

Imagining Better Futures of Health and Social Care using Fairytales

These works were created by participants of the writing workshops facilitated by Louise Kenward in 2024 as part of the research project *Imagining Better Futures of Health and Social Care with and for People with Energy Limiting Chronic Illnesses*.

The main prompt was to use fairytales to consider how this framework could help us imagine better futures of health and social care. This booklet compiles some of the creations from participants. Some pieces are complete works others are works in progress.

For more information visit

<https://disbeliefdisregard.uk/ahrc-project/>

CONTENTS

1. Pages of Possibility by Helen
2. The Sleeping Dragon (Once Upon a Time) by Anon
3. The Hermit Sorcerer of Nowhere by Angela
4. The Very Most Likely Right Dr of TaT (This and That) by Anon
5. Invisible Not Me by Punam
6. The Grateful Hairy Friend of the Chilly Heights by Nico
7. The Overwhelmed Pixie of the Multi-Dimensional World of Complexity by Anon
8. I Would Love to Be Cinderella by Jenny
9. Community Building by Sian
10. The Lavender Phoenix by Zoë

Introduction

This is a collection of texts, excerpts, notes, and stories created during, and inspired by, a series of asynchronous online prompts and a synchronous online workshop run by Louise Kenward and Ana Bê Pereira.

The sessions were designed to draw on the ideas of fairy tales to imagine future healthcare for people with energy limiting conditions. With themes of setting, character and communication, thoughts about how services could look, feel, and be like were brought out in enormously imaginative ways.

With thanks to all who have contributed their wonderful imaginings and rich creativity, bringing their own experiences of living with energy limiting conditions to life. It has been a great privilege and huge joy to work with you.

Louise Kenward, April 2024.

Pages of Possibility by Helen

In Bustleton Town, where life's a race,
Lives Luna, a soul of much gentler grace.
Her footsteps are slow, for an unseen mission,
She manages daily, energy-limiting conditions.

With a spirit quite brave and oh, so bright,
Luna embraces health challenges, be it day or night.
So, in a bustling world, where strengths frequently clash,
She's learned to be resilient, forging her own steady path.

Into Bustleton Town, with her friend she must go,
To this town where people gossip, about her pace being slow.
“Do not care for their words” Luna’s friend asserts,
“I’ve a surprise more important!” Luna’s attention she diverts.

From the heart of the rush to a place quite serene,
A new bookshop of stories is where they convene.
Leaving the bustling street, Luna moves to the door,
Untold tales within her, vibrating with lore.

The door-sprung jingles invite them in,
To books from whose page’s, possibilities begin.
Printed scents infuse the warm cosy air—
Luna inhales deeply: no room here for despair.

In this haven of wonders, from near and far,
Luna's mind explodes like a bursting star.
Upon lengths of shelves, books of magical titles,
At once exploring—her excitement won't stifle.

Book in hand, Luna's attention prepares for first flight,
Celestial Odyssey, she opens, a story of might.
“Whoa! What’s happening?” Luna exclaims with surprise,
A world at warp speed, fast forward she flies.

A mere whisp amid chaos, Luna's presence unseen,
Fast-paced worlds, zooming comets, she’s really not keen.
Overwhelmed by the pace, its clamorous race,
She closes this world, for a quieter place.

Undeterred for adventure, Luna’s spirits rebound,
Sonic Sanctuary, her next find, curiosity surrounds.
In an instant, a symphony of disorderly sounds,
Drown her senses—high-frequency echoes abound.

In this cacophonous world, tranquillity seems rare,
Luna shuts the book tight, escaping its audacious blare.
Thankful to return to the quiet bookstore's air,
She craves stories whispered, with more gentle care.

Approaching the shelves with resolve still strong,
A worn book called *Fables*—might this be the one?
The pages reveal characters quite unforgiving,
Their abilities thrive but compassion is missing.

Swift efficiency reigns in this able domain,
No patience for limits, understanding constrained.
Luna’s energy-limits feel horribly dismissed,
Until she spies the real title: *Able’s Fables*—how remiss!

Disheartened, she closes *Able’s Fables* and sighs,
Inclusion and kindness, the themes she now vies.
Pursuing a new title with hesitant grace,
The magic bookcase senses her yearning embrace.

So softly, it spoke to gift Luna her quest,
“*Togetherland*, is where your wishes will be met.
Open its pages to find a realm so divine—
Kindness is currency, all abilities thrive.”

