

LOCAL WELLBEING: CAN WE MEASURE IT?



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ABOUT THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES

"Manchester City Council and the Manchester Partnership welcome the development of a wellbeing measurement. Our Community Strategy aims to increase material prosperity and wellbeing so that Manchester's residents become wealthier, live longer, and have happier and healthier lives. It is recognised that public services cannot achieve these things on their own, raising expectations and a sense of wellbeing will be fundamental to achieving this. Currently we use two Local Public Service Agreement targets to measure our progress in this area and welcome any further mechanisms to chart our progress."

"Hertfordshire is generally a prosperous county and our residents enjoy some of the highest standards of living in the country. However this headline masks pockets of relative deprivation and we do not wish to be complacent about our future – for that reason Hertfordshire Forward (the countywide LSP) has identified 'health and wellbeing' as a key challenge which needs to be addressed between now and 2021. As we understand it however the wellbeing of our residents does not just depend upon promoting healthier lifestyles, but by ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to share in our prosperity through improving access to education and employment."

"In South Tyneside we recognise the impact that promoting culture and wellbeing can have on people's lives, whether it's to improve health, help people into jobs or help them achieve their full potential. *Spirit of South Tyneside* is our combined Local Area Agreement, Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and Community Strategy. It sets out how we will tackle our communities' priorities and regeneration of our most deprived neighbourhoods. Our plans for wellbeing are integral to the continuing transformation of our borough, economically, environmentally and socially. We have ambitious plans to improve all aspects of life in the borough. Whilst all our priorities contribute to improving wellbeing, we have identified a need to do more to drive our wellbeing agenda, to make a greater impact on people's happiness. We have examples of well-grounded and embedded interventions that promote wellbeing, from positive parenting from before birth, right through to tackling the isolation of older people.

We strongly believe in partnership working and were recently awarded 'Beacon Council' status for our multi-agency work towards promoting financial inclusion and tackling over indebtedness, as well as Community Leadership - major issues in terms of community and individual wellbeing.

We have a wealth of experience in managing performance measurement of our work. However, we are passionate about working toward developing measures of the actual difference a local authority can make to the wellbeing of individuals and communities. We particularly support the approach to measuring wellbeing within a personal-social-place framework outlined in the report."

ABOUT THE LOCAL WELLBEING PROJECT

The Local Wellbeing Project is a partnership between the Young Foundation, Professor Richard Layard at the Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics, the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) and three local authorities: Hertfordshire County Council, Manchester City Council and South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council. The aim of the Local Wellbeing Project is to pioneer new approaches in the design and delivery of policies and services to contribute to public happiness and wellbeing, which could be replicated more widely.

THIS REPORT

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CONTENTS

<i>INTRODUCTION</i>	6
<i>WHY MEASURING WELLBEING IS IMPORTANT</i>	8
<i>THE FIT WITH NATIONAL POLICY FRAMEWORKS</i>	16
<i>DIFFERENT WAYS OF MEASURING WELLBEING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL</i>	22
<i>LOCAL WELLBEING INDICATORS</i>	28
<i>MOVING FORWARD: SUPPORTING MEASUREMENT AND ACTION ON WELLBEING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL</i>	44
<i>REFERENCES</i>	47
<i>ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, RESOURCES & LINKS</i>	48

INTRODUCTION

WELLBEING IS INCREASINGLY RECOGNISED BY CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND THEIR STRATEGIC PARTNERS AS BEING OF KEY RELEVANCE TO PEOPLE'S LIVES AND A VITAL CONSIDERATION FOR IMPROVING LOCAL AREA POLICY AND SERVICE DELIVERY DECISIONS. THIS HIGHER PRIORITY MEANS IT IS NOW IMPORTANT TO DEVELOP ROBUST MEASURES OF WELLBEING.

The concept and language of wellbeing was first introduced at the local level through the Local Government Act 2000.¹ The Act included a new power of wellbeing, providing local authorities with the power to do whatever they consider necessary to promote or improve the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of their area. Following this, useful indicators aimed at measuring quality of life were developed and are now widely used by local authorities and their partners to track changing conditions of life at the local level.

There is now more interest in how policy making and service provision can help to enhance people's experience of life – their wellbeing – alongside improving their conditions of life. The new local government performance assessment framework, *Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA)*, reflects this drive and will be heavily influenced by the views and experiences of residents and those using services in their local areas. Emphasis will be placed on measuring outcomes within an area or place, with local government and their partners playing a greater 'place-shaping' role to achieve better outcomes.²

This document presents proposals for measuring wellbeing which will support local authorities and their partners in the shift to CAA, and in their place-shaping role, by improving their understanding of the feelings and experience of residents and those using local services. It recognises and values existing work in this area and aims to encourage more councils, health bodies, police forces, fire and rescue authorities and others responsible for local public services to develop their practice in relation to measuring and taking action on wellbeing at the local level.



WHY MEASURING WELLBEING IS IMPORTANT

WHAT IS WELLBEING?

In 2006 the UK Government's Whitehall Wellbeing Working Group developed a statement of common understanding of wellbeing for policy makers:

WELLBEING: STATEMENT OF COMMON UNDERSTANDING

"Wellbeing is a positive physical, social and mental state; it is not just the absence of pain, discomfort and incapacity. It arises not only from the action of individuals, but from a host of collective goods and relationships with other people. It requires that basic needs are met, that individuals have a sense of purpose, and that they feel able to achieve important personal goals and participate in society. It is enhanced by conditions that include supportive personal relationships, involvement in empowered communities, good health, financial security, rewarding employment, and a healthy and attractive environment.

Government's role is to enable people to have fair access now and in the future to the social, economic and environmental resources needed to achieve wellbeing. An understanding of the combined effect of policies on the way people experience their lives is important for designing and prioritising them."

Aside from the 'common understanding' there is no single, agreed definition of wellbeing currently in use at central or local government level. Wellbeing is often used to describe initiatives that tackle health and environmental issues. However, our emphasis here is on 'subjective wellbeing', how people think and feel about their lives and how people function within the context of the wider economy, environment and society in which they live. This reflects an approach to wellbeing that is consistent with the one outlined above.

