

Interdisciplinary research and implications for therapeutic practice in a connected world

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'An Internet of Soft Things'

- EPSRC-funded project
- September 2014 – February 2016

- Interdisciplinary nature of project and its value
- Show film documenting co-designer's experience
- Emerging themes from workshops

EPSRC

Engineering and Physical Sciences
Research Council



Internet of
SoftThings

Objectives of the Project

- To benefit non-medicalised care practices
- To co-design meaningful networks of things
- To develop a co-design methodology using relational approaches to mental wellbeing



Phases of the project

- **Series of workshops at Mind**
- Group work sessions in smart flat augmented with textile interfaces
- Work in the wild during days out with support staff and service users
- Integration and Reflection



Workshops at Mind



- Participants to **create personalized textile objects** with soft switches and light output
- **Recovery Star** to assess participants' ability to cope with aspects of their life and to map areas of improved self-worth and resilience
- To understand **how the community invests meaning in material things** and modes of expressive output, the input actions they identify, and to collect data on **participants' awareness of their own and others' emotions and behaviour**
- Participants will support each other in **developing peer support networks** as part of their own recovery agenda

An interdisciplinary approach

- **Computer Science** (co-design model)
- **Textiles** (drawing on craft/making approaches to design)
- **Person-Centred Approach** (relational therapeutic model)
- Creating an environment which is non-directive and open-ended, and ultimately guided by the participants

5 Stages of Process

Stage	Computer Science	Textile/Craft	Person-Centred Approach
1	Familiarisation	Familiarisation	Psychological Contact
2	Conceptualisation	Creation	Establishing therapeutic relationship
3	Creation	Conceptualisation	Meaning-making
4	Modification	Presentation	Being (awareness of self, and in relationship)
5	Presentation	Modification/Re-conceptualisation	Autonomy

Extracts from Informed Consent process

- **To take some time to reflect on how this process has been for me and communicate this in whatever way feels most comfortable for me personally.** I understand that I will have the opportunity to provide this feedback in a variety of ways; through conversation, written notes, drawings or photographs and that the counsellor can help to facilitate this process and offer any support I may need
- I understand that I may remain anonymous and that I will have the opportunity to consent separately to the use of **EITHER my image AND/OR my actual voice OR my words OR writings being used, and spoken by others**

Workshop experience

- Experience of one individual
- Shows range of reflection during workshops.... (process?)
-and after the workshops ended (outcome?)

- Elaine is our co-researcher from Mind
- She gave Sarah – her co-designer and one of our researchers – permission to speak her words and show her reflections and things that she made

Themes from workshops at Mind (1)



- **Interaction with others**

- Meeting new people
- Talking helps
- Increased ability to comfortably tolerate being in a group

- **Engagement & Participation**

- Focus on task and importance of finishing
- Absorbed by activity
- Sense of personal achievement
- Reduction of worry/stress temporarily, but concentration can cause worry too
- Distraction (short-term) from everyday challenges
- Trying something new



Themes from workshops at Mind (2)



• Changes in mood

- Low mood noticeably lifted after group
- Calmer, happier thoughts and feelings
- Looking forward to next week
- Enjoyment and increased positivity
- Apprehension lessened and confidence increased over weeks
- Food: eating it, talking about it, informing design ideas
- Humour: laughter of various types
- Collective making: individual items connecting, working together or alone



Implications for therapeutic practice in a connected world

- Mind group not using online resources or smartphones
- Textiles (soft things) are appealing from a sensory/experiential point of view
- Self-made objects hold meanings for individuals
- Next phase: we are developing a storyboarding tool to help people think about and co-design different possible connections between things, the implications of sharing information with others and/or having others share with you

How do we know we make a difference?

Outcome, process and wellbeing in psychotherapy

- Interdisciplinary project: different disciplines value different outcomes, but **one shared value is the importance of the participant's experiential process in the workshops**
- We tried to capture the making process as well as the emotional/psychological process of working with a facilitator and in the group **at an experiential level as well as part of a reflexive process**
- We adapted an existing model (Recovery Star became our 'starfish') as well as a shortened form of WEMWBS along with sheets we developed ourselves. **However, the most relevant feedback often came as a result of dialogue between participant and facilitator in an empathic, non-judgemental, open-ended environment**