffing structures and repeated attempts to better train the workforce. Residential care has also been the focus of considerable regulation and scrutiny, much of it in response to scandals associated with abuse; both contemporary and 'historic'.

Scotland's residential care services are strongly supported by central government policy and the government continues to play a major role, particularly for the most disadvantaged or 'troubled and troublesome' children. The sector is noteworthy in that Scotland does not have a separate juvenile justice 'detention' sector and it only has a tiny in-patient child and adolescent mental health service. Another notable characteristic of the Scottish children's homes sector is that a significant number remain under local authority control. Meanwhile there has been a steady decline in voluntary sector provision and a steady growth, from a low base, of private provision.

This is the first dedicated study of the Scottish children's residential care sector. Throughout appropriate comparisons are made to parallel provision elsewhere in the UK and in Europe. The result is a text of great interest and utility to all those working, training to work or formulating practice and policy for the children's residential care sector in Scotland.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS Dr Graham Connelly & Dr Ian Milligan are with CELCIS (Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland) at the University of Strathclyde.

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