Dear Everyone,

Welcome to the second newsletter on the iPOF study! Our workgroups are all making progress. We had a whole team in-person meeting to finalise our initial programme theories, which will be shared with our forum partners for further input.

**Meeting at Lancaster University!**

On the 3rd of February, the team came together for a full iPOF-focussed day at Lancaster University (scroll down for a photo!). Matt presented summaries of the forums involved, then Paul presented the current programme theories from the realist synthesis. We discussed which theories to focus on and how to test them, through linguistic analysis, surveys, and interviews. We also planned to meet again in the future, to triangulate findings and theories across these groups. To protect our forum partners’ anonymity, we decided to use bird names as pseudonyms in our outputs – more on these names to come!

**Realist Synthesis - Get Involved!**

Our realist synthesis team have analysed over 100 research articles found in our evidence searches! They’re also integrating insights from our interviews and other materials, such as moderator training guides, to develop an initial set of testable theories about how online forums work for users.

**Get Involved!** If you have any research papers, protocols or blogs in press, any moderator training materials, or anything else you think captures the reasons why peer online forums “work” in mental health, then please email them over to include in our analysis.

**Forum Data Analysis**

Our data analysis team has built an NLP (Natural Language Processing) pipeline for tagging and analysing data. We have already tested this pipeline with data from some of our forum partners, and in March, we hope to analyse data from all our forum partners. In the future, we will develop this pipeline further to allow us to test theories using computational and corpus linguistic methods.

In November, Matt Coole presented a webinar on corpus linguistics and NLP and how these methods will be used on the iPOF project. If you’d like to watch, it can be viewed here.

**Survey Development**

The first full draft of the survey is nearly complete. We are in the final phase of mapping the constructs measured by the survey to the constructs needed to describe and evaluate our theories. The main problem is that we have an abundance of riches from the theory development group! There are too many good ideas for us to be able to support them all in a short survey, so we will have to be very selective.

After the first draft is finished it will be circulated to iPOF researchers and the forum hosts for feedback and approval, hopefully soon in February. We aim to have the survey go live and start collecting data in March.

**PPI & Co-Design Group – Get Involved!**
The PPI group has been busy shaping our first research output, which will be an animation to promote peer online forums. We have developed a script, ideas for the look and feel, and we’re meeting with an animation team to put everything together. The group also has an important role in prioritising which theories the research team will test in our upcoming evaluation work. This has helped to ensure that our work on improving online forums is shaped by those who run and use them.

Get Involved! We are still looking for people with experience of using online forums to join the group. Our meetings are approximately once every month, last for around 2 hours, and take place on Zoom. Those who take part will receive £50 for each meeting. If you or someone you know wishes to learn more about getting involved, please contact the study team at ipof@lancaster.ac.uk.

Welcoming New Staff

Welcome to Connor Heapy, who joined us in January on a research placement as part of his Doctorate in Clinical Psychology training! Connor aims to run focus groups with people from ethnic minority communities, exploring the barriers to using peer online mental health forums.

Welcome to Claire Friedrich, who is helping with the PPI group and the realist synthesis, particularly the moderator training. She joined the University in December and has an evidence synthesis and mental health research background.

Thanks for reading our newsletter! If you have any questions or suggestions for future updates, then please get in touch ipof@lancaster.ac.uk

Best wishes,

The iPOF Research Team

[Image: The iPOF team meeting in-person]

Our website: www.lancaster.ac.uk/ipof

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