

ANNA WOOLF BA, MA

Email

anna.woolf@cssd.ac.uk

Website

[@annabosworth](https://twitter.com/annabosworth)

[@socialmediamum](https://twitter.com/socialmediamum)

www.annawoolf.net



PROFILE

Training

2018 The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, Research Degree (MPhil - PhD)

The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, MA Applied Theatre

University of Winchester, BA Hons Drama Studies

Project Title

Digital storytelling and Applied Theatre for Young People with JIA: Invisible Disability, Transition, and Performative Media.

Project Keywords: Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis; Health; Digital; Transition; Participation; Theatre.

Supervisors

Dr Kate Elswit and Dr Kat Low

Abstract

My research explores the process of medical “transition” that young people with Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis (JIA) go through when moving from a paediatric doctor to an adult rheumatologist. This process occurs any time from the ages of eleven up to twenty-five years old and enables young people (in this case with JIA) to have autonomy over their health care decision making. Evidence shows that there are many reasons why this process fails. In 2014 the National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society found that up to 42% of young people in transition rebel against medication taking, leaving them in serious pain or hospital. My research is manifold; at a theoretical level, I will engage with definitions of disability and performativity. This will be explored through practice research which will investigate the impact of theatre and arts on transition. My enquiry seeks to acknowledge the complex relationships that young people have with their JIA, often termed as an ‘invisible disability’ and to ascertain the extent to which the visibility of their disability impacts on both their own and society’s understanding of what disability can comprise. The research findings will be relevant to other scenarios where young people with chronic illness go through transition, for example, young people with Cystic Fibrosis who fail to transition successfully have an increased rate of morbidity. Transition is a crucial process to navigate for any young person with a lifelong chronic illness.

Key Research Questions

Research objectives include: understanding what transition means to the young people with JIA (whereby they move from a paediatric to an adult rheumatologist); the impact that arts in health (whereby artistic practices are used to promote health and wellbeing) and applied theatre can have in keeping young people engaged in their transition journey; the efficacy that digital storytelling can have in creating alternative places where transition experiences can be shared.

Profile

I am a PhD candidate at Central. My research examines socially engaged and participatory art, health and applied theatre in relation to teenagers suffering from the very complex autoimmune disease Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis.

Prior to beginning my PhD studies I have worked for a range of companies and engaged in a number of research and teaching projects both at Central and Goldsmith’s University of London. My specialisms include working with young people from primary school through to University age, coupled with digital practices in particular. My work spans the interdisciplinary nature of applied theatre and digital practices such as social media, online communities, filmmaking and digital facilitation. At Central I run a module on the BA Date course titled ‘Digital Storytelling: Film’ which explores participatory film practices, and I am also a visiting lecturer on the MA Applied Theatre. I am a trained and accredited Speech Bubbles Practitioner having delivered the programme across East London. Previous other work has included collaborations with Blue Apple Theatre, London Arts and Health Forum, C&T Theatre, Box Clever Theatre and Half Moon Young People’s Theatre. I am also interested in the tension between being a mother and a practitioner/academic. Recent funding in this strand has included an original project called Poems for New Mums; a poetry anthology curated by myself, and designed to support new mums through the first year of motherhood. Distributed exclusively for launch within the maternity ward, this project was fully supported by the Arts and Heritage team at UCLH Hospital, London. Poets included Wendy French, Hollie McNish and Claire Pollard.

Practice

2020. LAHF. Catalyst ‘Digital Sandpit’: development of digital facilitation prototype.

2020. LAHF workshop facilitator. Regional events.

2018. Assistant Researcher, Project Embrace; RCSSD and Little Fish Theatre.

2018. Lead Artist, Poems for New Mums; UCLH, London.

2017. Visiting Lecturer, Northampton University, Applied Theatre module in conjunction with C&T.

2017. Facilitator ‘Stratar Maps Project’, C&T Theatre with Swiss Cottage School, North London.

2016-2018. Facilitator, Speech Bubbles, Ben Johnson School and Half Moon Young People's Theatre.
2016-2018. Theatre Reviewer, Curious Mum.

2014-2015. Facilitator and Filmmaker, Half Moon Young People's Theatre, Transitions projects working with year 6-7 in schools in East London.

2014. Assistant Facilitator, Magic Me 'Outspoken' project exploring the power of women's voices and speaking out.

2014. Research Assistant, Clean Break, 'Celebrating Success' online resources and questionnaires, qual and quant data extrapolation.

2013-2017. Filmmaker, Frankenstein, Box Clever 20, The Chaucer Tales Project, Box Clever Theatre.

2012. Facilitator/Director, Company 3. I co-devised a play in 24 hours with a group of young people from Company 3.

Key Publications

2020. 'Building Digital Capacity for Change', Blue Apple Theatre.

2019. 'Joint(s) Working. What young people with Arthritis don't want to say about transition in health care'. Conference presentation, Storytelling for Health 2: Patient Voices, University of South Wales.

2019. 'The Death of the Newsfeed. Storytelling on Instagram for Gen-Z'. Promax Conference, Amsterdam.

2014. Filmmaker/Researcher, Talawa and EEA in conjunction with Goldsmiths University, London, 'Creating Routes'. This conjunction of MA and participatory practitioners culminated in a research conference and my original research film being shown at Goldsmiths, University of London.

2012. 'The Emergence of 'Digital Negotiators': Incorporating Technology into Applied Theatre Practice,' Performing Research – annual conference of performance research for MA students, The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama.

Teaching

2011 to present day – MA and BA Tutor, Central

2017 to present day – Unit lead, 2nd year BA DATE Digital Storytelling: Film

2021 – Unit Lead, 3rd year BA DATE Digital SLP

Teaching Areas

Digital Arts and wider participatory arts practices

Applied Theatre

Arts in Health

Participatory filmmaking

Digital Storytelling

Digital Pedagogies

Conference Presentations

2020. Collisions Festival, Royal Central School of Speech and Drama: Practice Research - Digital Storytelling and health.

2019. 'Joint(s) Working. What young people with Arthritis don't want to say about transition in health care'. Conference presentation, Storytelling for Health 2: Patient Voices, University of South Wales.

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