

Editorial

Graham Connelly

g.connelly@strath.ac.uk



@DocTweets

Welcome to the first issue of *SJRCC* of the new decade. We publish in the month that has also seen the publication of the reports of the [Independent Care Review](#) in Scotland. The review was established in February 2017, following a meeting in October 2016, at which Scotland's First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, listened to children and young people in care and care experienced adults and made a commitment at the SNP conference. Ms Sturgeon told her party delegates that she intended to commission an independent, 'root and branch review' of Scotland's children in care system.

The Review, based on the evidence of more than 5,500 care experienced children, adults, family members and members of the paid and unpaid workforce, has resulted in seven publications: *The Promise* (and a *Pinky Promise* for younger readers); *The Plan*; *The Money and Follow the Money*; *The Rules*; and *Thank You*.

In 'The Promise' the need for urgent improvement in Scotland's 'care system' is set out starkly in the foreword by the Review's chair, Fiona Duncan.

Despite the system being focused, above all else, on protecting against harm, it can prolong the pain from which it is trying to protect some children who have experienced trauma told the Care Review that being taken into care and growing up in the 'care system' was among the most traumatising experiences they had ever had, exacerbated by being separated from their brothers and sisters, living with strangers and moving multiple times (p. 7).

It is desperately sad to read this indictment from the perspective of a Journal whose principal aim is to provide a forum for discussion of the conditions for loving, nurturing care of *our* children. We know that good practice by caring and committed individuals exists – and is demonstrated through various accounts in the Journal – however, the Review shows that too many children and young people are not always getting the care and respect they deserve.

Fiona Duncan says that improving the care experience should not be about passing laws which require that children in care are loved, but ‘... will involve fundamentally shifting the primary purpose of the whole of Scotland’s “care system” from protecting against harm to protecting all safe, loving respectful relationships’ (p. 8). Wherever you are based, you are sure to find in these reports a call to action for ensuring that children growing up in care are listened to and can feel secure that when the State intervenes in their lives their everyday circumstances always improve.

The central theme of this issue of *SJRCC* is ‘looking forward’, or thinking creatively about the conditions for improving care experiences. We publish five articles from authors who responded to our call for reflections on this theme. In the first of these, Scotland’s former Commissioner for Children and Young People, Kathleen Marshall, sets out a vision of what residential childcare might look like in the future and concludes that legislating for love is both possible and desirable in setting aspirations. In making this argument, Professor Marshall takes a different view to that expressed by Scotland’s Care Review which has concluded that a legislative framework for love would be an institutional response which might not lead to the significant cultural changes needed to ensure children experience being loved. From the perspective of her research on child abuse, CELCIS researcher, Moyra Hawthorn, considers ‘instances and accounts of exemplary practice of residential care practitioners who were committed to ensuring that children and young people are nurtured, loved, and well prepared for adulthood’. Canadian psychotherapists, Shannon Moore and Kimberley Duffin, invite the readers ‘to imagine residential child and youth care as having a central connection to experiential nature-based therapies across rural and urban settings’. They propose that ‘Land Praxis’ should ‘provide a tool

to support an increased sense of agency for young people facing uncertain futures’.

Then, Danny Henderson, a residential practitioner with Scottish third sector residential care provider, Care Visions, reflects on the contributions of the Sanctuary Model, ‘an approach that foregrounds trusting reciprocal relationships as a medium for healing and growth that facilitates nuance and differentiation while ensuring safety’. And finally, Max Smart and Andy Thorpe, long-term managers of Lothian Villa, a residential centre in East Lothian, Scotland, describe the ‘journey of supportive care and healing that goes beyond another kind of home and leads to a different kind of residence’. They outline their aim to create a supportive family that transcends the immediate care experience so that even after young people have left ‘The Villa’ they feel they will have continuing support.

The issue is book-ended by a peer-reviewed research article in which trainee clinical psychologist, Katie McIntyre, reports on her research on a Dialectical Behavioural Therapy skills group implemented in a Scottish residential service, and two reviews: one of a book for children – ‘Not Again Little Owl’ – and one of research reports on leaving care in India.

Also published in this issue, is the transcript of the Kilbrandon Lecture 2020 given by international human rights lawyer and author of the United Nations [global study on children deprived of liberty](#), Manfred Nowak. The research found that a staggering seven million children are currently deprived of liberty in various situations. Professor Nowak offers five recommendations, including applying diversion at all stages of the criminal justice process to transfer children from justice contexts to child welfare.

A lot to read, full of new insights and challenge! We will be back in June 2020, with a special issue coinciding with the Scottish Institute of Residential Child Care conference.