CAN WELLBEING BE MEASURED?

Measuring people's wellbeing can be undertaken in ways which are both robust and useful to local authorities and their partners. It requires asking people about their feelings and experiences, typically through surveys and/or questionnaires. This is often referred to as measuring people's 'subjective wellbeing'.

Although this differs from more objective quality of life indicators at the local level such as crime rates, economic activity rate, local air pollution data, and educational attainment data, the measurement of subjective wellbeing provides a valuable way for local authorities to understand and respond to local needs. Research has found measures of self-reported wellbeing – that is answers to questions about how people feel about their quality of life – correlate with other indicators of human happiness and wellbeing. Subjective measures of how people feel and how people function in their everyday lives can predict consistent behaviour. This applies to people's physical health, mental wellbeing, patterns of economic activity, educational attainment, personal and family relationships or involvement in pro-social activities – many of the areas targeted through local public services.

Measuring subjective wellbeing is also a useful activity for local authorities together with their partners due to the emphasis the new assessment framework places on capturing the views of residents and service users. There are already subjective indicators in use at a local level to show that this can be done robustly. For example, perceptions of anti-social behaviour and fear of crime are now commonly used to monitor local feelings and the

effectiveness of local services. Measuring the subjective wellbeing of residents and those using services will provide other more useful ways of assessing local views and experiences.

The main issue is therefore not whether wellbeing can be measured, but how it can be measured most effectively at the local level to equip local authorities and their partners with the information required to achieve better outcomes for individuals and communities, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable and those using services locally. An important dimension of this will be how local authorities and their strategic partners analyse and interpret information about people's subjective wellbeing alongside objective data as a key part of service planning and delivery.



HOW MEASURING WELLBEING CAN BE USEFUL

Measuring wellbeing is useful for local authorities and their strategic partners to:

- understand local needs – to enable resources to be targeted to areas and population groups where they are most required
- measure outcomes – as part of the Sustainable Community Strategy and/or Local Area Agreement to assess performance and shape future priorities
- track progress – capturing 'distance travelled' and the extent to which some of the leading indicators for achieving local area outcomes are being met
- encourage partnership working and the pooling of budgets – between local authorities and other public service providers, linked to the cross-cutting nature of many wellbeing measures
- demonstrate *positive* local change – so that local authorities' energies to achieve change through initiatives which focus on developing human potential and enhancing lived experience, not only on reducing deficits, are recognised and rewarded
- facilitate a shift from an emphasis on service provision to community focused outcomes – mirroring the change from Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) to Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA).

Measuring wellbeing can also support local authorities and their partners to measure 'real' progress by directly capturing people's experience of their lives rather than using proxy indicators. Given its immediate relevance to people's lives, this may also provide greater opportunity for better engagement with the public on shaping local policy and local service delivery.

Hertfordshire's Local Strategic Partnership, Hertfordshire Forward, has identified health and wellbeing as a key challenge for the county over the next 15 years. Building on earlier measurement work looking at the dimensions of public health, Hertfordshire Forward is now broadening its focus to consider a wider range of quality of life and wellbeing issues. Local assessments of wellbeing are now drawing on surveys from wider fields, such as residents' perceptions of their locality. The results of this broader view are helping statutory bodies understand and reflect upon what contributes to the quality of life and wellbeing of Hertfordshire's citizens.

Local partners recognise that existing methods of data collection have their limitations since they currently allow for a county-wide analysis of quality of life and are not suitable for disaggregation to neighbourhood or district levels. Therefore, ways of measuring wellbeing in a robust way – which allows analysis and comparison of different domains and population groups – is now a priority for the county.

GENERATING NEW INFORMATION FROM MEASURING WELLBEING

Good measurement should provide new information which can be used to inform local decision making to achieve better public services, enhance communities' lives and improve local area outcomes.

Measuring wellbeing has the potential to offer many new insights. A more coherent framework for measuring wellbeing at the local level, which sits alongside existing quality of life measures, would help local authorities and their partners to explore and understand some of the counter-intuitive findings which are emerging from the field of wellbeing research, and the implications this may have for the targeting of, sometimes limited, local resources.



There are a number of potential scenarios where a focus on wellbeing challenges conventional assumptions and which could be usefully explored through measuring wellbeing at the local level. These include:

- the well established finding that wellbeing is often lowest in middle age, yet this is a time when people are least likely to use local government services (being neither young people, children, or older people). Efforts to improve wellbeing may necessitate targeting resources towards groups who are not conventionally defined as being 'in need'
- the example of homogenous and long-standing populations in some deprived areas where relatively high levels of social wellbeing run in parallel with often lower levels of personal wellbeing. Area regeneration has the potential to increase opportunities but may, if introducing new residents to the community through housing development, reduce social capital, community cohesion and wellbeing unless carried out effectively
- the emerging evidence that policy and practice to reduce carbon emissions and promote environmental sustainability is most likely to succeed when local authorities and their partners are able to encourage pro-environmental activities and behaviours that also increase people's wellbeing. For example, activities and behaviours which promote a sense of engagement and empowerment, build social relations, and bring observable gains to the individual or community may achieve better outcomes than those in which people feel they have to 'give something up'
- the finding that the ways in which local authorities and their partners can help to enhance people's wellbeing is closely related to how they design and deliver services (to promote autonomy, connectivity, engagement, etc), in addition to the provision of services themselves. This has the potential to challenge conventional assumptions about the relationship between service provider/service user and the nature of public service provision at the local level.