Undeterred by a bookcase that seemed to speak,
Luna sought *Togetherland*, its essence she'd seek.
A world where acceptance and love prevail,
She longed for this book with its heart-warming tale.

Togetherland was all she'd longed for and more,

People weren't judged by abilities, this she adored!
Where compassion, understanding, and generosity were trade,
A warm community with uniqueness; strong foundations laid.

Luna felt embraced, in the warmth she'd found—
Prizing diverse qualities, it was truly profound.
Boundless possibilities buoyed upon a loving air,
A strength grew within her, beyond what's rare.

Absorbing the pages, her radiant smile grew,
She'd found her place of goodness, this she knew.
Magic bookcase, sensing her joy so bright,
Softly whispered, "*Togetherland* is your guiding light."

Startled, intrigued, Luna looked around,
It was from the bookcase, the voice was found!
"Fear not, dear Luna, your eyes' plea I see,
A place to store *Togetherland*, for you I reveal."

A hidden door from its frame the bookcase unsealed,
"Return when equanimity your heart longs to feel.
Within enchanted shelves, this secret we'll keep,
A world of possibilities, where your dreams can run deep."

Overwhelmed with gratitude, Luna's beating heart swelled,
This enchanted bookcase, her soul it now held.

A haven of inclusion, where her dreams were made real,
With diversity and equity, such exciting appeal.

Togetherland became Luna's guiding north star—
In hearts, not appearances, rests the stories we are.
A narrative of acceptance, of abilities entwined,
From pages of possibility, togetherness in kind.

*

The Sleeping Dragon by Anon

Once upon a time

In a land far away
The sleeping dragon lay
All had tried to mix a spell, to wake it up
To make it well
The doctors failed
Soothsayers too
Witches wailed
No one knew
Why it slept night and day. When once its strength was legendary

One small child bright as a pin

Decided to try reading poems

Well what harm can it do the adults said

And installed a comfy seat by the dragons bed

At first nothing changed, on the outside at least

The carers still came to feed and clean the fantastic beast

But by the time the child had grown out of mother goose

The dragon began stirring and asking for soup

By the time the child became adult

The dragons strength had trebled

All that loving and tender care

Helped the dragons health repair

If all that needs it could receive dragon tlc

I think that from ME we'd all be free.

Its experience that counts said the wise man

Walk in the dragons footsteps for a year

Endure what it endures

See how villagers turn away ignore its pain

Pretend it isn't real

Except the children untainted by misinformation

Who accept all creatures

With love and kindness

Marvel at the wondrous being

Acknowledge its wisdom and show compassion.

Bear witness and believe

Hope and like the witches explore spells and potions one day the magic of art and science will find a cure.

Anyone can fall ill at anytime with ME. Do more research try try try harder to understand

Reach out a helping hand

Support dragons to live their best lives.

The beginning of the end

Dragons traditionally live long and distinguished lives

Being that rare creature of fire and air

Most folk think they are uncultured

Not knowing they sing and hold the ancient stories

Whether a dragon is from the woods or mountains

Streams or sea

They all share the same DNA

Have scales that reflect the colours of nature magic and sparkle and twinkle in time with their glowing hearts.

Yes dragons are often quiet seeking sanctuary from ignorance and become lonely and forlorn.

It is not unknown for them to die of neglect or be grumpy if disturbed by disrespectful people.

But in the best places surrounded by compassionate and those who place listening to others at the top of their must do and do well list

Dragons can thrive and find joy.

They are great story tellers and wise

Children know this and as in all things are smarter than grown ups who forget that playing and using imagination is the key to making the world a good place for everyone and all creatures

Dragons who are the most wondrous of all need TLC and if we fail at this then the end of the beginning will be the beginning of the end for all.

What will you do?

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The Hermit Sorcerer of Nowhere by Angela

The Hermit Sorcerer of Nowhere lives on a windswept island covered in wildflowers. The island travels across the seas hidden from view. Sometimes she is joined by the big wild goose who carries her as they fly over the oceans.

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Notes for fairy-tale setting of future healthcare vision

Setting:

Forest. River. Forest gardens. Nuts and berries. Clearings – meadows. Brooks / burns. The sea, next to the forest. A mountain/hill where goats live. A dragon who lives in the mountain – she gives advice (sometimes), and sometimes she heals people – they rest on her/by her side (imagine she is curled up in crescent shape, and healing-seekers rest around the centre of the crescent). Crystals in the mountain.

