

# Cross-Cutting Themes

## *A Wellbeing Public Dialogue*



Anita van Mil and Henrietta Hopkins

Hopkins Van Mil: Creating Connections Ltd

December 2015

**What Works  
Wellbeing**



HM Government

Creating Connections  
Hopkins Van Mil

Facilitating engagement to gain insight  
[www.hopkinsvanmil.co.uk](http://www.hopkinsvanmil.co.uk)

# Contents

<b>Executive summary</b>	p. i
<b>1. Cross-cutting wellbeing themes: introduction</b>	p. 1
1.1 Scope of the overarching dialogue	p. 1
1.2 Public dialogue partners	p. 2
1.3 Dialogue methodology	p. 4
1.4 Recruitment	p. 6
1.5 Resultant reports	p. 6
<b>2. How people define wellbeing in their own lives</b>	p. 8
2.1 Basic wellbeing needs	p. 8
2.2 Belonging	p. 16
2.3 Self-esteem	p. 21
2.4 Fulfilment	p. 23
<b>3. Views on actions that can improve wellbeing</b>	p. 31
3.1 Overcoming perceived barriers to wellbeing	p. 31
3.2 Reliable public transport	p. 37
3.3 Affordable good quality homes	p. 38
3.4 Wellbeing trade-offs	p. 39
<b>4. Actors in the delivery of wellbeing</b>	p. 42
4.1 What individuals can do	p. 42
4.2 Views on what central and local government can do	p. 45
4.3 Views on the role of business	p. 48
4.4 Views on the role of the What Works Centre for Wellbeing	p. 50
<b>5. Wellbeing messages</b>	p. 53
5.1 The pros and cons of using the term wellbeing	p. 53
5.2 Adapting the message for the audience	p. 54
<b>6. Concluding remarks</b>	p. 56
<b>7. Acknowledgements</b>	p. 57

# Executive summary

---

## Background

This report describes the cross-cutting findings from three two round public dialogues commissioned by the What Works Centre for Wellbeing (the Centre) with support from Sciencewise<sup>1</sup>, Public Health England and the Cabinet Office and involving 108 members of the public in Bristol, Belfast, London, South Tyneside, Falkirk and Cardiff. The aim of the public dialogue was:

*To increase the effectiveness of the What Works Centre for Wellbeing by ensuring its design and policy priorities are informed by members of the public.*

The What Works Centre for Wellbeing commissioned public dialogues around three evidence areas:

- Community wellbeing
- Sport, culture and wellbeing
- Work, learning and wellbeing

The overarching objectives for the three series of dialogues were, to understand public views on:

- How people define wellbeing in the context of their own lives
- Perceptions of whether and how individual and government actions can affect people's wellbeing
- Direct and indirect use of the Centre by the public
- The format, style of message, channels and messenger that they would be most and least receptive to.
- In addition each series of dialogues had its own objective tailored to the evidence area concerned.

The views described in this presentation are drawn exclusively from the public dialogue and the presentations given during the 12 sessions. In summary the cross-cutting findings are:

### *How people define wellbeing in the context of their own lives*

The dialogues demonstrated that basic wellbeing needs include being safe and loved, having sufficient money, good physical and mental health and the opportunity to access good quality affordable food. Participants said that the more belonging people experience the happier they are. Belonging starts with connections with others, which may turn into friendships and ultimately grow into a sense of being part of something bigger where difference is appreciated. Self-esteem was seen as an essential component of wellbeing which stems from increased confidence as a result of strong connections and a sense of achievement and pride. A sense of opportunity and agency, inspiration, opportunities for personal growth, recognition and appreciation contribute to feelings of fulfilment.

### *Views on actions that can improve wellbeing*

Each of the dialogues comprised discussions about positive and negative life events which had impacted on people's wellbeing. A lack of time and money, confidence and support, information, and work-life balance were cited as the main barriers to wellbeing alongside a lack of affordable good quality housing and a reliable transportation system. To overcome issues of time and money participants felt strongly that

---

<sup>1</sup> [Sciencewise](#) is the UK's national centre for public dialogue in policy making involving science and technology issues

appropriate pay, the availability of online learning options and low cost sport and cultural activities are likely to improve wellbeing. To overcome a lack of balance participants referred to the need for flexible solutions to cater for individual needs beyond work and for cooperation amongst colleagues to accommodate each other's needs. There was a view that a lack of confidence can be mitigated by friendly and reliable support services, intergenerational programmes, opportunities to advance and positive feedback. The creation of community information hubs and tailored information to different life stages were mentioned as measures to overcome a lack of information.

