



# THE YARNFULNESS PROJECT

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# PUBLIC INPUT AHEAD OF RESEARCH

- The main feature of The Yarnfulness Project is to engage with members of the public before the research has taken place

# PREMISE

- Recent trend in the news and online media reporting on the benefits of yarn-based activities, such as knitting and crochet
- Public asked questions at Curiosity Carnival 'Knit a Neuron'
- No clear cut evidence to back up the claims



# AIMS



- To engage the public in the design of a project to investigate the merits and potential benefits of yarn crafts in an objective, empirical manner
- To conduct in-depth research engagement and involvement activities with the public

# PHASE I - ENGAGEMENT

- Visit local craft groups and talk about the project and gain initial ideas
- Set up public facing website with background information and interested people
  - Post Team and Guest Crafter Blogs about the topic to encourage subscribers

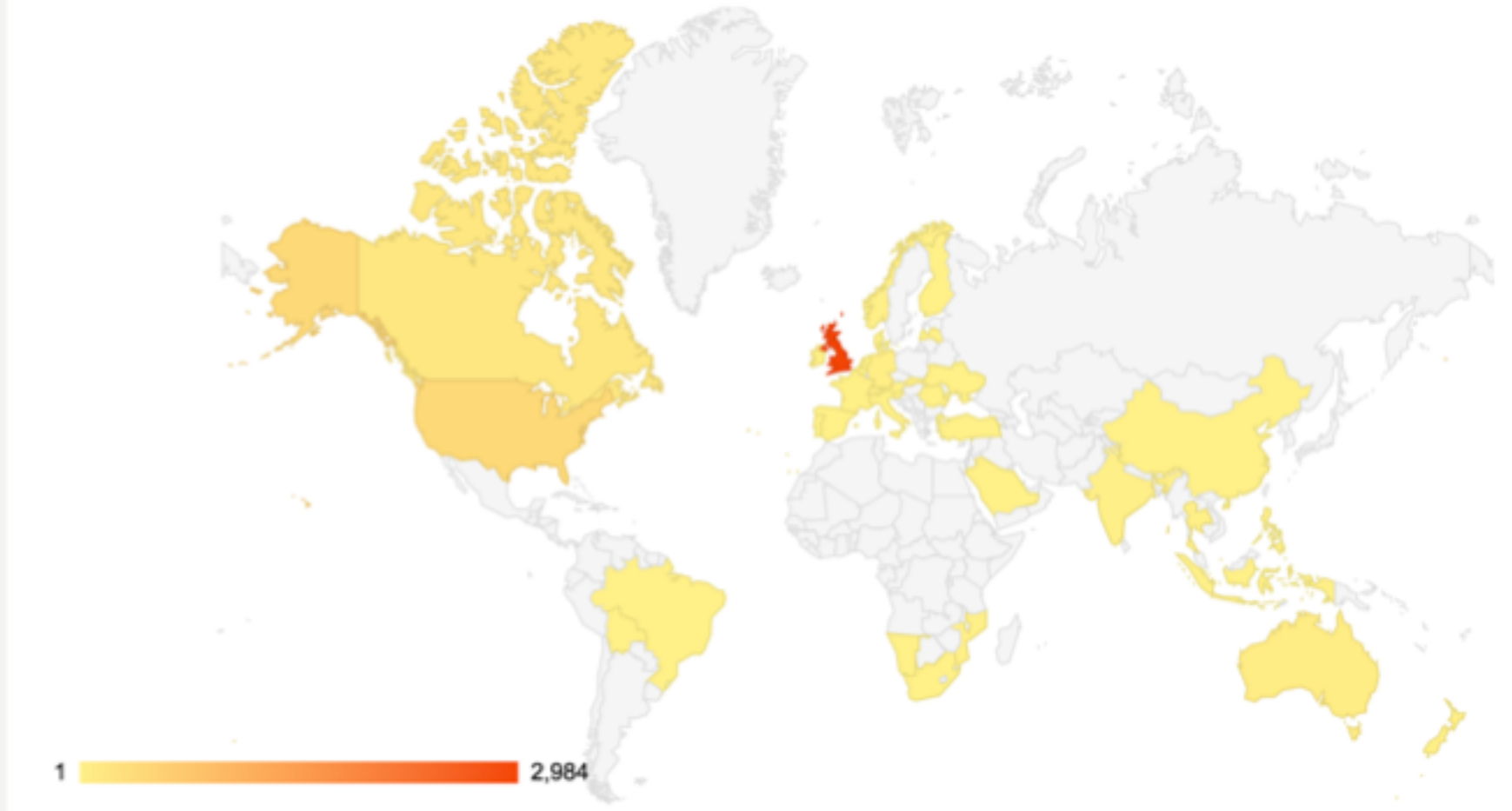
# ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