Seasons. Musical instruments made from wood – drums, percussion, flutes.

Swings near a brook, different sizes, all have privacy.

Resting places – beds of grass on the ground, some higher wooden frames (off the ground).

Important: Diversity in the setting – many options.

Characters:

- Elves who smell of leaves and mould
- Small rodents who look after the resting places – munching grass into a paste to make a smooth base for mattresses
- Butterflies in the meadows and clearings
- The dragon
- Healing-seekers
- Witches
- Unicorns – Empaths

Future healthcare in this setting:

- The dragon is a healer
- Elves are hosts to travellers and healing-seekers
- Rodents maintain resting places
- Purring animals (could be cats, or other for those with allergies) live in resting places, keep healing-seekers warm, and the vibration of the purring soothes their fractured/stressed nerves
- Butterflies tickle the faces of those who like that (yellow and white), or provide visual interest to those lying down who do not like tickling (Peacocks, Red Admirals)
- Unicorns are empaths and act as guides (1-2-1) to healing seekers, carrying them around the place as needed, and providing warmth as well as guidance, and they carry people well enough through the forest to the sea for *Ausfluege* (lit. Out-flights – fig. day out)
- Beds are where healing-seekers prefer: in the trees (elves host), by the burn/brook, at the edge of the forest to be able to see stars in the sky at night, and the mountain and the sea – unicorns stay with those who are not with elves

Communication methods:

- The dragon feels the pain, and sometimes its source, through its skin, and heals through its skin – where scales are softer. Different parts of the dragon for different pain (so that she does not burn out with unnecessary depth of healing)
- Elves communicate telepathically amongst themselves, and with those sensitive healing-seekers who speak ‘Mind’
- Goblins offer blackboard and pointing stick presentations and advice on treatments, food, and anything that healing-seekers want to learn about, especially the flowers and trees in the forest

- Witches do a sensory assessment based mostly on taste and smell, also touch and speed of vibration – and make healing teas and foods
- Unicorns do play assessments and show healing-seekers all the different places and ways to play and have fun: swings, pools, chessboards, libraries, racquet games, word games, playing with colours, making marks, musical instruments

Important: healing-seekers and healer teams review all healing/processes together!

Important: **Multitudes** of communication: tablets, speaking rounds, dance, write/make music, painting/mark-making

Seasons: healing-seekers come for their healing in the season of their choice: some prefer the contrasts of ice and sun, frost and fire in winter; others seek the warmth of late spring, the heat of summer, early and late, or the cooling moisture of autumn, with its abundance of berries

Work: this is part of the healing, to be determined after intake assessments: learning to prepare herbs, food, documenting to preserve knowledge, learning about the forest and methods of permaculture – and support with direction after leaving the healing-place.

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The Very Most Likely Right Dr of TaT (This and That) by Anon

The Very Most Likely Right Dr of TaT (This and That) is friend to all animals and leading expert in the management of pain (source unknown) and frizz.

Set on an island; barren, it looks bleak but is glorious on further discovery. It has many seasons and many species of plant and trees. Wildflowers, orchids, mega giant poppies and cornflowers. The island is home to chestnut ponies, goldfinches, goats.

The waves do seethe along the coastline but there is power to halt and freeze, to walk underneath and connect to darker or lighter places.

The island is connected by boat and is accessible by other modes of transport. Booted bantams on bicycles advise further on this.

Community and compassion are everything on the island.

*

Invisible Not Me/ The beauty within fairy by Punam

Set on a hot beach in parallel with a frozen kingdom, the characters are navigating mountains and deep crevices and hidden caves. It's a place which is striving for a non-judgemental world, where everyone is equal, and people look within not outside. Everyone has a part to play and are valued for who they are.

Characters:

The Kindness fairy ice skates around in the ice while The Bold Queen rides in on a horse The Judgemental Ogre crawls around on their hands and knees and the Funny wise Owl zooms around in an air taxi.

Communication:

Kindness Fairy communicates via balloons with her thoughts or feelings written on them.

The Bold Queen has a sword which she swishes around when talking.

The judgemental ogre farts out his words, and the Funny wise owl draws their thoughts in the air out the exhaust of their taxi.

