



Researchers at the Centre for Appearance Research (CAR) at UWE, Bristol are being supported by the VTCT Foundation to work with the charities involved in the Appearance Collective (AC) to provide evidence-based psychosocial support for people affected by visible differences.

Study using Appearance Collective to be published in the journal *Body Image*

A research study conducted by VTCTF CAR researchers **Fabio Zucchelli** and **Heidi Williamson** will be published in the academic journal *Body Image*. The study recruited over 200 participants with visible differences via a number of Appearance Collective organisations, **so thank you to all the organisations who helped us make the study possible!**

In a nutshell, we found that the extent to which people judge their own appearance as good or bad does not fully explain their tendency to (a) avoid important life activities and (b) spend a lot of effort covering and focusing on their appearance. The factors that do explain these behaviours are (a) an attitude of trying to avoid or get rid of difficult thoughts and feelings and (b) getting caught up or 'stuck' in difficult thoughts. This means that helping people to develop the opposite capacities, i.e. (a) take an accepting attitude towards difficult thoughts and feelings and (b) hold a healthy psychological 'distance' from difficult thoughts, may well help people with visible differences who struggle to get more engaged with the outside world, and to spend less time focusing on their appearance.

This is exactly what we are doing with a new self-management mobile intervention, based on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). We have designed it with the help of Appearance Collective charities and specialist psychologists, and are currently preparing it in readiness for testing in the New Year. So watch this space!

Social activism workshop

On 22 November 2019, CAR hosted a social activism workshop for members of the Appearance Collective. Delivered by **Sharon Haywood**, who is widely regarded as one of the leading appearance activists in the world, the workshop provided delegates with an introduction to social activism. Sharon drew upon recent examples of campaigns striving to challenge beauty standards and fight size discrimination that she has been instrumental in delivering. The workshop also covered how to work with businesses as a way to ignite social change. Attendees were clearly inspired, coming up with some great campaigns that they would like to take forwards within their own charities...exciting!



Study updates

Medical tattooing

The new treatment decision-making work stream is progressing well. The first study led by CAR's **Nicola Stock** focuses on medical tattooing in adults with a visible difference. Twenty-five interviews were completed. Despite a widespread advertisement strategy across the Appearance Collective charities, the majority of participants are women with hair loss. With support from CAR's **Nick Sharratt** and **Georgia Treneman-Evans**, findings will be made available shortly. Work has now begun on two follow-up studies.

Individuals with craniosynostosis and their families

CAR's **Nicola Stock** and **Bruna Costa** continue to work with **Wendy Edwards** and **Karen Wilkinson-Bell (Headlines Craniofacial Support)** on their VTCTF Small Grant entitled "Psychosocial adjustment and support needs of individuals with craniosynostosis and their families". A successful Stakeholder Workshop was held in September 2019 where feedback on the study design and materials was collected from young adults, family members and health professionals. An online survey was launched in November 2019 and several responses have already been received.

Thank you to everyone who has shared the survey.

The next Appearance Collective workshop delivered by CAR will be on the topic of **Acceptance and Commitment Therapy** for those providing direct support. More information to follow in the New Year.

Volunteering survey

Our survey of the motivations and experiences of volunteers with AC charities is complete. Findings have been shared in a brief report by CAR's **Bruna Costa**, **Claire Hamlet** and **Nicola Stock**.



