**Title of research: Understanding young people’s biographical narratives of living with juvenile idiopathic arthritis.**

## Hello my name is Charlotte and I’m in my 2nd year of my PhD research.

## The purpose of my research is to explore and develop new understandings of young people’s embodied experience of juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA). This research aims to comprehend how young people (age 14 to 24) make sense of being diagnosed with a long-term condition and provide biographical narrative understandings of young people’s lives exploring how they negotiate identity within the broader social contexts to produce future trajectories as they transition to adulthood. While there are several sociological studies on arthritis, the literature mainly focuses on the experiences of adults (see Bury, 1982; Sanders *et al*., 2002). Additionally, there is a dominant theme within sociological accounts of chronic illness which position it as an experience of crisis, disruption, and a loss of self (Bury, 1982;1988’ Charmaz, 1983). This study aims to mitigate against these theories by using the concept of biographical contingency (Monaghan and Gabe, 2015) to understand the illness experience.

So far, I have conducted interviews with 5 participants over Zoom due to COVID-19 restrictions. Some initial findings from my interviews are highlighting that some young make sense of their JIA by accepting their condition. The theoretical framework of this research is underpinned by biographical contingency, which is employed particularly in young people with a chronic illness (Monaghan and Gabe, 2015). For young people, conceptualising their condition as contingent with the formation of their identity is deployed rather than being viewed as a critical disruption to their life. This also ties into discourses on youth identities that suggests young people are in a process of ‘contingency and flux’ (Macdonald and Shildrick, 2013: 157).

Another common theme which is emerging in my data is the narrative understandings of the process of diagnosis. Several of the young people interviewed have had a recent diagnosis take place during the Covid-19 pandemic. This has caused a delay in diagnosis and access to treatment. Such delays have seemingly highlighted the symptoms that JIA can have on a young person’s life and intensifies the embodied experience. As such, a diagnosis of JIA highlights the tensions of the condition as well as being diagnosed itself. Moreover, diagnosis can be seen to aid acceptance and continuity of a young person’s biographical identity.

I am still recruiting participants for my research and I look forward to listening to more young people’s experiences of life with JIA.