THE FIT WITH NATIONAL POLICY FRAMEWORKS

This is the right time to be developing measures of wellbeing at the local level. It fits with the drive towards outcome measurement and community-focused services outlined in the Local Government White Paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities*, with a focus on the place-shaping role of local government, and with the introduction of the new assessment framework for local government, *Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA)*. The CAA brings together the work of seven inspectorates to provide an overview of how successfully local organisations are working together to improve what matters in each place.³

PLACE SHAPING

In his inquiry into local government, Sir Michael Lyons described 'place shaping' as 'the creative use of powers and influence to promote the general wellbeing of a community and its citizens'.⁴

Recognising the strategic role of local government, the Lyons Inquiry advocated a role for local government as an agent of place which involves building and shaping local identity and making sure that appropriate services are provided, based on local needs and preferences. It notes that the ability of local government to pursue the wellbeing of communities will first depend on its capacity to understand and respond to the needs and concerns of its individual residents.

Recent government policy on Local Area Agreements (LAAs) emphasises the need for local sustainable community strategies, and the LAAs which they underpin, to develop a 'story' or narrative about the area – what kind of place it is, and what kind of place does it want to be? Similarly, the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 places a duty on local authorities and Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) to undertake Joint Strategic Needs Assessments, defined as a "joint analysis of predicted health and wellbeing outcomes, what the community wants and a view of future needs."⁵



Local partnerships, including local authorities, therefore have a vital role to play in developing a common evidence-based 'story of place' that can be used as a mechanism for the effective allocation of public resources to enhance the wellbeing of individuals and communities, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable.

COMPREHENSIVE AREA ASSESSMENT

From April 2009 Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) will replace the existing Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) and will focus on 'place' rather than the individual bodies responsible for local services.

The new assessment framework will focus on 'what matters here, to whom', challenging how local public service priorities have been set and whether they are rooted in a genuine understanding of diverse local needs. The experience of local residents and communities, including people who use services, is at the centre of the new local assessment framework. Measuring people's feelings and experience of life – their wellbeing – would make a direct contribution towards meeting this goal.

Measuring wellbeing could contribute to the 'area assessment' component of the CAA – which will use the performance indicators from the national indicator set as a key source of evidence.

NATIONAL INDICATOR SET AND PLACE SURVEY

The new national indicator set (NIS) contains 198 indicators, some of which are to be determined by measuring citizens' views and experiences. 18 of these are to be collected through the Place Survey which will be administered by all local authorities. Based on the new national indicators, up to 35 targets will be agreed in each Local Area Agreement (LAA) and there will also be 16 statutory targets on educational attainment and early years. A small number of indicators included in the NIS measure people's subjective wellbeing.⁶

The LAA framework also encourages local authorities and their partners to

develop local indicators and targets. This means that an LAA can draw on the NIS, the statutory indicators and locally-agreed indicators. NIS are national indicators which are sometimes referred to as statutory indicators, however there is no statutory basis to them.

There is scope for local authorities and their partners to include additional questions in the survey which look beyond the NIS; the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) has developed a 'question bank' to help direct local authorities to possible questions.⁷ The question that is most relevant to wellbeing in the 'question bank' is QB-34: 'All things considered, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your life as a whole nowadays?'

South Tyneside is unique in that wellbeing is at the heart of the borough's



Local Area Agreement, *The Spirit of South Tyneside*, so that improvements can be delivered across all aspects of local people's lives – from employment, health and crime to housing, the environment and education. Measurement against specific targets in the LAA is mandatory; however, as wellbeing is so integral to the agreement, there has been increasing interest in how wellbeing as a whole could be measured.

Originally, the borough planned to do this via specific questions which would be added into existing surveys undertaken as part of the borough's performance management. However, this approach was later reconsidered – partly in light of developments from central government on a new National Indicator Set and the Place Survey. These developments were seen as a new vehicle within which wellbeing could be measured through the use of a single question on wellbeing and 'proxy' indicators – those which can be used to paint a picture of local wellbeing across different domains of life.

Wellbeing is also being measured at the targeted level through specific big initiatives delivered through the Local Wellbeing Project, such as the drive to improve the emotional resilience of young and older people. It is hoped that in the future, wellbeing and measures of wellbeing will be an umbrella which will bring different strands of work together; increasing efficiency, breaking down silos and improving outcomes for the people of South Tyneside.

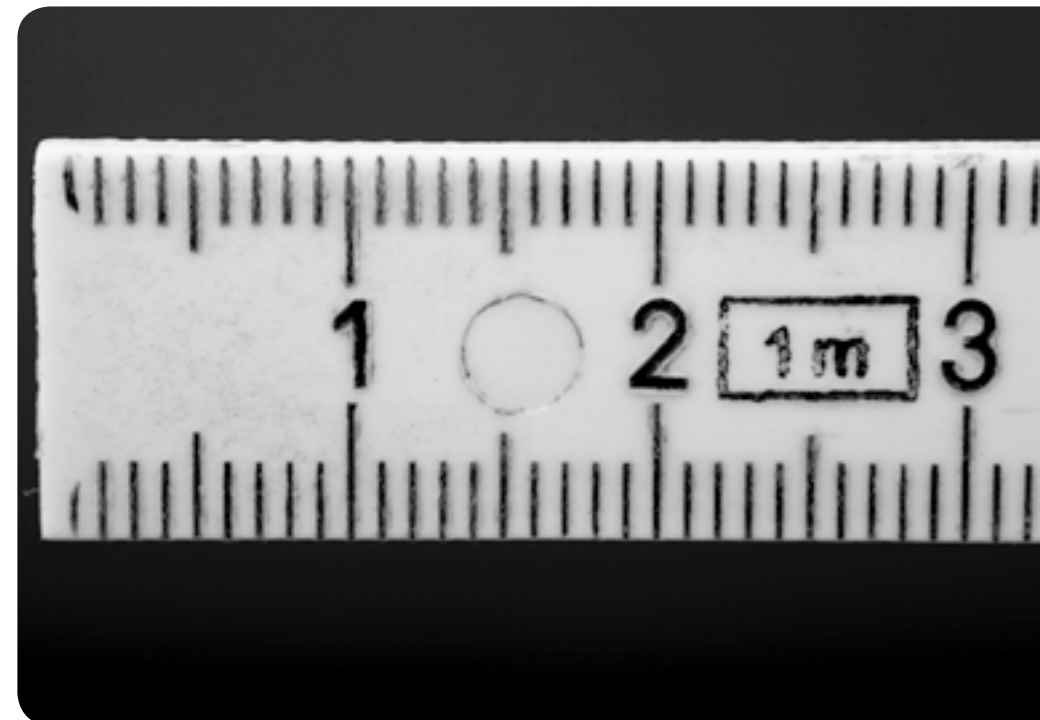
NATIONAL WELLBEING INDICATOR

Work has been taking place at a central government level to develop a national wellbeing indicator. The cross-departmental Wellbeing Indicators Group is developing a national indicator to help monitor progress against the UK sustainable development strategy, *Securing the Future*. This strategy aims to enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life without compromising the quality of life of future generations.⁸