### *Actors in the delivery of wellbeing*

In each of the dialogues participants considered who should be doing what to increase people's wellbeing in communities, work and learning and through sport and culture. An overwhelming majority felt that individuals need to take responsibility for their own wellbeing first of all and motivate others to do so as well. Local and central government can support individual initiative by working with the third sector in getting the wellbeing message out, incentivising employers to introduce wellbeing programmes and promote life-long learning. Businesses should invest in local communities, develop wellbeing policies with a focus on the individual needs of employers and offer learning opportunities to all. The What Works Centre for Wellbeing was seen as the main advocate for wellbeing, who could build bridges between communities, policy makers and employers, advocate for the wellbeing needs of the public, identify and disseminate best practice and set up a network of wellbeing field specialists who provide information about wellbeing activities at regional level.

### *Wellbeing messages*

Participants in the sport and culture dialogue considered what messages would nudge people to improve their own wellbeing. Although using the term wellbeing was seen as a useful way to get the message across, words in relation to happiness and fun had slightly more traction. Messages need to be tailored to ensure they chime with the experiences and language use of people at different life stages. Some felt that employers need guidance about the meaning of wellbeing and how to communicate wellbeing programmes.

### *Reflections and concluding remarks*

Using wellbeing as a way in to discussing policies has proven very productive in the three public dialogues commissioned by the What Works Centre for Wellbeing. Reviewing dialogue strands through the wellbeing lens enabled participants to relate quickly to the policy under discussion, shed a light on what matters most to them as they go about their daily lives and reflect on what holds them back from improving their wellbeing.

Discussing policies from a wellbeing perspective shows that policy makers need to recognise the interconnectedness of people's lives to make better decisions. A policy intervention in one area might enhance one aspect of wellbeing but not contribute to a better quality of life overall.

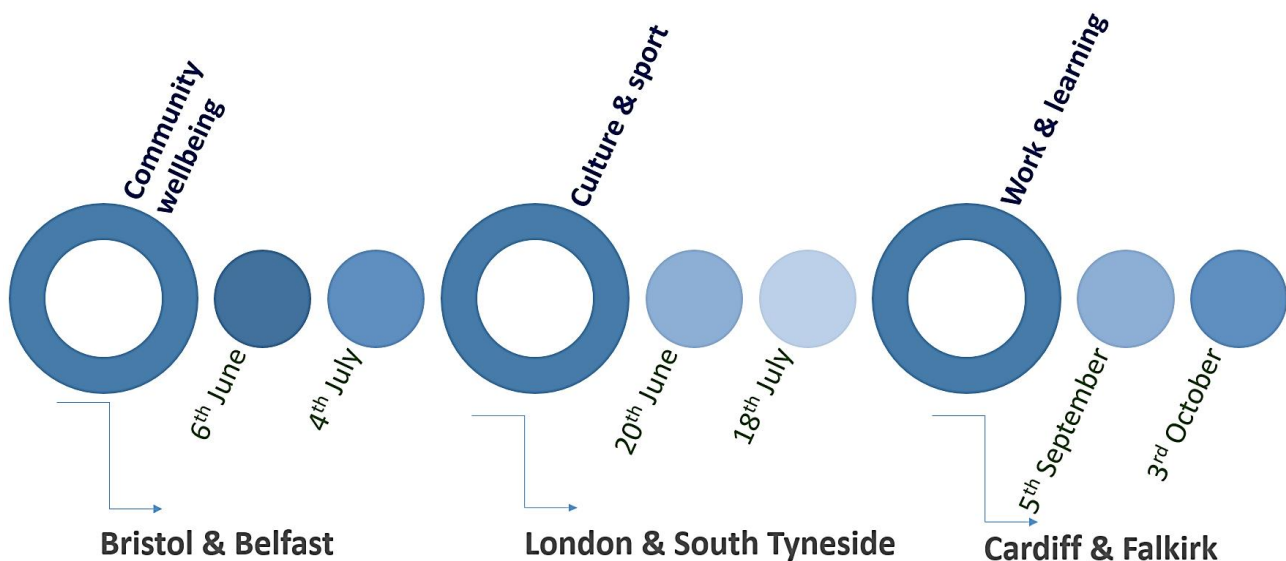
If policies can facilitate wellbeing as a state of mind their impact is more likely to be long lasting.

