

August 2024

Editorial

Follow this and additional works at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/jsoc>



Part of the [Other Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

(2024) "Editorial," *Journal of Social Care*: Vol. 4, Article 1.

Available at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/jsoc/vol4/iss1/1>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Current Publications at ARROW@TU Dublin. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Journal of Social Care* by an authorized editor of ARROW@TU Dublin. For more information, please contact arrow.admin@tudublin.ie, aisling.coyne@tudublin.ie, vera.kilshaw@tudublin.ie.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International License](#).

Editorial – Dr Martin Power.

After many, many years of calls for registration, regulation and, by extension recognition of social care workers, state registration for social care workers opened in November 2023, which began a two year grand-parenting period. This is a pivotal development, which cannot but significantly shape social care over the coming decades and beyond. While regulation has been long awaited and is a very welcome development, the wider context presents many challenges. Recruitment and retention continue as ongoing challenges in social care work and are shaped by issues of pay and conditions, the glass ceiling of social care leader and the general absence of progression pathways. Proposed restructuring in a number of critical stakeholder organisations will do little to alleviate such drivers and, if anything, are only likely to exacerbate concerns and ultimately further fuel retention issues.

Certainly, concerns have been expressed around the extension and expansion of a policy whereby providers of children’s residential services can have increasing proportions of non-social care qualified staff and social care leaders can have a qualification in any one of 14 ‘related fields’. It is a situation that is difficult to imagine would be considered acceptable by any other profession. In a similar fashion, the establishment of the Children’s Residential and Aftercare Voluntary Association (CRAVA), so as to highlight the existential treat faced by voluntary providers due to years of underfunding, only serves to draw attention to the seemingly counterproductive approach to the provision of care services that has come to dominate. Indeed, given the considerable sums of money directed to private providers of special emergency arrangements, which are not regulated and staff qualification requirements are not on par with other providers, it would be difficult not to agree with contentions that the social care system is in many instances not fit for purpose.

In light of such concerns recent research and policy reformation developments in the U.K. can provide some insights. For instance, research by Oxford University identified that outcomes for children in for-profit-providers, which have come to dominate provision in the U.K., are generally worse. This research was influential in encouraging reconsideration of the manner in which care was funded and delivered, with governments in Wales and Scotland seeking to reduce and potentially ultimately remove for-profit provision. If such examples highlight the importance and contribution that social care research can make to the field, whether through expanding knowledge and understanding or by inputting into policy developments, they also serve as reminders of the fulcrum around which care revolves – relationships.

Unsurprisingly therefore, this centrality of relationships is a common thread throughout the articles in this issue. For example, in their article on insights from evidence around incorporating outcome measures in social care work, Dr Susan Flynn, Sowmia Lakkshme and Dr Louise Caffery, point to the importance of ensuring staff buy in and not throwing the baby out with the bathwater when designing and implementing outcome measures. While outcome measures can be utilised to support learning and service improvement, caution, critical thinking and inclusive collaboration are required to help ensure that quantifiable hard measures do not dominate at the expense of the essence of social care work – human relationships. Thus, hard measures must be balanced by the inclusion of soft measures that recognise the value of relationships between service users and staff, and between organisations and staff. If it is

relatively straightforward to count how many or how often, it is far less straightforward to quantify the value to people of sharing a life space or to assess what the nourishing of hope may mean to an individual who has been marginalised.

This centrality of relationships is similarly reflected in the article by Karla Kane and Dr Susan Flynn, who examined the literature around the children of parents who have been incarcerated. As the article's title highlights, such children are often the 'forgotten victims' and the child's relationship with their incarcerated parent and/or subsequent caregiver can have critical long-term impacts on children. Caregivers, schools and the education system are identified as pivotal shapers of such longer-term impacts, especially in relation to whether they act to reduce or exacerbate feelings of shame and stigma among the children of parents who have been incarcerated.

Stigma and the myriad ways in which it and social expectations interact between the individual, service providers and wider society are the subject of the scoping review of eating disorders among men in the article by Rachel Maloney, Louise Looney, Olivia Mari-Lennox, Dr Elena Vaughan and Professor Colette Kelly. In examining this under-researched area, the article not only provides insights into how stigma can impact an individual's relationship with them-self and others, but it also helps to explain the dynamic interconnected mechanisms through which stigma operates. In discussing stigma experiences by examining the layers of internalised, enacted, anticipated and perceived stigma this article teases out the nuanced ways in which stigma is reinforced, which is a topic of relevance to so many areas of social care work with vulnerable and marginalised individuals and groups.

The theme of relationships and support is examined through more of a workforce lens in the next number of articles in this issue. In her article Lorraine O'Brien highlights the importance of support and examines the extent to which social care managers are ready for registration and what managers perceive as the implications of registration for their role. On the one hand, it is largely clear managers will need to register. However, on the other hand, their role in supporting staff teams around registration is altogether more ambiguous, as are their perceptions around the supports that are available to them to support staff. The overall conclusion is that there is more that could be done by CORU and employers/providers to support social care managers to assist staff in engaging with registration.

In a similar vein, Dr Mark Taylor, Shanili Abrol, Sharon Frieslaar and Corlea Taylor discuss how workforce development teams can support resilience among social workers to help tackle the challenges of retention, turnover and retaining social workers for more than an average of a few years. This article uses a narrative approach that presents a quote by a social worker, which is then reflected on by members of the workforce development team. By exploring the topic in this manner this article provides insights into the value of peer support and how organisational culture could be harnessed to improve satisfaction and work-life, and thereby retention. In doing so it also provides a warning about the negative impacts that overly procedural and tick-box approaches can have on human relationships.

Though in a very different way, the interplay between organisational culture, quality of care, and the emotional effects caring can have on staff is also examined by Farah-Lelia Mughai, Vikki Bunting and Jessica Ruth Austin. This article looks at reasons for why care homes are forcibly closed, how this can impact staff, and whether debriefing can help to alleviate some of these impacts. The approach adopted marries a thematic review of Care

Quality Commission reports with the findings from focus groups with debriefed and non-debriefed health and social care professionals. The findings highlight that when culture, staff and management supports, working environment and reporting systems are all poor and work against quality care delivery there is a high probability of forced closure. When staff do not have the opportunity to debrief afterward this tends to encourage more negative views than when staff do have such opportunities.

The final piece in this issue is not an article, but rather a report reproduced by kind permission of Mr Tony Moore, who details the near four decades history of the Smyly's aftercare service, which was closed in 2023. The story of the service's establishment in the 1980s through to its development and expansion, and ultimate demise, is one of innovation, commitment and dedication. More importantly perhaps, throughout the service's story the value of human relationships is paramount and it seems fitting to complete this issue that has focused so much on the importance of relationships, with as the report's title suggests, a celebration.

Martin

Reviewers.

The Journal of Social Care relies completely on the good will, effort and dedication of reviewers who give their time and expertise freely, and whose efforts often largely go unnoticed. The Editorial Board would therefore like to thank most sincerely all the journal's reviewers, especially those who contributed to the publication of this issue.

If you are currently registered as a reviewer and in light of organisational and technological changes in recent times, please can you login to your journal account and ensure your contact email address is correct. Thank you.

If you wish to act as a reviewer for the journal please forward your CV to the editor.