The provisional wellbeing indicator was published in July 2007 as part of

the sustainable development indicator set and involves drawing together a cluster of existing measures.⁹ It also includes new survey information on Life Satisfaction which has been collected through a national survey coordinated by the Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs, and which may later be included as part of the national wellbeing indicator set.

Local authorities will not be required to report on or adopt the national wellbeing measures. However the Wellbeing Indicators Group has stated that these measures might influence any additional indicators local authorities choose to adopt, and that work taking place through this project is helping to explore options which are most appropriate to be used at a local level.



DIFFERENT WAYS OF MEASURING WELLBEING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

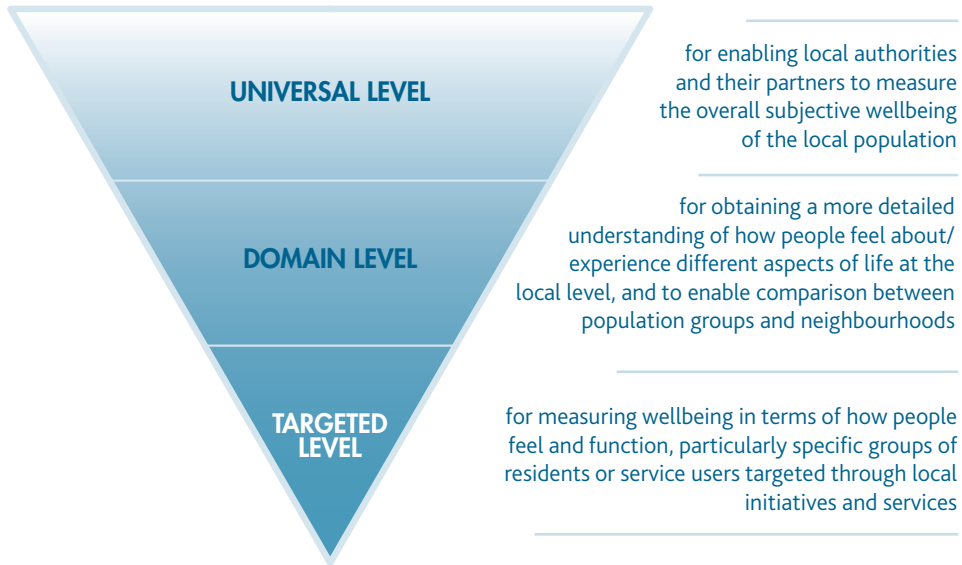
A FRAMEWORK FOR WELLBEING MEASUREMENT

A three-tiered approach is recommended for measuring wellbeing at the local level:

1. universal level
2. domain level
3. targeted level

This framework has been developed collaboratively with a small group of local authorities. Both the universal and domain levels are designed to fit within the new performance context for local government. Measurement at the targeted level will focus more on the local context and the extent to which measures can be disaggregated to specific target groups.

These levels are not mutually exclusive. Deciding at which level to measure will depend on the rationale for collecting new information and the potential for decisions and actions to be taken as a result of the findings in each local area.

FIGURE 1: FRAMEWORK FOR MEASURING WELLBEING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

LEVEL 1: MEASURING WELLBEING AT THE UNIVERSAL LEVEL

The universal level provides an overall, cross-cutting measure of people's experience of life. It provides headline findings at a population (universal) level and a basis from which more detailed exploration and analysis can take place (for example, by exploring different domains – satisfaction with health, employment, family, etc – or by asking how overall wellbeing could be improved).



It would be typically captured by a single-item measure (or small group of measures) asking people to rate their overall satisfaction with life.

How universal level wellbeing data could be used:

- to provide a direct measure of progress in relation to the overarching aims in the Sustainable Community Strategy or Local Area Agreement (for example, "to improve the wellbeing of the population")
- to assess differences in overall wellbeing between population groups and/or geographical neighbourhoods within a local authority area, as a basis for further exploration and targeted action
- to analyse universal wellbeing data against existing subjective and objective data to identify the key determinants or predictors of people's wellbeing at a local level (for example, good physical health, being economically active, level of income, residents' feeling a sense of belonging in relation to where they live, quality of open spaces, etc).



LEVEL 2: MEASURING WELLBEING AT THE DOMAIN LEVEL

The domain level measures different aspects or dimensions of people's wellbeing, for example, in relation to health, community safety, economic circumstances and so on. It moves beyond providing an overall assessment of outcomes to explore differences and variations within a local authority area, drilling down into some of the key components of people's life experience.

How domain level wellbeing data could be used:

- to measure outcomes in relation to different thematic objectives of the Sustainable Community Strategy and/or Local Area Agreement blocks
- to explore how a population's wellbeing varies across different domains of life (health, family and relationships, neighbourhood, etc) to inform the targeting of local resources
- to 'drill-down' to provide a more detailed understanding of a population's wellbeing in relation to a particular domain already identified as a local priority (for example, social support and engagement), as a basis for future service planning and delivery
- to assess how different population groups and/or geographical neighbourhoods experience different aspects of their life, to provide an evidence base for how activities and services can best be tailored to meet different needs (for example, by ethnicity, by age, by gender, by neighbourhood).

