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
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

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