- Launched in January 2018
  - 836 Unique hits
  - 37 Countries



# ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

Stats for 2018



# PHASE II - INVOLVEMENT

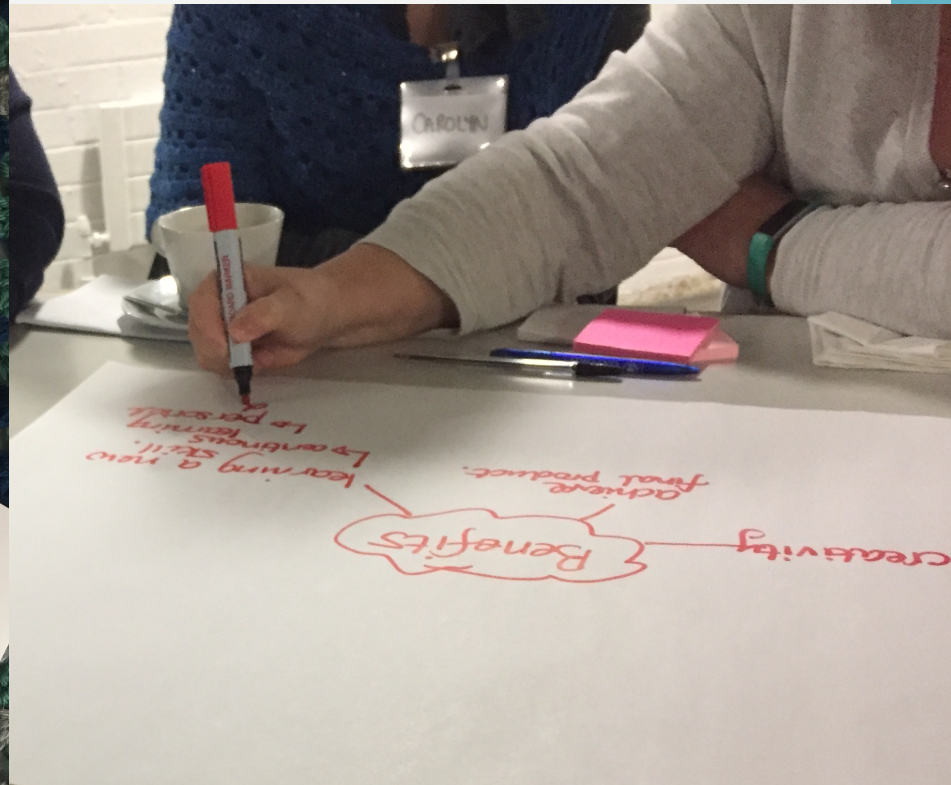
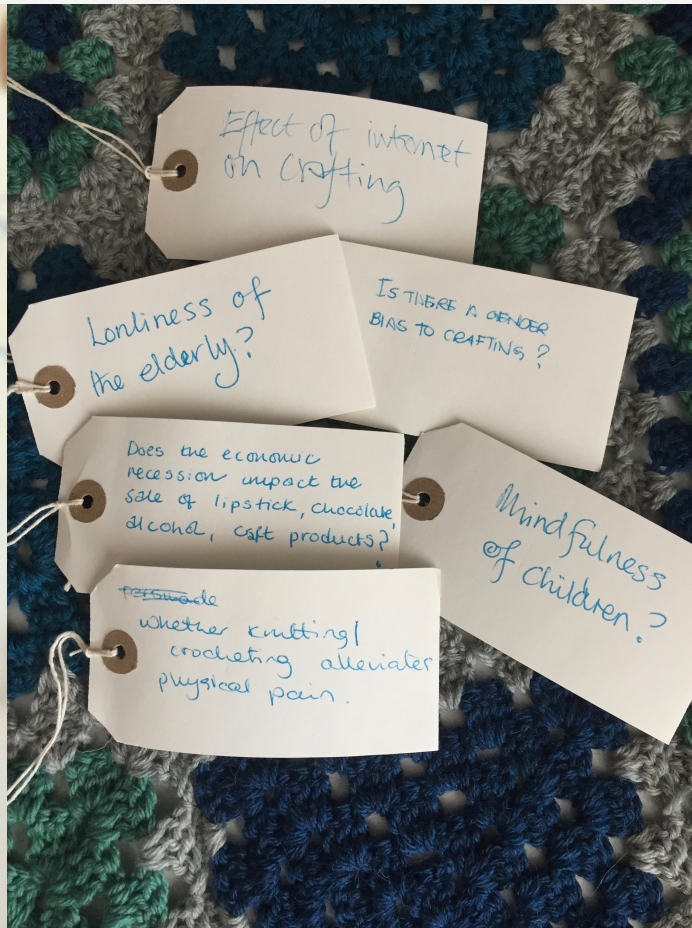
- Run a 'Yarnfulness Tea Party' for interested people to learn more and shape future research priorities – identify potential public collaborators
- Take comments from online contributors