LEVEL 3: MEASURING WELLBEING AT THE TARGETED LEVEL

The targeted level measures some of the underlying or protective factors affecting people's overall wellbeing. This could include, for example, autonomy, resilience, self-esteem, feelings of competency, and strength of relationships. This approach could be used across entire local populations; however over the short to medium term it is likely to be particularly useful for measuring the wellbeing of residents whose circumstances make them vulnerable and who use services locally:

- specific population groups for example, vulnerable older people over 75 years
- targeted neighbourhoods for example, most deprived Super Output Areas
- service users for example, looked after children.

How targeted level wellbeing data could be used:

- to improve understanding of local needs, particularly of vulnerable groups or specific service users, to help inform the design and delivery of local services and interventions
- to review performance and inform local action in relation to 'closing the gap', where efforts to improve psychological feelings and functioning (around building self-esteem, confidence, aspirations, autonomy and so on) might be needed to reduce inequalities and achieve better outcomes for more people
- to measure the wellbeing impact of specific initiatives or services being delivered at a local level, through tracking progress and capturing 'distance travelled' in relation to how people feel and function
- to assess and highlight the importance of targeting resources by local authorities and their partners, towards the enabling/protective factors for people's wellbeing, to encourage a shift towards more preventative approaches and to improve local area outcomes over the longer term.



LOCAL WELLBEING INDICATORS

In this section we outline the indicators that local government and their strategic partners could use to measure subjective wellbeing in the context of the new assessment framework.

There is currently no comprehensive wellbeing indicator set available for use by local authorities and their partners to capture people's subjective experience of life. This section therefore:

- identifies indicators in the national indicator set which can be used to measure people's wellbeing at the local level
- provides recommendations and examples of additional indicators which local authorities could use to measure people's wellbeing on a voluntary basis.

LEVEL 1: INDICATORS FOR MEASURING RESIDENTS' OVERALL WELLBEING (UNIVERSAL LEVEL)

The recommended indicator for measuring residents' overall subjective wellbeing is a single-item Life Satisfaction question. This is a global wellbeing measure and does not set a specified timeframe within which respondents should rate their satisfaction. It asks:

All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole nowadays?

This question is now included in the CLG question bank.



Life Satisfaction is a widely used indicator, the responses to which could be collected in a reliable and consistent way at a local level. It is currently used, for example, as part of the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) among c. 10,000 individuals in the UK. Confidence intervals concerning levels of error can be estimated and it is statistically robust. Variation in results has been consistently found between population groups, and these have been shown to be related (at least in part) to differences in social, economic and environmental factors.

Some local authorities and local strategic partnerships have decided to use an overall measure of subjective wellbeing on a voluntary basis.



NATIONAL INDICATORS

There are currently no indicators which measure people's overall subjective wellbeing in the national indicator set. The national indicator which has the greatest potential for this is NI 119 – self reported measure of people's overall health and wellbeing – although the definition currently proposed suggests the focus will be limited to health only.

The vision set out in **Manchester's** Community Strategy states that by 2015, residents should be wealthier, live longer, healthier and happier lives. This vision is at the heart of Manchester's LAA, which has an explicit priority to promote aspiration, wellbeing and happiness. This cannot be achieved through public services alone; improving expectations and a sense of wellbeing amongst citizens is fundamental.

Currently, the Life Satisfaction question "All things considered how satisfied are you with your life on the whole nowadays?" is being used to measure wellbeing supported by National Indicator 119 – 'self-reported measure of people's overall health and wellbeing' to measure the health aspect of wellbeing. A range of measures looking at individual aspects (or domains) of wellbeing have also been included in Manchester's LAA. However, the limits of this universal indicator and recognition that the majority of services have, to varying degrees, the potential to impact on people's wellbeing are driving innovation. New methods are being developed which will draw upon a plethora of information across the range of services to provide an accurate measurement of local wellbeing which can be used to inform the universal level and applied at the domain or targeted levels.

In practice, this will require an exercise to map the tools being used across Manchester to measure reported levels of wellbeing, the evaluations planned that are relevant to wellbeing and the initiatives where no formal evaluation currently exists. Once the mapping is complete, the value of each of the tools and methodologies identified will be assessed and a common evaluation framework – based on good practice – will be developed. The framework will also be available as a web-based resource for all of Manchester's agencies.

LEVEL 2: INDICATORS FOR MEASURING WELLBEING IN RELATION TO DIFFERENT AREAS OF RESIDENTS' LIVES (DOMAIN LEVEL)

To measure wellbeing in relation to different areas or domains of residents' lives, a blend of satisfaction and experiential indicators are suggested. These should cover the key domains or areas which are recognised to have an important influence on people's experience of life.

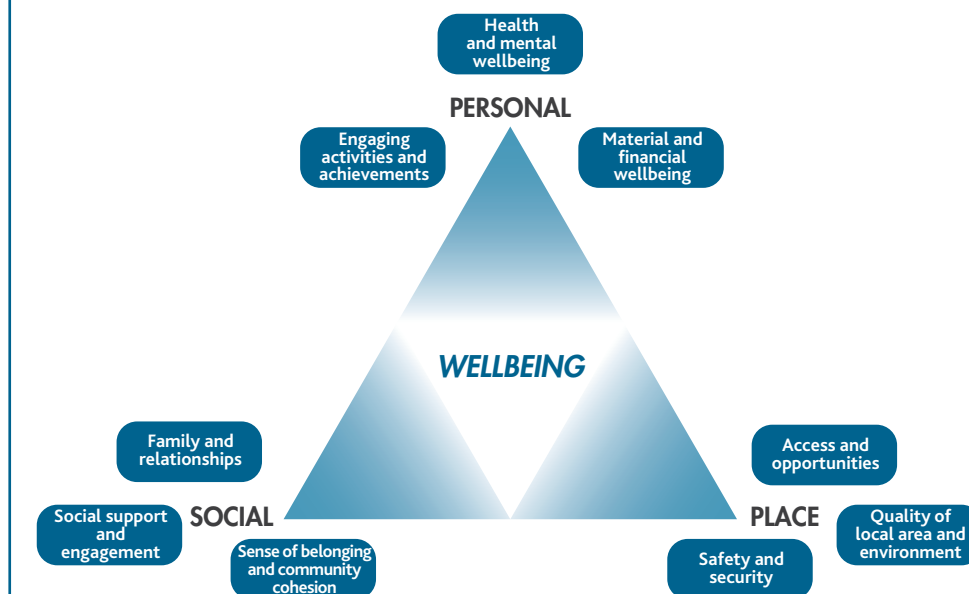
One way this could be taken forward is to measure domain level wellbeing in relation to a personal-social-place-based structure. This provides a bounded, but holistic, way to think of wellbeing and incorporates the key dimensions of how people experience their lives at a local level:

