Blankets for Ipswich: promoting well-being through a collaborative charitable project fostering connection, creativity and community.

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Background

Loneliness and social isolation are on the rise in the UK across age groups, leading to poor mental health and increasingly linked to adverse health outcomes in later life(1,2).

Blankets for Ipswich is a charitable project, organised by volunteer ambassadors, as part of Craft Forward CIC's "Blankets for the World"(3). In 2025, blankets were collaboratively handmade to donate to local charities (Lighthouse Women's Aid and Suffolk Refugee Support) and promoting wellbeing for participants and recipients.



Figure 1. Graphic highlighting the ways well-being is promoted through "Blankets for Ipswich"(4-7).

Social prescribing allows clinicians to connect individuals to initiatives like Blankets for Ipswich to promote mental well-being alongside traditional therapies(8). There are opportunities for all staff working within healthcare setting to apply this - "Making Every Contact Count" from the waiting room and beyond(9).

Intervention

A series of 5 free workshops were organised in Ipswich town centre from July to December 2025. Materials were provided at all events.



Events were promoted through social media, local news, physical flyers. A group chat was later created for participants.



Participants knitted/crocheted squares that were, in later workshops, stitched together into collaborative blankets.



Workshop facilitators as well as more experienced knitters/crocheters in the group helped beginners to learn and feel involved.



Collaboration with local community groups and businesses - The Knit Wits, Steam House Café, Crafty Baba, The Church.

Figure 2. Images of a "Blankets for Ipswich" event at The Church. Photography by Kezia Tan(10).

Results

Over 30 in-person participants attended across 5 events, with many attending multiple sessions. 24 completed blankets were donated to local charities Lighthouse Women's Aid and Suffolk Refugee Support.

An online semi-structured survey with closed and open-ended questions was designed to explore participant perspectives of Blankets for Ipswich. 9 participants (ages between 16-64) completed survey after completion of 2025 project.

Results (cont.)

"The project was **incredibly fulfilling** to me, I **felt connected to my community** in a way that I have not done for a long time. On a personal level I genuinely **enjoyed crafting** and **learning new skills**, and the **relaxed atmosphere** where I **chatted and shared with others**. Then producing something that was going to be given away to others **felt meaningful to do something bigger than myself**."

What did taking part in this project mean to you?

- "Connection and purpose were two things I really needed to feel… and this project gave me both."
- "The opportunity to meet old and new friends, and feeling I was making a small difference to someone."

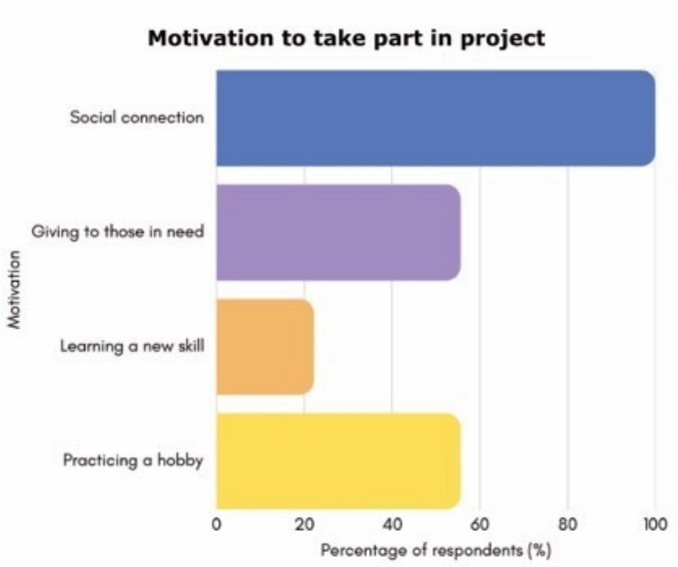


Figure 3. Bar chart showing participant motivations to take part.

Multiple respondents mentioned wanting to take part again in 2026 with 100% agreeing that the project positively impacted their wellbeing and 89% confirming they would take part in future similar projects.

Suggestions for improvement

- Wider ethnic and social diversity of participants.
- More organised support for beginners.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Positive Community Engagement: Blankets for Ipswich has been received well and had a positive impact on well-being of participants. Participants responding to survey were in want of social connection and felt the project fulfilled that.

Community Enhanced Social Prescribing: It is important for healthcare practitioners to meaningfully engage with community projects for their mutual benefit, especially with increase of social prescribing in primary care and mental health(6,8). All staff working within healthcare setting have opportunity to apply this.

Repeatability: Although part of a larger project, this series of events was small-scale and feedback was limited. Specific community engagement and conversation is needed to know what will be well-recieved in other areas(8,11). Formal analysis of future feedback may produce more actionable results.

Sustainability: Engagement with and success of 2025 project has allowed initiative to continue in 2026, with some of 2025 participants now leading project. Community ownership is advised for sustainability of projects like this(11).

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