

University of Manchester Medal of Honour Presented to Jo Richler on Tuesday, 16 July 2024

Citation:

Jo Richler is the Lead Consultant at Ciel Associates, an educational consultancy. Her consultancy work and research focus are on the management of change with a specific focus on Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND).

Following an initial career as a musician in the theatre and as Composer-in-Residence in Wigan for the Arts in Schools initiative, she earned a PGCE at The University of Manchester and an MSc in Education Management from MMU. So, you won't be surprised to learn that Jo is an Accredited Member of the Society of Education Consultants and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.

Jo has extensive experience across the education sector, having served as a tutor, senior manager, and consultant in primary to higher education. The breadth of her expertise in this field is truly awe inspiring.

Jo's research and consultancy work in the past has included projects with Brooke House (new sixth form college – creation of the learning services provision) and City College Norwich (evaluation of provision). Jo was the Senior Advisor (HE in FE) for PALATINE, the HEA Subject Centre for Performing Arts, for whom she researched and wrote 'Looking Further: a landscape survey of the provision of HE performing arts in further education', and she also was commissioned by the HEA's Psychology Network to map the provision of higher education psychology courses in FE colleges, including issues of access.

She has also established a formidable reputation as a leader and innovator in inclusion, learning challenges and the management of change with a specific focus on education and independent learning skills. Jo has particular expertise in special education needs and disabilities; compliance and awareness; equity, equality, inclusion and diversity.

She is a Director of the Delamere Trust, a funding provider for professional special needs education providers and schools, and a strategy and policy adviser for a number of charities in that sector.

She is senior education advisor of JSEND an organisation supporting those educating and caring for Jewish children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) ensuring service provision is culturally and religiously appropriate.

For over thirty years, Jo has volunteered with Manchester Sands, a baby loss charity for bereaved parents who support other bereaved parents in the Manchester area who have experienced baby loss. She served as a meeting host, trained befriender, and since 2016, as Co-Chair. She co-led the award-winning STILL PARENTS: Life After Baby Loss project with The Whitworth Art Gallery in 2019.

STILL PARENTS won four major awards:

- The Kids in Museum's 'Going the Extra Mile' award
- The University of Manchester's 'Making a Difference Award'
- The Museum Association's 'Best Museum's Change Lives Project' award
- The Family Arts Campaign's 'Audience Impact and Innovation Award'.

Whilst the exhibition is now closed, monthly artist-led, art-making sessions are continuing at The Whitworth.

If I may read some quotes of parents from the Sands website that captures the profound impact these sessions have had on parents who have lost a baby.

“This has been better than a counselling session. It was so good to talk to others who understand.”

“We got more time to talk to people as we were working...I realised tonight that others have the same feelings as me. It made me feel less alone.”

Jo is an inspiring speaker and facilitator and recognised as a leading voice and innovator in her field. In 2004, Jo was awarded the Learning Resources Manager of the Year by the prestigious World of Learning Awards, and in 2005 she was short-listed for a DfES Star Award for Outstanding Achievement in the area of Innovative Practice and Inspiration.

In her leisure time, Jo enjoys navigating the Cheshire waterways on her narrowboat with her husband Paul and their dog Bertie.