- how they feel about their own lives (for example, health, work, financial circumstances)
- how they feel about those around them (for example, friends, neighbours, community)
- how they feel about where they live (for example, neighbourhood quality, accessibility, safety).

The national indicators of subjective wellbeing contribute to four of these nine domains:

- sense of belonging and community cohesion
- quality of local area and environment
- health and mental wellbeing
- access and opportunities.

FIGURE 2: PERSONAL-SOCIAL-PLACE-BASED WELLBEING



NATIONAL INDICATORS

The national indicator set includes six indicators which measure aspects of subjective wellbeing in relation to different areas of residents' lives. These will be collected through the Place Survey.¹⁰

Some of these indicators are 'borderline' wellbeing measures and could be adapted to measure subjective wellbeing more directly, although this would compromise the ability to compare results with other local authorities (for example, do residents personally feel that they are treated with dignity and respect in their local area rather than their perception as to whether this is something taking place locally).



Other indicators in the national indicator set are closely related to measuring wellbeing in relation to different domains (for example, NI 3 Civic Participation and NI 6 Participation in Regular Volunteering in relation to social engagement and participation) but are not identified as measures of wellbeing here as they do not capture feelings or experiences directly.

DOMAIN LEVEL WELLBEING INDICATORS IN NIS	
Sense of belonging and community cohesion	
NI 1	% of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together
NI 2	% people who feel they belong to their neighbourhood
NI 23	perceptions that people in the area treat one another with respect and dignity
Quality of local area and environment	
NI 5	overall/general satisfaction with local area
Health and mental wellbeing	
NI 119	self-reported measure of people's overall health and wellbeing
Access and opportunities	
NI 4	% people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality

In addition to the national indicators, some other domain level indicators are also available and in use. These include indicators drawn from the library of local performance indicators (for example, fear of crime) or which have been developed locally by local authorities and their partners. However, there remain a number of gaps.

Local authorities and their partners could usefully develop a comprehensive set of domain level wellbeing indicators for use at the local level, drawing on both the national indicator set and locally-derived indicators. This will provide the evidence base needed to demonstrate a real understanding of local needs as part of the Comprehensive Area Assessment and for enabling local authorities to take forward their place-shaping role by taking action which is relevant to their specific local context. Breaking down the data by age, neighbourhood, gender, ethnicity and so on will further ensure that an understanding of diverse local needs is achieved.

Figure 3 begins to sketch out a domain level approach. Across the nine domains it combines subjective measures of wellbeing drawn from the NIS, existing locally-derived indicators, and new measures of subjective wellbeing, as well as examples of objective quality of life measures for each domain. This is **indicative** only. Many local authorities will wish to measure more than two indicators in relation to objective and subjective wellbeing for each domain. Similarly, whilst there are currently more objective indicators available within the NIS, some local areas may look to supplement these with new objective measures alongside new measures of subjective wellbeing.

Local authorities already pioneering a wellbeing approach at the local level are building on this:

- to identify existing local indicators of subjective wellbeing which can be brought together to understand local wellbeing more fully (for example, local performance indicators in the Local Area Agreement or contextual indicators included in the Sustainable Community Strategy)
- to identify and fill gaps by developing and making use of new measures of subjective wellbeing at the local level.

To support local authority activity in this area, more work is needed to explore this approach and domain selection further, as well as to pilot specific indicators – for example, to develop a supporting basket of subjective wellbeing indicators for local authorities to use on a discretionary basis.



FIGURE 3: MEASURING WELLBEING BY DOMAINS - AN EXAMPLE

DOMAIN	PERSONAL			SOCIAL			PLACE		
	Health & mental wellbeing	Material & financial wellbeing	Engaging activities & achievement	Family & relationships	Social support & engagement	Sense of belonging & cohesion	Quality of local area & environment	Safety & security	Access & opportunities
OBJECTIVE INDICATORS	All age all cause mortality rate (NI 120)	Working age people on out of work benefits (NI 152)	GCSE or equivalent qualifications (NI 75)	Proportion of children in poverty (NI 116)	Civic participation in local area (NI 3)	Population in transience (Local Indicator)	Level of air quality (NI 194)	Serious violent crime rate (NI 15)	Number of vulnerable people achieving independent living (NI 141)
	Adult participation in sport (NI 8)	Average earnings of employees in the area (NI 166)	Young people's involvement in positive activities (NI 110)	Under 18 conception rate (NI 112)	Participation in regular volunteering (NI 6)	Number of racially motivated incidents (Local Indicator)	Street & environmental cleanliness (NI 195)	People killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents (NI 47)	Number of new affordable homes (NI 155)
SUBJECTIVE INDICATORS	Self-reported measure of overall health & wellbeing (NI 119)	% people who feel they are coping on present income (NEW)	% people who feel they seldom have time to do things they really enjoy (NEW)	% people satisfied with their personal relationships (NEW)	% people who feel they have other people to turn to/discuss problems with (NEW)	% people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together (NI 1)	Overall/general satisfaction with local area (NI 5)	Fear of crime during day and at night (Local indicator)	% people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality (NI 4)
	Self-report limiting long-term illness (Local indicator)	% people satisfied with present standard of living (NEW)	% people who feel unable to demonstrate competence in daily life (NEW)	Experiential measures of time spent with family (NEW)	% people satisfied with support received from others (NEW)	% people who feel they belong to their neighbourhood (NI 2)	% people satisfied with access to local green spaces (NEW)	Perceptions of anti-social behaviour (NI 17)	Fair treatment by local services (NI 140)

In developing its Sustainable Community Strategy for 2008-18 (known as the Essex Strategy), the Essex Partnership wanted to make sure it could measure progress accurately against its delivery. The primary means by which this will happen will be through the targets agreed in the Local Area Agreement, the delivery mechanism for the Strategy. However, the Partnership was also keen to understand and respond to changes in people's experience of living in Essex during the lifetime of the Strategy and improve understanding of how the actions of the Essex Partnership help to improve people's Quality of Life.

