

## Measuring wellbeing – and changes to wellbeing - in Newcastle

### Scoping of drivers and developments

The measurement of wellbeing is becoming increasingly important locally, nationally and internationally – both to measure the progress of society as a whole and to evaluate whether policy actions have resulted in positive population-level change.

Parallel directions of recent debate have sought to:

- Embed economic measures into wider reflection on social and environmental progress, with a focus on the wellbeing of populations
- Shift from purely using disease or life expectancy measures of health, to embrace ones that consider social, emotional, financial and other dimensions of wellbeing.

A recent paper<sup>1</sup> argued that a shift to measure wellbeing doesn't just influence what you do but should make you re-consider how policy making is done.

#### In Newcastle...

Partners in the Wellbeing for Life Board, including Newcastle City Council, have a strong cross-cutting focus on wellbeing as a positive 'state'. The Wellbeing for Life Board, chaired by the Leader of the Council, is leading a city wide approach to tackle inequalities in wellbeing and health, and improve wellbeing and health for all, by:

- Improving the conditions in which people are born, grow up, live their lives and grow old.
- Strengthening the impact of services we provide

The Wellbeing for Life Strategy, which will provide the framework for partners to work together and take these ambitions forward, is now drafted. During its development, partners have recognized that a key concern is to be clear on the framework for demonstrating the difference that collective effort is making.

The Newcastle Future Needs Assessment (NFNA) is our single policy approach which intends to provide an integrated, coherent and evidence-based means of partners working together to determine priorities for the city.

In our NFNA approach, processes at all levels will draw on a suite of profiles with a view to partners looking forward and informing conversations about what should be prioritised. The core population profile, Know your city, draws together data on the people in Newcastle, the various factors that affect their wellbeing and health and that on health and disability in Newcastle. Developments are currently underway to provide the source data in the form of a Know your community dashboard for a selected community of geography, interest or identity (as far as the relevant data sources allow this). **In practice, a selection of the same data could be used on a time series basis to look backward to help us evaluate changes at a population level.** This could also offer a basis for relative comparison with other areas to both assess development in Newcastle and assess the impact of factors external to the city.

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<sup>1</sup> Wallace J and Schmucker K (2012), Shifting the dial: from wellbeing measures to policy practice. Carnegie UK & IPPR North

## Nationally...

The Public Health Outcomes Framework concentrates on two high-level outcomes to be achieved across the public health system, and groups further indicators into four 'domains' that cover the full spectrum of public health. The outcomes reflect a focus not only on how long people live, but on how well they live at all stages of life. The data behind the outcomes framework is being made available to those working at local authority level by Public Health England<sup>2</sup>

The Prime Minister initiated the National Wellbeing Project in 2010. Run by the Office of National Statistics (ONS), it aims to broaden the framework for measuring progress in the country, to include both standard of living and quality of life. Early reports from this project were published in July 2012, presenting a new national wellbeing index.<sup>3</sup>

There has also been work by non-governmental bodies, such as:

- The New Economics Foundation who have used the data collected on 'subjective wellbeing' in the Annual Population Survey (conducted by ONS) to do more in-depth analysis of the patterns of wellbeing in the country<sup>4</sup>.
- The Young Foundation who have drawn on an asset-based perspective to develop a Wellbeing and Resilience Measure (WARM)<sup>5</sup>. This is now being used as part of an EU project called Beyond GDP.

## Internationally...

Drawing attention to the WHO definition of health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity", the WHO European Region's new policy framework Health2020 drew attention to the need to introduce measures of wellbeing and referred to a number of international developments.

Since the publication of Health2020, the WHO European Office have convened an Expert Working Group on measurement and target setting for wellbeing. A report of the second meeting of this group hosted by the OECD (in June 2012) has been made available<sup>6</sup>. The meeting discussed concepts of wellbeing; existing measurement work and agreed a road map to move forward.

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<sup>2</sup> Public Health Outcomes Framework data tool <http://www.phoutcomes.info/>

<sup>3</sup> Office of National Statistics: Measuring What Matters: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/user-guidance/well-being/index.html>

<sup>4</sup> New Economics Foundation: Well-being Patterns Uncovered <http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/uncovering-wellbeing>

<sup>5</sup> The Young Foundation: Wellbeing and Resilience Measure: <http://archive.youngfoundation.org/our-work/advising-public-service-innovation/warm/wellbeing-and-resilience-measure-warm>

<sup>6</sup> World Health Organisation European Office: Measurement of and target setting for wellbeing: an initiative by the WHO European Office for Europe. Report on second meeting of the expert group. Available on request from Helen Wilding, [Helen.wilding@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:Helen.wilding@newcastle.gov.uk)

The WHO European Region Annual Report 2012 (published March 2013) chose as its title “Charting the way to wellbeing”<sup>7</sup>. An entire chapter of the report (Chapter Three) and an associated Summary Fact Sheet<sup>8</sup> both emphasise the importance of moving away from measures solely about disease and disability to measures of wellbeing.

The OECD have developed a Better Life index<sup>9</sup> which enables comparisons of wellbeing to be made across countries (including the UK). The index draws on 11 topics the OECD has identified as essential in respect of material living conditions and quality of life.

The OECD is also in the early phases of a project, *How is Life in Your Region*<sup>10</sup>, which aims to advance the measurement agenda on wellbeing across the member states of the OECD with a particular focus on indicators, and to promote exchange of practice on strategies which can support progress at the sub-national level. The project aims to compile and develop an agreed suite of wellbeing indicators at regional and local level which can provide the basis for comparison across OECD countries; and through case studies, improve understanding of the links between policy actions and outcomes, aiming to enhance the results of local and regional policies. Given the work we are doing, **the OECD have approached Newcastle as a possible partner to this project alongside areas in Germany, the Netherlands and other OECD members states.**

RB/HW/SL  
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<sup>7</sup> World Health Organisation: The European Health Report 2012: charting the way to wellbeing  
<http://www.euro.who.int/en/what-we-do/data-and-evidence/european-health-report-2012>

<sup>8</sup> World Health Organisation European Office: Fact Sheet Health 2020 and the case for measuring wellbeing  
<http://www.euro.who.int/en/what-we-do/data-and-evidence/european-health-report-2012/fact-sheet-health-2020-and-the-case-for-measuring-well-being>

<sup>9</sup> An interactive tool, which allows the user to choose their own weightings between different parts of the index, is available at <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/>

<sup>10</sup> OECD (2011) “How’s life?” OECD Publishing: <http://www.oecd.org/statistics/betterlifeinitiativemeasuringwell-beingandprogress.htm>