Participants in the three What Works Centre for Wellbeing public dialogues reported that achieving a state of flow made them feel happy and inspired and contributed to a more positive outlook on life.

An interesting finding of the three dialogues is that some of the interventions that have the potential to improve people's wellbeing are extremely low cost including employee/ learner focused approaches; information distribution; and two-way dialogue.

The dialogues demonstrated that there is a lot to be gained from putting wellbeing at the heart of policymaking. When people are happy and their quality of life is good they are more likely to be productive in work, learning and in their communities; and more likely to engage with sport and culture.

# 1. Cross-cutting wellbeing themes: introduction



The following is an introduction to the cross-cutting themes that have emerged from the design and delivery of three public dialogue strands from June to October 2015. 12 dialogue workshops were held in this time period in the locations set out in figure 1.

## 1.1 Scope of the overarching wellbeing dialogue

The overarching dialogue builds on the work of the [2014 public dialogue](#) on wellbeing commissioned from the New Economics Foundation by the Cabinet Office, supported by Sciencewise, designed and delivered by Hopkins Van Mil: Creating Connections Ltd (HVM). This subsequent dialogue was also co-funded by Sciencewise and supported by the Cabinet Office.

The aim of the dialogue commissioned by the What Works Centre for Wellbeing was to:

- Increase the effectiveness of the Centre by ensuring its design and policy priorities are informed by members of the public who:
  - Will be affected by decision making resulting from guidance issued by the Centre;
  - Are potential users of guidance from the Centre.
- Ensure that the knowledge mobilisation strategy for the Centre is informed by how public decision-makers want to receive and use evidence.
- Significantly increase the likelihood of Centre's success in terms of:
  - Producing evidence in formats and through channels that are most likely to be accepted and used by the public;
  - Increase the % of people accessing and acting upon advice and guidance issued by the Centre.

Figure 1: Dialogue timetable and locations

This, and each of the other dialogue reports, can be read independently from each other or as a suite of information on all the dialogue findings. Each report is intended to support the work of the academic teams commissioned by the What Works Centre for Wellbeing to inform their *Voice of the user* reports ensuring

that the views of the public are taken into account as the What Works Centre for Wellbeing develops its work programmes.

## 1.2 Public dialogue partners

The following organisations worked together on the overarching public dialogue.

The [What Works Centre for Wellbeing](#) aims to improve the wellbeing of the people in the UK by bringing together the best evidence, making it easy to use and easier to make. A new organisation, launched by the Government in October 2014, the What Works Centre for Wellbeing is dedicated to understanding what national and local governments, along with voluntary and business partners, can do to increase wellbeing. The Centre is supported by 16 founding partners<sup>2</sup>, which are, in aggregate, funding a research programme of £3.5m over three years beginning from June 2015.

## What Works | Wellbeing

The [Sciencewise](#) programme is funded by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS).



Sciencewise aims to improve policy-making involving science and emerging technology across government by increasing the effectiveness with which public dialogue is used, and encouraging its wider use where appropriate to ensure public views are considered as part of the evidence base.

[The Cabinet Office](#) supports the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, and ensures the effective running of government. It is also the corporate headquarters for government, in partnership with HM Treasury, and takes the lead in certain critical policy areas such as national security and government efficiency, transparency and accountability.

[Hopkins Van Mil: Creating Connections Ltd](#) is about engagement to gain insight. As expert dialogue



facilitators the team creates safe, neutral and productive spaces in which to access people's views on the content that matters to them. HVM bridges the gap between policy and decision-making and the views of communities and members of the public for whom policies and decisions are made.