Building on work carried out by Essex County Council's Quality of Life Unit to establish a method of measuring quality of life (which first brought to light the possibility of using measures of subjective wellbeing), it has been proposed that the Partnership will include a series of tracking measures in the Essex Strategy, which will give a wider context to the performance recorded against specific indicators within the LAA. This is a bold step that will allow positive public engagement with local people and more closely reflect their own quality of life. At this stage these will remain as tracking measures and so targets will not be set – if the targets set within the LAA are met, then a rise in these more over-arching indicators should be expected as well.

These tracking measures have been selected to fit with the thematic structure of the Essex Strategy (and also match the structure of the LAA) and can be summarised as follows:

Overall measure: Satisfaction with the local area as a place to live (NI 5)

Our People: Personal health and wellbeing (NI 119)

Our Community: Sense of belonging to local neighbourhood (NI 2)

Our Economy: Financial wellbeing (question from European Social Survey)

Our World: Engagement in environmentally-friendly behaviours (question from Defra's survey of behaviours and attitudes in relation to the environment)

This will bring a greater outcome focus to Essex's Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement and allow the Partnership to measure progress against the themes (or domains) that they are looking to achieve progress in. The following practical steps are to be taken to ensure these measures are useful and relevant to partners in Essex:

- As far as possible the National Indicator Set was used in order to allow benchmarking and comparison with other local authority areas

- It was felt that the biennial Place Survey did not allow regular enough reporting on progress and so surveys will be carried out twice a year to track performance against these measures
- This survey work will be carried out with a sufficiently large sample to ensure that results are valid at District level, allowing the 12 Districts LSPs in Essex to interpret the results for their own locality.

Croydon Council, Croydon Primary Care Trust and the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust have been working collaboratively to assess the potential impact of the Croydon Local Area Agreement on residents' wellbeing and to pilot new measures of wellbeing at the universal and domain level.

Using a Mental Wellbeing Impact Assessment Framework (based on the MWIA Toolkit published by Care Services Improvement Partnership in 2007) partners in Croydon first 'screened' the Local Area Agreement to produce a basket of indicators which, based on available evidence, were deemed to have a clear and robust relationship to mental health and wellbeing. A total of 18 indicators were shortlisted (many of which now feature in the National Indicator Set), and fall into six main domains:

- A. Social and Community Wellbeing
- B. Social Functioning and Participation
- C. Environmental
- D. Physical Wellbeing
- E. Employment, Education and Personal Functioning
- F. Influence and Control

The data from across the 18 indicators has been brought together into a single document, and presented using a traffic light system based on recent performance against target.

To complement existing indicators of wellbeing in the LAA, partners in Croydon also piloted a suite of additional subjective measures. This has taken place through the Croydon TalkAbout Survey which is the Borough's Citizens Panel comprising 1500 residents, with a life satisfaction question also included in the PCT's Patient Survey. The indicators include:

- % residents satisfied/dissatisfied with their life as a whole
- % residents satisfied/dissatisfied with the Croydon area
- % increase in social contact by choice with friends, relatives or work colleagues
- % residents likely to be living in the same place as at present in two years
- % residents having a positive outlook on life

This subjective data is being analysed and further disaggregation of the data is currently taking place to help build the evidence base on local wellbeing.

The aim of this work is to produce an annual residents' wellbeing report for Croydon Strategic Partnership, which reports progress against the 18 indicators and targets identified from the LAA together with the new data from local surveys conducted by the Council and PCT. Discussion is currently taking place with regard to the format and focus of this report although it is anticipated it will act as a basis for:

- Better understanding the link between LAA outcomes and people's subjective wellbeing
- Exploring the relationship between objective and subjective measures of wellbeing
- Identifying potential areas where activity could be targeted to promote people's wellbeing (for example, geographical, age groups, vulnerable residents)
- Indicating where further information to guide potential actions/interventions is required

LEVEL 3: INDICATORS FOR MEASURING THE ENABLING OR PROTECTIVE FACTORS INFLUENCING RESIDENTS' WELLBEING (TARGETED LEVEL)

Measuring wellbeing at the targeted level involves the selection of wellbeing indicators which are particularly relevant for residents whose circumstances make them vulnerable or who are users of local services. This suggests indicators which are rooted in the psychological dimensions of people's wellbeing will be particularly useful for understanding how residents and service users feel and function, and for understanding the potential

relationship this has to the achievement of wider outcomes at the local level.

NATIONAL INDICATORS

The national indicator set includes some targeted indicators of subjective wellbeing for use with particular groups of residents or service users including:

TARGETED LEVEL WELLBEING INDICATORS IN NIS	
Older People	
NI 137	Healthy life expectancy at age 65
NI 138	Satisfaction of people over 65 with both home and neighbourhood
Children and Young People	
NI 50	Emotional health of children

The national indicator set includes few subjective indicators which capture the psychological dimensions of people's wellbeing, either for specific groups or for the population as a whole.

A small number of indicators are contributory but are not included as targeted indicators of subjective wellbeing here as they do not directly measure people's life experience in terms of how people feel and function. For example, NI 124 – People with a long-term condition supported to be independent and in control of their condition – taps into the issue of autonomy which is a known determinant of wellbeing, but the indicator is focused on service provision and does not ask respondents directly to rate how autonomous they feel. Similarly, NI 139 – Extent to which older people receive the support they need to live independently at home – is a perception measure as to whether residents believe older people receive support locally rather than a direct measure of subjective wellbeing which asks whether people feel supported or not.

