

## The Big Knit story

We started the Big Knit in 2003 as an innocent way of raising money to help keep older people warm in winter. In its first three years the Big Knit had a different name – Supergran. But as more and more hats came in each year, not all of them from your Gran, we felt that 'The Big Knit' was more fitting.

The idea was to knit little woolly hats to fit snugly on our bottles – then for every bottle sold, we'd donate 50p to charity. It seemed ingenious but left us with the little challenge of finding some keen knitters. The founders might be a talented bunch, but they're not exactly top banana when it comes to wielding knitting needles, so New Adam came up with the idea of asking grannies – yep, real genuine grannies – if they'd have a go at knitting them for us.

The first grannies we asked were at the Age Concern Healthy Living Centre in Montgomeryshire – who kindly stepped into the breach and got knitting. Thus our first Supergrans were born. These fine ladies then got a few Supergrandads knitting, and soon the staff at Fruit Towers decided to have a go too. We decided that maybe our innocent family would like to get involved as well, so we asked all our lovely subscribers to the web news if they'd like to help and the innocent knitting craze took off. That first year, we received over 2,000 beanies to kit out our bottles.

By the time we launched Supergran 2004, news had spread. We had a blistering 24,000 little woolly hats arrive at Fruit Towers. Schoolchildren were doing it, Mums and Dads were doing it, even supercool teens got knitting for Supergran. Our oldest knitter was the amazing Mrs Hodges of Worcester, aged 96.



24,000 hats at an estimated 20-minutes knitting time per hat works out at 8006 'granny hours' of knitting (or 1008 'granny days' or 2.7 'granny years'). After this, knitting suddenly seemed to become a tad trendy – with supermodels and celebs being snapped knitting on the tube and in Central Park – but we're not suggesting that it had anything to do with us.

So, in 2005 we decided to get even more people involved, including some of those celebrity knitters (Paul Smith's hat is the one below), while other companies started 'knit-ins' in shops and businesses. As usual, our on-the-ground innocent drinkers joined in with fervour. We had lots of feedback from people who had set up 'stitching groups,' with one consisting of three generations of one family all knitting hats together – true members of the innocent clan.

We were sent little knitted hats from as far afield as Scandinavia and the USA and thought such enthusiasm deserved some recognition. So we decided to celebrate several of our wonderful innocent-drinkers-turned-knitters in the web news, with a 'Hat of the Week' slot. We had a grand total of 80,000 hats knitted in 2005 – with 50p from every one sold going directly to help elderly people.



Year by year we have been receiving more and more hats and in 2006 we were overwhelmed when 230,000 came flooding in. This equated to £115,000 to help keep older people warm when it's cold outside.

In 2007 we started working exclusively with Sainsbury's and re-named Supergran the Big Knit, setting ourselves a target befitting of such a name change: 400,000 little hats. Celebrity endorsements came flooding in, and we were even supported by royalty. Suit you, sir.

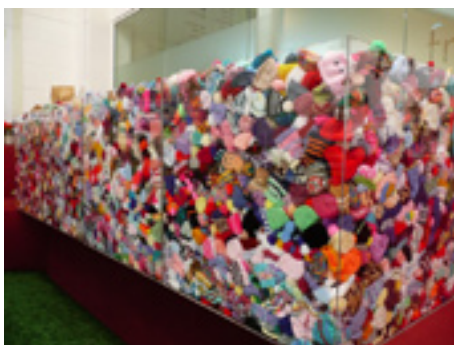


Prince Andrew's daughter, Beatrice, sent us this lovely design



Russell Brand sure knows how to make a hairy hat

We couldn't have been more chuffed then, when in 2007 we managed to beat our target of 400,000 hats with a grand total of 400,720. That is one heck of a lot of hats (there is only 9,000 hats in the picture below).



Why do we do it? The reason is simple – to raise funds for Age Concern to support older people in the winter months. Almost 25,000 older people die of cold-related illnesses each winter, so, for a limited period only, these dinky little woolly hats will sit on the top of our innocent smoothie bottles in Sainsbury's and for each hat-wearing smoothie sold, innocent and Sainsbury's will donate 50p to Age Concern.

Health, housing and heating all affect older people's ability to keep warm and stay well in winter. Age Concern provide services that support older people in winter, including hot meals, room thermometers, warm blankets, safety checking electric blankets,

and advice on how to handle rising energy costs. The money raised from the big knit will go towards these types of activities.

Not only does the knitting raise money to support the most vulnerable older people but they've knitted a fair few themselves and we think they enjoyed it.

Since it all began back in 2003, we've raised nearly £400,000 to help look after old people, and there's certainly no sign of us letting up. The target for Big Knit 2008 is, wait for it, 900,000 hats.

So, if you've never been involved with the Big Knit before\* get nifty with your needles and send us as many little woolly hats as possible. Thank you.



NB. no chickens were harmed in the making of this photo, nor are any included in any of our drinks

**\*and if you were one of our super knitters, please join in again this year**