

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Concern about citation and misrepresentation of our work in recent publication

I am writing to you in relation to a recent publication in your journal titled 'The Family and Disability in Ghana: Highlighting Gaps in Achieving Social Inclusion' (2017, Volume 28, No 4), in which one of my articles (Jacobs, P., & MacMahon, K. (2017). 'It's different, but it's the same': perspectives of young adults with siblings with intellectual disabilities in residential care. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 45(1), 12-20) is cited. I and my co-author have some concerns that the conclusions of our study have been taken out of context.

In Opoku et al's paper, they make the argument that in Western countries many children with disabilities continue to live segregated lives, distant from their families and with weak connections between family members. In fact, there has been a significant shift in public policy since the 1960s, with the closure of long-stay hospital institutions in the UK (e.g., Caruso & Osburn (2011) *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities*). At present, there are only a very limited number of residential placements within the UK, and those are for children and adults with the most complex needs, where local services are not considered suitable.

With regard to our own study, it does not support an argument that siblings, where one sibling has a disability, do not have strong relationships with each other. First of all, our study examined sibling relationships where brothers or sisters had severe intellectual disability, and very complex needs, that are considered to be best met within residential care. Thus, this is a very select group of individuals and does not reflect the situation for the vast majority of children with disabilities. Furthermore, despite the physical separation, my study highlights the close emotional bond and involvement of young adults in the lives of their siblings with disabilities. In fact, participants expressed feeling emotionally very close to their brother or sister, they did know about their sibling's life and were involved in the residential community and all anticipated supporting their sibling within adulthood.

While I feel uncomfortable with the interpretation of my study, I do, however, wholeheartedly agree that in the current climate of austerity there is a lot to be done to improve the lives of families with children with disabilities.

Paula Jacobs

* PhD researcher at the University of Edinburgh
Email: s1368461@sms.ed.ac.uk