*

The Grateful Hairy Friend in the Chilly Heights by Nico

The Chilly Heights are near to the ocean, but in a place that is very hilly and very cold. It's a place where humans and birds live alongside each other. The birds have their world in the forest and the humans live in houses amongst the valleys and hills. They support each other and there are extra special 1-2-1 bonds between a bird and a human. If the human is in need, the bird can call in their flock for support and similarly the human can call on other humans for support. It is very much a world of shared care.

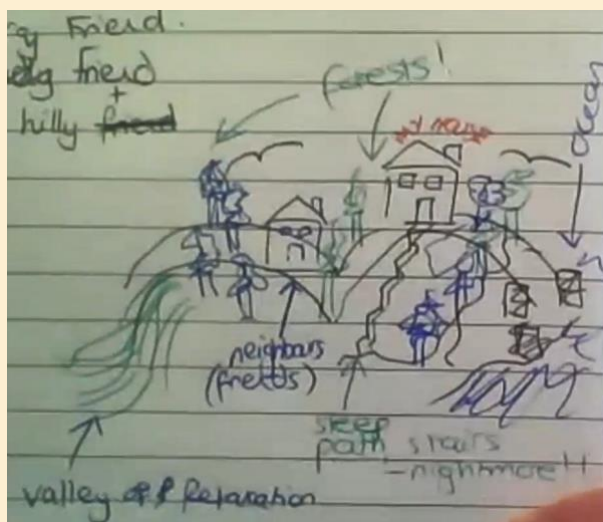
On the lower hill nearby are my friends, and it's easy to get lost in the forest that surround the house, but it's much easier to navigate when the birds are with me. It's quite steep and hard to get down but at the bottom is the Valley of Relaxation.

Luna is the name of the main bird friend, and everyone has housing no matter their income. Everyone has access to foods (and vegetable patches!), and we live in communities of support and care - with a whistle to call on our bird, who can then call on others with specialist knowledge/skills (no assuming our key Bird Friend/loved one will/can do all the support and vice versa).

The human would have a whistle (flute-esque instrument) made from the bark of their Bird Friend's chosen Home tree. This would be used to mimic bird song.

There's lots of communication through acts (plenty of sharing baked good and extra veggies from your patch) with a community-built library to help people find common experiences around their conditions.

In a corner of the land, there is a community amongst the hills with people much like you and I. The difference is that they have joined forces with the creatures nearby.



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The Overwhelmed Pixie of the Multi-Dimensional World of Complexity by Anon

The Overwhelmed Pixie of the Multi-Dimensional World of Complexity lives in a cave in a forest but every time she emerges the world is slightly different, sometimes dark and menacing, sometimes beautiful, sometimes foggy, sometimes magical, things fade in and out, at times there are buildings and structures and lots of people, but at others just cute animals. It's a small area and the cave is largely hidden by drooping tree branches. Just outside is a clearing surrounded by shrub land with paths cutting through sometimes just foot trodden sometimes actual roads. The scale can vary depending on what version of the world she is seeing in that moment. The air is always crisp and clean no matter what else is happening. Certain trees and plants and paths are always in the same place no matter what else is going on around it.

Pixie moves slowly and cautiously. She tries to be invisible until she can suss out what's going on around her each day. If she goes through the undergrowth at the side of the cave, she can access a small area of wilderness that doesn't change too much, where she can spend time to get her bearings. There are other pixies who live in the same world, four others she sees from time to time, and they help each other practically and emotionally if needed, but they are all ultimately independent. They are all just trying to get by and stay OK in difficult circumstances.

Pixie is slightly smaller than a human, softly spoken, she wears green and brown. Moving slowly and quietly you might not easily see her. She is friendly if approached by someone she perceives to be kind but otherwise tries to keep out of people's way. Most people (aside from the four pixies) are different to her, some trolls, some gnomes, some robots, even zombies so she has to be cautious.

The pixies are all understanding, intuitive, and committed to supporting one another, when needed. In this world, the pixies can always be found in the wilderness area at the back, no matter what chaos is happening in the main part of the world. They will be there if one of them is in distress and needs help. Even though they don't spend all their time together, they care about each other deeply, are a community and their top priority is to make sure everyone is as healthy and happy as they can be.

