

Elsbeth Penny
Writer/Director/ Arts & Health Specialist

I'm an innovative arts&health workshop creator and leader in the arts&health field of therapeutic letter writing. I also work with senior academics and clinicians, using or creating original research and developing it into narratives for participants or for audiences. I am Director of a creative agency called 2BU Productions Ltd. I have Enhanced Disclosure and Advanced Safeguarding for Children Level 2.

1. Writer/Creator

Current Projects

- Creator/director **Silva Lining's Care Plan:** Podcast drama, currently in edit. Three brains, two bodies, one secret plan: an absurd journey into the invisible world of the carer. Longlisted for Women's Prize in Playwriting 2020. Arts Council England and University of Nottingham funded play, using original research - see [Silva trailer](#)
- Writer/director: **Out Like Fudge:** Translating research into drama 2019-20: commissioned by Nephrologist, Dr Barny Hole, performed at Wills Memorial Building, Bristol and Denmark in Nov 2021. Our collaboration extended in 2020 to include **Letter to My Kidney**, a Futures2020 funded participatory project and exhibition, and is extending further in 2021.
- Writer/Producer **Write without Rules** and **Your Creative Sparkle:** two online courses.
- Arts&health Lead **Letter to my Breath:** As part of the award-winning team at Life of Breath Project (2018 Health Humanities Award). Details of this at the end of the CV: "An example of work".
- Arts&health Lead **Letter to my emotions:** Commissioned by EHCAP, then Life of Breath. Also **Letter to my Inner Superhero** for Arts and Health South West).

Credits/Funding

- Writer Collected and compiled **Bournville Tapestry**, a collection of fables about flourishing, told near the sea. This is a story telling

evaluation report, commissioned by Arts and Health South West and Theatre Orchard, published in 2021.

- Consultant **Exhibition and events programme for Catch Your Breath exhibition 2019-20:** for Life of Breath Project.
- Creator/Writer **Frankie:** awarded a 'Broadcast Development Award' from the Wellcome Trust. 2013.
- Writer/Dir. **The Owl,** a story telling poetic adventure for ages 4 to adult. In association with Bristol Old Vic, and St George's Bristol. 2011.
- Writer **BBC Doctors:** Sharp Seedlings. First broadcast Nov 30th. 2004.

2. Academic

- Two Papers [Penny, E., & Malpass, A. \(2019\). Dear Breath: using story structure to understand the value of letter writing for those living with breathlessness—a qualitative study. Arts & health, 1-15. \[Read here\]\(#\)](#)

Malpass, A., & Penny, E. (2019). Invisible Breath. *Storytelling, Self, Society*, 15(1), 43-70.

- Arts&health Lead Devised and lead workshops for WECIL (West of England Centre for Inclusive Living); BEEF (Bristol Experimental and Expanded Film); The Theatre Orchard, Tiverton Youth Club; Scouting and school groups in North Somerset [Caving poems: diary of a creative writing project](#); Crediton Arts Centre and Mediabox. 2013-18.

- Module lead Norwich School of Art and Design Team member for setting up new MA module in Narrative, in 'Animation and Soundscape.' Also, University of East Anglia: Lecturing 1999-2002.

3. Actor, Communications Specialist

Many parts in art films, training videos and virtual reality films.

Employed by six South West medical schools for over fifteen years: multiple role-play scenarios and providing excellent personalised

feedback. 2005-20.

I have a Cambridge University degree in Anthropology and Theology, and an MA in Theatre Directing/Script Writing from UEA.

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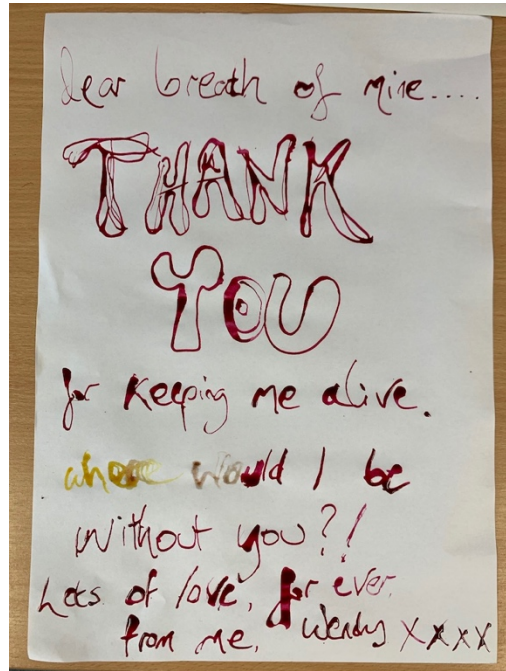
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An example of work from Elsbeth Penny

Over the last six years I have become a leader in the arts&health field of therapeutic letter writing. I began my breath project with a Tedx talk in 2014: [The Lost Art of Letter Writing](#).

