



The Motherhood Quilt and Guilt projects aims to use crafts to encourage often difficult discussions about the pressures mothers face when making choices for their child.

Feb 15, 2024 14:27 GMT

## Quilting project encourages community discussions about motherhood guilt

Mothers were invited to share their experiences of infant feeding and the complex experiences of early motherhood in community workshops held as part of an interactive research project supported by an Assistant Professor from Northumbria University.

The Motherhood Quilt and Guilt projects aims to use crafts to encourage often difficult discussions about the pressures mothers face when making

choices for their child. These experiences were made into audio recordings incorporated into a quilt stitched from donated babygros.

The project, funded by [Welsh Crucible](#), is a collaboration involving Aberystwyth, Swansea and Northumbria Universities.

Left to right: Dr Sophia Komninou, Dr Gillian McFadyen and Dr Angelika Strohmayer

Dr Gillian McFadyen, an International Politics Lecturer from the University of Aberystwyth explained: “The emotive and often divisive subject of how mothers feed their babies is a regular topic of discussion among policymakers, academics, mothers, and the public. The uniqueness of the Motherhood Quilt and Guilt is that it departs from dominant breastfeeding literature that tends to focus on positive emotions related to bonding, and offers space for amplifying mothers’ voices and their range of experiences surrounding feeding.

“The project follows in the Welsh communal quilting tradition, as through the stitching workshops we create a space for mothers to come together and share their stories whilst sewing.”

[Dr Angelika Strohmayer](#), Assistant Professor at Northumbria University’s [School of Design](#), focuses on research in participatory and digitally-augmented craft practices. Her interests include how crafted artefacts and the research that can take place around their collaborative making can create spaces of safety, inclusion, and meaningful engagement with policy change.

Dr Strohmayer, who collaborated with colleagues from Wales on the project, explained: “Within the quilt, we are incorporating a number of quilted spirals, using a traditional motif. The pattern guides people to interact with the hidden touch sensors and simultaneously can also be seen as a metaphor for the spiralling emotions experienced by mothers. At the centre of each spiral, we are embedding an electronic touch sensor through which a mother’s story can be heard through a pre-recorded audio clip.”

Dr Angelika Strohmayer from Northumbria University

Dr Sophia Komninou, Lecturer of Public Health Nutrition at Swansea University, said: “Through previous research we discovered that, regardless of

how mothers feed their babies, they all harbour feelings of guilt. For those that formula feed or combination feed, there are often feelings of having failed to follow public health advice, especially if, before they had the baby, they were planning to breastfeed. However, those mothers that breastfeed also often feel that they are letting people down - for example, they feel guilty that breastfeeding takes them away from their other children, makes them a less attentive partner, and means that they focus less on their career.”

It is hoped the finished quilt can be exhibited across venues in Wales to spark public conversations, while encouraging understanding and empathy around infant feeding choices.

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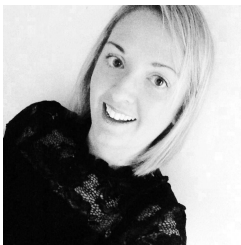
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