



## My Story

### *Karen Hoffman, PCC member since 2013*

I joined the Patient | Carer Community in September 2013 and I've worked as a Mentor, Co-facilitator and a Simulated Patient with Medical Students within that time. I'm also a professional Counsellor living with Psoriatic Arthritis, so I bring my own experiences of having a debilitating, chronic illness along with my professional skills of working as a Mental Health Practitioner.

My journey began several years ago when I was a volunteer with Arthritis Care; this is where I met Jools as we were part of a project called Patient Voices. The project entailed making your own digital story that would be shown in educational settings and to healthcare professionals. I named my own story 'My Dear Friend Arthur'. My story explored the difficulties I faced coming to terms with Psoriatic Arthritis and the difficult life changes I had to make. Arthur was the name I chose for my chronic debilitating illness, and was a coping strategy; a therapeutic response to the anger I felt. Several of us made our stories together and they were named the 'Arthur and Co' stories. The stories have made a lasting impression on the project facilitators, Pip and Tony, so much so they have written a book to celebrate ten years of Patient Voices. They have included a chapter called 'Arthur and Co' describing the journey we have all taken since the making of our stories. My story has been shown all over the world by Pip and Tony, and I've even shared it with some of the medical students. The impression I've been given from the students' perspective is the emotional impact they feel rather than just reading a case study from a text book.

This brings me back to the present day, working for the Patient | Carer Community, where I feel like I'm giving something back to the NHS by educating student doctors. The PCC being part of their education is vital, and is a valuable learning tool. My role has also given me the confidence I lost when I was first diagnosed, a sense of purpose, it feeds my self-worth and I'm not alone as I'm part of a community. I feel great satisfaction when I help a group of students to learn how to communicate with a patient. I've also mentored a small group of students that have reflected on the challenges they have faced out on placement. In the classroom visits, I've educated the students on living with a long term condition, something that cannot be taught by a book alone. I will finish by saying that I'm proud to be part of the students' journey, and watching them grow and become Doctors with difference.