The wellbeing public dialogue was supported by an **Oversight Group** comprising the following members:

- Robin Clarke\*, Dialogue and Engagement Specialist, Sciencewise
- Professor Kevin Daniels, Evidence Programme Lead (Work and Learning), Professor Organisational Behaviour, University of East Anglia
- Balgit Gill, Department for Communities and Local Government
- Nancy Hey, Director, What Works Centre for Wellbeing
- Dr. Susan Hodgett, Senior Lecturer in the School of Sociology and Applied Social Studies and Deputy Chair of the Research Excellence Framework, University of Ulster
- Alison Humberstone, Mental Health Strategy, Department for Work and Pensions
- Nina James\*, Policy Adviser, Wellbeing Programme, Analysis & Insight, The Cabinet Office

---

<sup>2</sup> The founding partners are: Economic and Social Research Council, Public Health England, Department for Business Innovation and Skills, Department for Communities and Local Government, Department for Work and Pensions, Department for Health, Cabinet Office, Arts and Humanities Research Council, Food Standards Agency, Local Government Association, Office for National Statistics, Big Lottery Fund, DCMS, Arts Council England, Historic England, Sport England, Heritage Lottery Fund.

- Professor Peter Kinderman, Evidence Programme Lead (Community), Professor of Clinical Psychology, University of Liverpool
- Dr. Paul Litchfield (Oversight Group Chair), Chief Medical Officer and Director of Wellbeing, Inclusion, Safety & Health for BT Group
- Anna Macgillivray\* (Evaluator), Ursus Consulting
- Simon McKee, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
- Catherine Mottram, Principal Research Officer, Department for Culture, Media and Sport
- Andrew Mowlah, Senior Manager, Policy and Research, Arts Council England
- Catherine Parker, Health & Wellbeing Programme Lead, North East Public Health England Centre, Public Health England
- Lucy Smith, Public Health Manager, Mental Wellbeing, Lambeth and Southwark Council
- Dr. Dawn Snape\*, Head of Evidence and Analysis, What Works Centre for Wellbeing
- Andrew Spiers, Strategic Lead Research, Evaluation and Analysis, Sport England
- Jude Stansfield, National Adviser, Public Mental Health, Public Health England
- Francis Stuart, Research and Policy Adviser, Oxfam Scotland
- Andrew Taylor, Knowledge Manager, BIG Lottery Fund
- Dr. Richard Thurston, Deputy Chief Social Research Officer Welsh Government
- Dave Wall, Director, Department of Social Development, Northern Ireland Executive
- Jennifer Wallace, Head of Policy, Carnegie UK Trust
- Professor Christine Victor, Evidence Programme Lead (Culture and Sport), Professor of Public Health / Vice-Dean Research, Brunel University London

\*Wellbeing Public Dialogue Project Team

Each dialogue strand had its own sub-committee which supported the dialogue design and delivery as follows:

#### Community wellbeing public dialogue sub-committee

- Saamah Abdallah, Community Evidence Programme What Works Centre for Wellbeing, Senior Researcher & Programme Manager, New Economics Foundation
- Robin Clarke, Dialogue and Engagement Specialist, Sciencewise
- Nina James, Policy Adviser, Wellbeing Programme, Analysis & Insight, The Cabinet Office
- Professor Peter Kinderman, Evidence Programme Lead (Community), Professor of Clinical Psychology, University of Liverpool
- Dr. Susan Hodgett, Senior Lecturer in the School of Sociology and Applied Social Studies and Deputy Chair of the Research Excellence Framework, University of Ulster
- Baljit Gill, Department for Communities and Local Government
- Alison Comley MBE, Strategic Director for Neighbourhoods, Bristol City Council
- Dave Wall, Director, Department of Social Development, Northern Ireland Executive
- Jen Wallace, Policy Team Leader, Carnegie UK Trust
- Liz Zeidler, Founder and Director of Strategy & Production, Bristol Happy City

#### Sport, culture and wellbeing public dialogue sub-committee

- Robin Clarke, Dialogue and Engagement Specialist, Sciencewise
- Nina James, Policy Adviser, Wellbeing Programme, Analysis & Insight, The Cabinet Office
- Dr. Louise Mansfield, Deputy Director of the Brunel Centre for Sport, Health and Wellbeing
- Simon McKee, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
- Catherine Mottram, Principal Research Officer, Department for Culture, Media and Sport