# TEA PARTY

- Tea Party
  - Modern Art Café Oxford , Neutral Setting
  - ‘What is Psychological Research’ and ‘What is the Evidence So Far?’
  - Informal Conversations and Comment Gathering
- 9 Attendees from 22 – ‘Late 50’s’
- Lots of ideas for research
- Very positive Feedback from participants
  - *An absolutely fascinating morning – so many different strands of thought*
  - *Absolutely brilliant discussion. Want to help in any way I can.*

# TEA PARTY

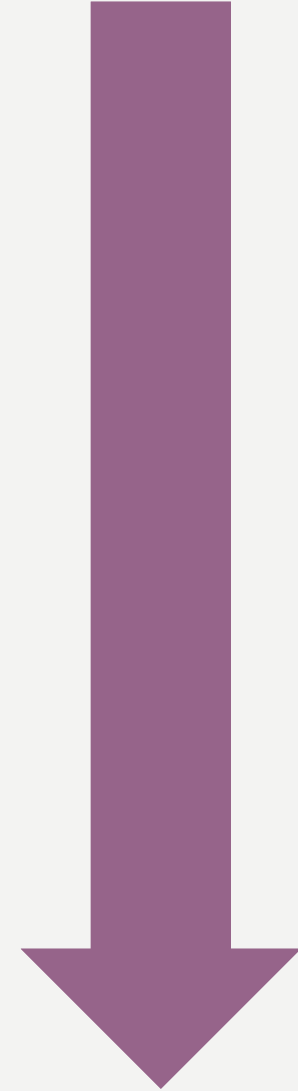


# PHASE III – CO-CREATION

- Using input from phases I and II, develop research plan and write protocols with members of the public

# GOING FORWARD

- Involvement has made us go back to basics
- Systematic Review of literature underway with Contributor input
- Qualitative Research in Health and Mental Illness
  - working with public and mental health charities
- Quantitative Research – In-depth Questionnaires
- Experimental study using qualitative and questionnaire data



# ADDITIONAL COLLABORATIONS

- Pitt Rivers Museum
  - Pitt Fest 'What to Researchers Do All Day' Knitting Circle
  - Knit In - Engaging with the public through craft
- Crafting for Mental Health
  - Mind Solent – Visit Local Wellbeing Centres
  - Restore Oxford – Visiting Local Restore Café Knitting Group

# PROJECT IMPACT TO DATE

- Featured in Handmade UK Magazine
- Featured in the Federation of Women's Institutes' 'Recommended Reading' for Wellbeing Week 2018
- Featured in the British Psychological Society 'The Psychologist' in an article – 'Public involvement in research – just good science'



# PROJECT IMPACT TO DATE



## THE YARNFULNESS PROJECT

by Emma Palmer-Cooper and Anne Ferry

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CREATIVE PROJECTS CAN be a welcome diversion from the stresses and annoyances of daily life. Those of us who knit or crochet often intuitively feel that this has a positive effect on our lives – whether it is due to the joy of creating, the fun of learning something new or the triumph of finally mastering a difficult pattern.

But is there any scientific evidence that crafting has positive benefits? This question interested us, as researchers who are also crafters, and it's a question we've been asked by members of the public, who often have a vague sense that crafting might lead to positive results but wonder whether there is scientific evidence.

People who enjoy knitting or crocheting have told us that the repetitive nature of the craft can feel quite meditative and that they find it helps them with stress relief. Some people have compared it to mindfulness or meditation, which are certainly linked to positive mental health benefits.

We looked at the scientific literature to see what kind of evidence has been collected. One research group did an international survey of knitters\* and found that they reported health and wellbeing benefits, including happiness, feelings of calm and increased social contact for those who did their knitting in a group setting.

However, not much work has been done on why this might be, or what physical effects might be related to this feeling of calm (lowered heart rate? Lowered blood pressure? A decrease in stress hormones?). We thought it would be interesting to dig into this a little more deeply.

For example, there are several ways that knitting or crochet could help mental health – by distracting from stressful thoughts, by fostering socialisation, by encouraging creativity or by helping people to



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## Public involvement in research – just good science

Emma Palmer-Cooper on the value of working with members of the public as more than just the subjects of research.