Some local quality of life indicators also tap into aspects of wellbeing in a targeted way (for example, some local authority areas look at issues relating to isolation and independence among their older populations).

Overall, indicators of wellbeing at the targeted level could be developed further:

- to provide tailored subjective wellbeing indicators which cover different aspects of life for particular groups of residents/services users at the local level (for example, children, vulnerable older residents)
- to provide a common set of subjective indicators which tap into the psychological distress/psychological flourishing aspects of people's wellbeing in terms of how they feel and function. Local authorities and their partners could either use these indicators to track performance and improve support for those who are known to be vulnerable, or use these indicators across local populations in a more diagnostic way, to inform the targeting of local resources (potentially including targeting those residents not typically identified as vulnerable or in need).

There are a number of indicators available which could be used, or adapted for use, by local authorities and their partners to measure wellbeing at the targeted level. These include single-item measures or small groups of measures (including questions on autonomy, competence, relatedness, resilience, etc which have been used in various national surveys and the European Social Survey) as well as various validated scales (for example, Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale – WEMWBS, Centre for Epidemiological Studies scale to measure depressive symptomology – CES-D, General Health Questionnaire – GHQ).

Some local authorities and their partners are actively engaged in this area and are already taking forward some of these targeted level approaches to measuring local wellbeing. Again, further work to pilot and recommend a menu of indicators would be a useful activity to support this.



MOVING FORWARD

SUPPORTING MEASUREMENT AND ACTION ON WELLBEING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

This report recommends an approach for measuring people's wellbeing at the local level. It is aimed at local authorities and their partners and has been developed in collaboration with a small number of councils and with the Audit Commission in the context of the new assessment framework.

Feedback to date suggests that the universal level and domain level are likely to be of particular relevance to local authorities and their strategic partners over the short to medium term. Data obtained from measuring wellbeing at these levels can be used to help assess needs, set priorities and measure outcomes as part of the Local Area Agreement and Sustainable Community Strategy, and to demonstrate a robust understanding of 'place' as part of the Comprehensive Area Assessment.

Over the medium to longer term, we would anticipate an increasing focus on wellbeing measurement and action at the targeted level. A number of local authorities and their partners already recognise the value of measuring and acting on wellbeing at this level, particularly for addressing the needs of those who are the most vulnerable and those who are users of services locally.

The development and use of psycho-social measures of wellbeing across universal, domain and targeted levels, offers the opportunity to build a much stronger evidence base on the relationships between positive feelings, good functioning and local area outcomes. This requires further research to explore the feasibility of developing measurement approaches based on, for example, psychological needs assessments, psycho-social needs audits and capabilities/functioning approaches. This data will give local authorities and their partners the opportunity to explore the long-term impacts of policies, service provision, and social changes for communities and citizens and provide a stronger basis for decision making and resource allocation at the local level.

As a next step, exploratory research, innovative action and the further piloting of new measures of wellbeing at the local level is recommended. This will support local authorities and their partners to deepen their understanding of residents' experience of life at the local level and help to shape policies and services in a way which will create the conditions necessary for the achievement of wellbeing for individuals and communities.

REFERENCES

¹ The Local Government Act (2000) can be found at http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts2000/en/ukpgaen_20000022_en_1

² The Audit Commission consultation document on Comprehensive Area Assessment, released July 2008, can be found at: <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/caa/consultation.asp>

³ The Local Government White Paper, *Strong and Prosperous Communities*, published in October 2006 can be found at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/strongprosperous>

⁴ The Lyons Inquiry into the Future of Local Government final report, released March 2007, and associated documents can be found at: <http://www.webarchive.org.uk/pan/15454/20070428/www.lyonsinquiry.org.uk/index.html>

⁵ The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act (2007) can be found at: http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2007/ukpga_20070028_en_1

⁶ The complete National Indicator Set can be found at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/nationalindicator>

⁷ The Question Bank can be found at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/placesurveymanual0809>

⁸ The UK Sustainable Development Strategy *Securing the Future*, launched in 2005 can be found at http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/publications/pdf/strategy/SecFut_complete.pdf

⁹ Further information about the provisional national wellbeing measures can be found in Sustainable Development Indicators In Your Pocket 2007: <http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/progress/index.htm>

¹⁰ Guidance for the 2008 / 2009 Place Survey can be found at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/placesurveymanual0809>

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, RESOURCES & LINKS

Details of the final definitions for the national indicators, issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government and released in February 2008, can be found at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/nationalindicatorsupdate>

The Audit Commission's Library of Local Performance Indicators can be accessed at:

<http://www.local-pi-library.gov.uk/index.html>

A report by the Audit Commission on Local Quality of Life indicators, released in August 2005, can be found at:

<http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/reports/NATIONAL-REPORT.asp?CategoryID=&ProdID=0D488A03-8C16-46fb-A454-7936FB5D5589>

A paper synthesising the outcomes of four Defra research projects on wellbeing that were commissioned in February 2006 can be found at:

<http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/what/priority/pdf/Wellbeing%20research%20synthesis%20report.pdf>

For more information about the Local Wellbeing Project please visit:

http://www.youngfoundation.org/work/local_innovation/consortiums/wellbeing

THE LOCAL WELLBEING PROJECT

The Local Wellbeing Project is a unique, three-year initiative to explore how local government can practically improve the happiness and wellbeing of their citizens. The project brings together three very different local authorities – Manchester, Hertfordshire and South Tyneside – with the Young Foundation; Professor Lord Richard Layard from the London School of Economics, who has led much of the debate about happiness and public policy; and the Improvement and Development Agency, who are leaders in local government innovation. The project is also backed by key central government departments.

MORE INFORMATION

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South Tyneside Council

Funded by:



Core Partners:



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