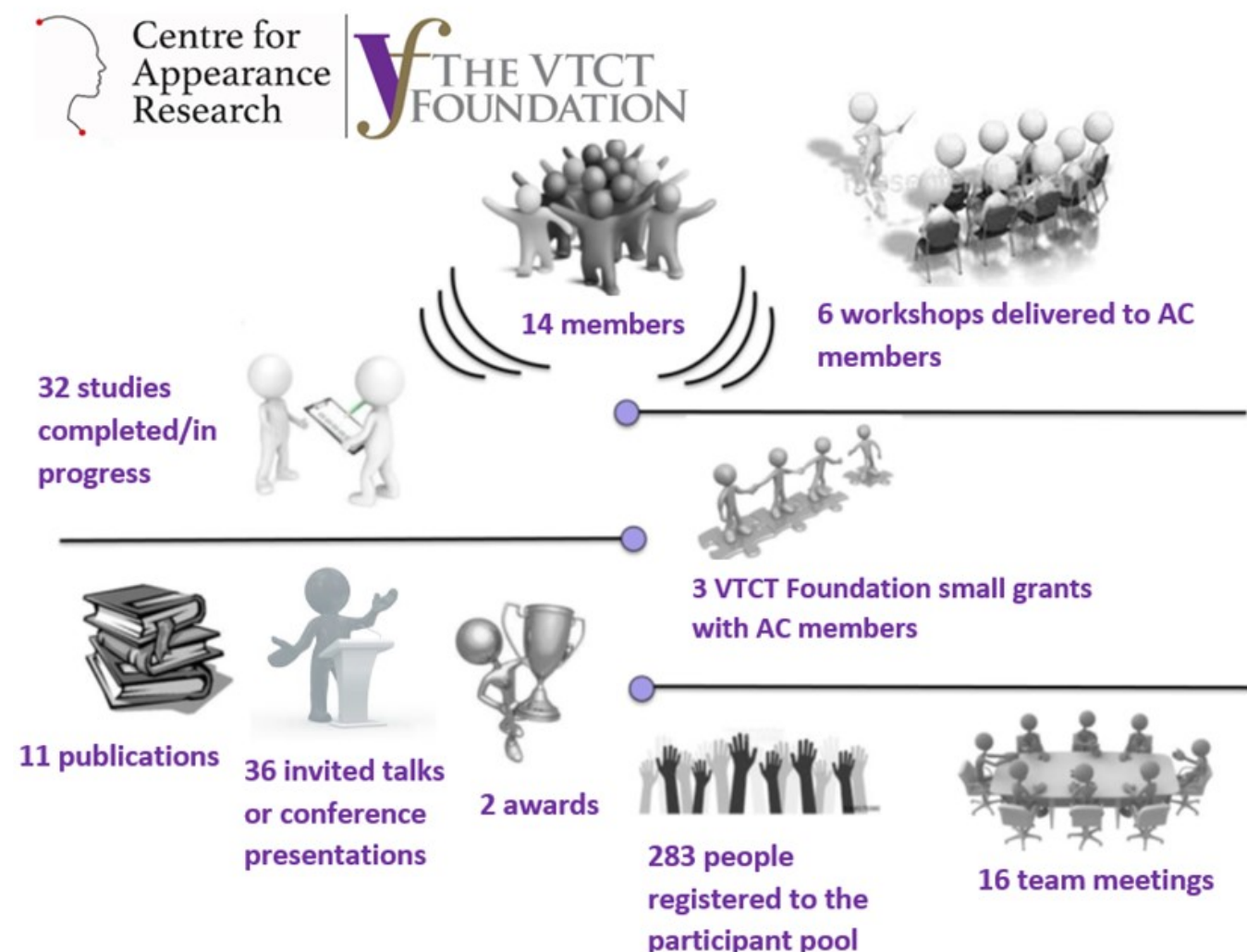
Follow us on Twitter [@CAR_UWE](https://twitter.com/CAR_UWE) and Facebook: www.facebook.com/AppearanceResearch/. You can also listen to our podcast which explores the world of appearance, the latest research in the field and features leading appearance experts: www.uwe.ac.uk/car/podcast





The team at CAR have had a very busy and successful year. We're looking forward to more impactful research in 2020, knowing that what we are doing makes a real difference to the work of the AC and the lives of people affected by visible difference.

Di Harcourt, Director of CAR



New research study

CAR's **Nicola Stock, Bruna Costa, Heidi Williamson, James Kiff, Danielle Cox** and **Di Harcourt** are designing a new study to better understand the factors that contribute to appearance concerns in young people with and without a visible difference. Launching early 2020, this study will involve a national recruitment campaign and support from the Appearance Collective charities will be crucial. **Thank you to all colleagues who have provided their input so far.**



**Lastly, we would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.
We look forward to continue working with you in 2020!**



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