

## **Memory, beliefs, childhoods and the arts therapies: challenges and innovations**

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### **Overview**

Childhoods are changing. Centuries old cultural traditions, held and passed on through the interconnections of memory and oppressive attitudes are being challenged. These have been seen as unquestioned norms and maintained in ways that range from our individual and collective unconscious to healthcare policies and practices. Memory and beliefs hold and keep alive negative stereotypes of a child as passive, unable to make decisions of worth and needing adults to make decisions or to act in their 'best interests' about children's bodies and minds.

This keynote is based on innovatory theory, research and practice that challenges the power of such cultural memory and attitude. It connects drama, art, music and dance movement therapy to recent developments in the new sociology of childhood (Corsaro, 2017) and children's rights (Jones and Welch 2020) to develop new ways of theorising, researching and practising arts therapy with children. It will draw on a range of perspectives, including those of child clients. The keynote will be driven by three questions:

- How do traditional cultural beliefs and our collective memories and associations with childhood impact negatively on therapy with children?
- How can recent concepts and practices rooted in child rights, child voice and child agency offer challenges to the influences of such memories and associations on the arts therapies?
- What do such innovative ideas and ways of working offer to children, arts therapy service provision, research and therapist education?