After presenting further ideas about using letters in participatory art projects to Lead Investigator of Life of Breath Project, Professor Havi Carel and her team, at University of Bristol, I was delighted to be invited to take part in The Wellcome Trust funded Life of Breath Project. Adapting ideas to the values and needs of the project, this became **Letter to my Breath**. Over the first two years, I ran over 10 “Letter to my breath” workshops along with Dr Alice Malpass, and produced Being Human Festival event [Gasp! Exploring Breath Through Creative Arts](#) at The Arnolfini, and other community events, all contributing to Life of Breath winning the 2018 Health Humanities Award.





This work has manifested further in a number of forms and I have played these roles:

Co-writer of articles Penny, E., & Malpass, A. (2019). Dear Breath: using story structure to understand the value of letter writing for those living with breathlessness—a qualitative study. *Arts & health*, 1-15. [Read](#)

Malpass, A., & Penny, E. (2019). Invisible Breath. *Storytelling, Self, Society*, 15(1), 43-70.

Provocations/speaker/workshop leader:

2020 February SWSAPC workshop: Telling Stories About Breathlessness Hosted by The [Centre for Academic Primary Care \(CAPC\)](#) at the University of Bristol, the South West regional meeting of the [Society for Academic Primary Care \(SAPC\)](#).

2020, Our work presented at The Conference on College Composition and Communication, the largest gathering of college writing faculty in the US via Beth Boquet, Professor of English Director, The Writing Center.

2019 Provocation at Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance: Cultures of breathlessness: using creative letters to the breath to navigate narrative wreckage.

2019 June. Workshop at Storytelling Conference Swansea: Breathlessness as narrative wreckage: helping patients locate themselves within their own treatment narrative and helping GPs to engage their clinical imagination.

My work with Life of Breath took another direction in 2019-20 and I worked part time as a Consultant for **Exhibition and events programme for Catch Your Breath exhibition** for the project. Our team coordinated, commissioned, curated and arranged exhibitions, events and a workshop programme. We invited new and diverse audiences to encounter a collaborative multi-sensory, interdisciplinary, participatory exploration of breath. We held events in diverse locations across Bristol.

My Letter to the Breath project has also inspired two pieces of art: Louise Jenkins' 'Breath Capsules' and Toby Young's choral piece 'Under The Surface'. And the letters themselves have been displayed at multiple venues and online.

Here are some of my blog posts about the project:

<https://lifeofbreath.org/2019/07/catch-your-breath-puppetry-dance-and-creative-writing>

<https://lifeofbreath.org/2018/11/letter-to-my-breath-at-fun-palaces-bristol>

<https://lifeofbreath.org/2018/01/gasp-making-breathlessness-less-invisible-through-the-creative-arts>.

<https://wp.me/p2Dje8-aS> Letter to my Lungs 2016

I have explored writing/creating letters to various aspects of ourselves, (ie not just breath) and have tried them in various pilot projects, (including adaptations to take into consideration vulnerable participants) and one evaluation project, as below.

Letter to my emotions: Commissioned by EHCAP, then Life of Breath, I developed workshops in Dunster Primary school, then led an innovative a puppetry, dance and creative writing workshop about emotions and the breath in three Bristol primary schools, including Glenfrome and St Werburghs.

Letter to my grandchild: I created and ran workshops at 65 High Street, for Nailsea Town Council in 2017: 14 older people learned ipad skills and story-telling skills and made their own photo books and presented them at a Christmas party.

Letter to my Inner Superhero: as part of an evaluation project for social prescribing at For All Healthy Living centre, Weston Super Mare (commissioned by Theatre Orchard and Arts and Health South West). This is an ongoing project over 2 years.



I also wanted to discover what would happen if I tried writing the letters each day, rather than just a one-off workshop. I tried this out at an Arts Residency at The Mothership, Dorset, along with my 16 year old son Bede. We presented our Work in progress and listened to stories and responses over a fire dish to artist's collective, Force 8.

As a result of this, I am creating and piloting an online multimedia course called 'Your Creative Sparkle.' which is a forum for creativity and curiosity, for art and creative writing, a love letter to the self and uses my letter writing/creating techniques to help people through transition.

I'm proud that my letter project has both continued to teach me, and has benefited many people: by listening to what people need and organising a workshop to reflect that, the letter have provided a platform for people to be listened to, and for them to listen to themselves.