This wilderness area is a hidden world that doesn't change like the "real" world out the front. It can be used to call for help from the other pixies if needed. The pixies will come straight away if they sense one of them needs help with food, maintenance, or care. If the situation is more dire, they will come together and carry the ill pixie deeper into the forest where an elder druid will guide them to a healing pod. The healing pod is a glass capsule embedded into the ground. There is no sensory input, and it is infused with healing energy. It is ideal

for healing migraines! If the pixie needs other types of healing, then the fairy nurses are sent. They are silent, gentle, and caring, and monitor the ill pixie. They sense what medicine or intervention is needed and administer it without any fuss. They know what the patient needs and when they need it and have an empathetic attunement to knowing exactly what the ill pixie is feeling. Their priority is the comfort of the pixie. There is a spot outside the pixie's cave where she can rest on a bed of moss in the cool gentle breeze.

The communication in this world between the pixies is based around intuition and just "knowing" each other. They know when they can chat, and they know when they need something. Maybe one pixie finds a potion in one of the temporary worlds that would help a fellow pixie. To help one pixie is to help the community of pixies and the community is greater than the sum of its parts.

The other characters that turn up in each of the new worlds that appear are virtually impossible to understand. Sometimes there is a degree of communication that can be done but there are no guarantees they will understand each other. Most of the time they will not. The pixie with an energy limiting condition must depend on the other pixies and their close connections alone. There may be magic potions or wise healers in the other worlds, but the amount of energy involved in understanding and navigating each new world and the characters within it just isn't energy efficient for her.

Luckily for the pixies they also exchange essence between themselves as a form of communication. Each pixie has a predominance of a certain type of essence which is not dictated by the amount of physical energy they have. It means that they can contribute to their community just by existing. That is enough.

One day there will be a magical world where, despite the chaos, confusion and change a group of pixies will learn to care for and support each other. They will hone magical techniques, communications, skill, and above all will love, respect, and trust one another. They will learn that happiness and peace come from community and helping one another not from snatching whatever novelty they can from all the worlds that pass by.

*

I Would Love To Be Cinderella, But Because Of My Health And How It Affects Me, I End Up Feeling Like the Ugly Step Sister by Jenny

Set in a kingdom without barriers where people listen to each other and do not feel on their own. A world where they don't ask why 'can you not?' they know what I can do and accept me.

Cats would live in my kingdom, as they don't want your energy & they want to make you feel better. They would speak and reassure me. Garfield, Luna and Cleo would bring their cat friends to visit and there would be harmony amongst past enemies.

Garfield sleeps on my head, protecting me whilst I sleep, and Luna gets up to mischief. When I struggle to get up, they stay with me. If they could in this magical world, I know they would make me better.

It would be a simple life and very easy to navigate, not the bureaucracy that currently surrounds disability / long term health conditions. I wouldn't have to keep filling in forms - having to prove health care needs. My cats would fix me, they would have the power and they don't ask 'why'. My cats are non-judgemental, they would listen and make sure they helped.

Often nobody in health care has time, they just refer you onto a merry-go round of other referrals. They would just know what was wrong and what I needed and I would not have to stress the impact my health has on my life all the time. Virtual meetings would be easier rather than expecting me to attend appointments in person. This is easier now, as doctors do a lot more phone calls and texts.

In my fairytale world the cats would be the ones who stayed with you all the time and sorted medical issues all out that day. They would come to you; they would know you struggled and what would help. Communication would be easy and there would be a lot more understanding.

*

This Is a Story About a Community Building Itself On Care by Sïan

In my world the humans all live in the village, and the mythical beasts have retreated to the woods away from them. There's a centaur, elf etc. Eventually in the story the woodland creatures will come together and form their own community instead of being isolated.

Even when talking different languages there is a common understanding & instinctive knowing in this imagined future community. I know that there are other people living in the woods as well, but maybe I haven't quite found them yet, so it's like I've got people around me but they are hiding behind a tree. We're all out in the woods, it's just really hard to see and hear each other sometimes.

A future healthcare system will look for the root of the problem and treat the whole body & mind as a holistic system rather than many individual symptoms (e.g. my CFS was probably caused by undiagnosed/untreated ADHD and could have potentially been avoided altogether if I hadn't burnt out).



*

The Lavender Phoenix by Zoë

In an alpine village with colourful plants and glacial blue river, there are colourful painted wooden huts. The phoenix lives in the hollow of a tall pine tree.

Mythical beasts fill this story, with Pegasus and Snomes etc - they both walk and fly. It's a peaceful place and strength and kindness prevail. Freedom is the most important thing in my world.

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