- Andrew Mowlah, Senior Manager, Policy and Research, Arts Council England
- Catherine Parker, Health & Wellbeing Programme Lead, North East Public Health England Centre, Public Health England
- Lucy Smith, Public Health Manager, Mental Wellbeing, Lambeth and Southwark Council
- Dr. Dawn Snape, Head of Evidence and Analysis, What Works Centre for Wellbeing
- Andrew Spiers, Strategic Lead Research, Evaluation and Analysis, Sport England
- Jude Stansfield, National Adviser, Public Mental Health, Public Health England

### Work, learning and wellbeing public dialogue sub-committee

- Dan Bristow, Public Policy Institute for Wales
- Professor Kevin Daniels, Evidence Programme Lead (Work and Learning), Professor Organisational Behaviour, University of East Anglia
- Gavin Gray, Head of Promoting Fair Work, Scottish Government
- Sam Haskell, Health and Work Policy Team, Public Health England
- Alison Humberstone, Department for Work and Pensions
- Stuart King, Researcher, Scottish Government
- Fiona McFarlane, HR Team Leader, Falkirk Council
- Simon McKee, Department for Business Innovation and Skills
- Tom Smith, Department for Work and Pensions
- Francis Stuart, Policy and Research Adviser, Oxfam Scotland
- Dr. Richard Thurston, Deputy Chief Social Researcher, Welsh Government
- Jen Wallace, Head of Policy, Carnegie UK Trust

The HVM delivery team for the programme was as follows:

- Anita van Mil, Project Director and Lead Facilitator
- Henrietta Hopkins, Lead Designer and Lead Facilitator
- Hally Ingram, Facilitator
- Emma Cranidge, Facilitator
- Mike King, Facilitator
- Jemima Foxtrot, Data Analyst and Event Administrator
- Mamun Madaser, Data Analyst and Event Administrator
- Tisna Westerhof, Event Administrator and Photographer

### 1.3 Dialogue methodology

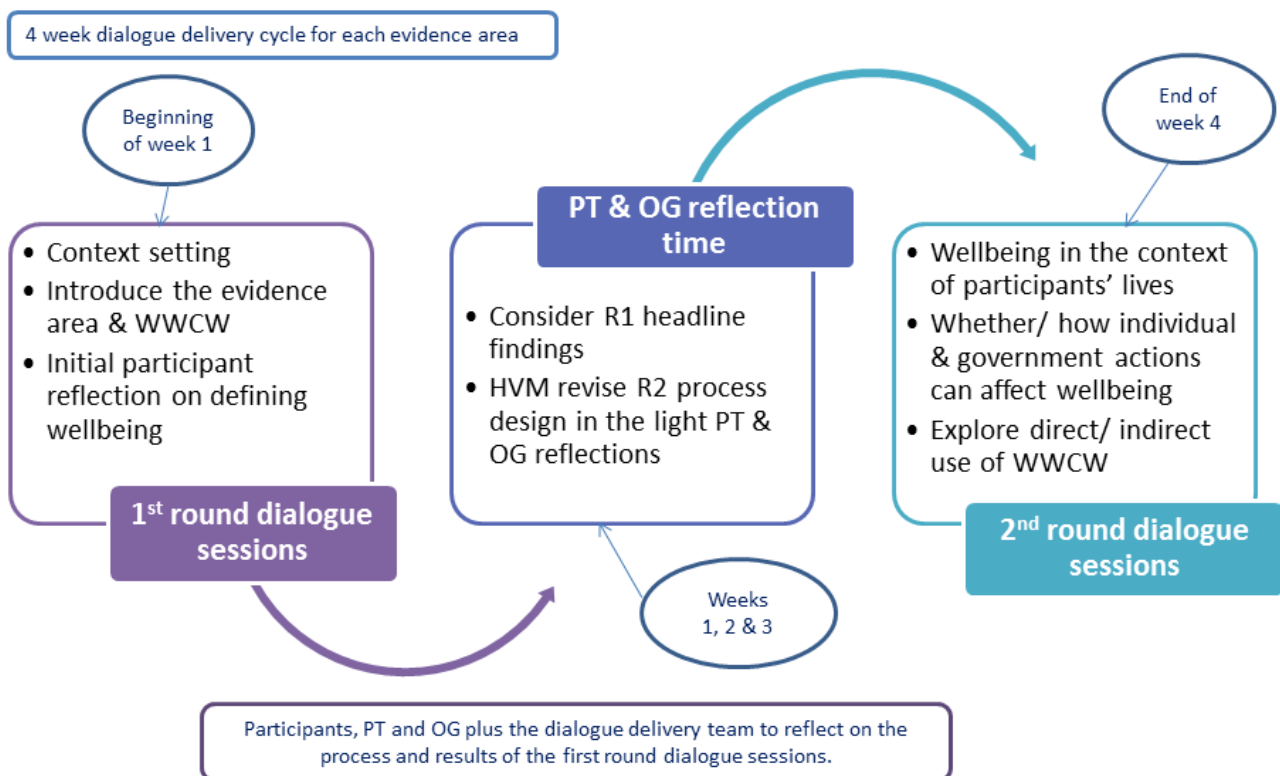
The wellbeing public dialogues were devised using a tailored process based on that initially tested by HVM as the dialogue contractor for the *Embedding Wellbeing Science in Policy Making*<sup>3</sup>; a public dialogue commissioned by the New Economics Foundation (NEF)/ the Cabinet Office and supported by Sciencewise in 2014. The 2014 dialogues demonstrated that a two round process was effective in considering policies through a wellbeing lens. HVM dialogues follow the best practice set out in the Sciencewise Guiding Principles<sup>4</sup> and as such consider a two round process to be important. It gives time for all those involved on the dialogue to have a space for reflection enabling richer findings from discussions. It enables trust to be built so that an effective interaction can take place between dialogue participants, policy makers and stakeholders around the wellbeing policy context. In addition this structure allows for:

<sup>3</sup> Hopkins Van Mil: Creating Connections Ltd – Dialogue Findings report (November 2014) [http://bit.ly/HVM\\_NEF\\_WellbeingFindings](http://bit.ly/HVM_NEF_WellbeingFindings) and Technical Appendices (November 2014) [http://bit.ly/HVM\\_NEFTechnicalAppendix](http://bit.ly/HVM_NEFTechnicalAppendix)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/guiding-principles/>

- Momentum to build in the discussions from the first round focused on context to the second focused on in-depth consideration of wellbeing in response to participants' lived experience
- Time for the Centre and other stakeholders to reflect on participant views in between each round
- Flexibility in workshop design to allow new thinking to emerge in between rounds and for the round 2 process plan to be amended in the light of this period of reflection.

For each of the dialogue workshops participants were allocated to one of two small discussion groups with up to 10 people in each. They stayed with the same group, and the same dedicated HVM facilitator, for rounds 1 and 2. This meant that in each round participants were able to reflect on the issues as individuals, within a smaller group or as a whole group. Sometimes participants discussed the issues with policy or topic specialists where they needed more clarification on a particular aspect of the dialogue, but for the most part the latter were present as observers. The same lead facilitator managed the process for all the dialogue sessions in each location. Consistency in small and whole group facilitation is important to the process. It enables a sense of trust to build up between participants and the facilitation team so that the discussions can tap the rich experience of those taking part. It also means that retention of participants between rounds 1 and 2 is higher than it otherwise might be. The discussions were guided by facilitators using a detailed process plan devised by HVM in collaboration with the Oversight Group and Sub-Committees for each policy area. The following flowchart describes the four week dialogue delivery cycle and explains how the process plans evolved during the design development with input from the sub-committee throughout:



At the sessions HVM facilitators, based on their experience and training, knew when to probe further; when to prompt with additional questions; when to challenge the first response given by participants and when to allow the conversation to take its natural course if this was likely to make a richer contribution to the

dialogue. The Lead Facilitator managed the session overall, kept everyone to time and dealt with any specific challenges that arose.

## 1.4 Recruitment

108 participants were recruited to participate in this two round dialogue process.

For the *community wellbeing dialogue* strand Acumen Fieldwork recruited 20 participants in Bristol and surrounding rural areas, who were retained for both sessions. 20 people were recruited from the Belfast Metropolitan Area for sessions in Belfast, 18 of whom were retained for both rounds.

For the *sport, culture and wellbeing dialogue* strand Acumen Fieldwork recruited 18 participants in South Tyneside and surrounding rural areas, all of whom were retained for both sessions. 20 people were recruited from Greater London for sessions in Lambeth, 15 of whom were retained for both rounds.

For the *work, learning and wellbeing dialogue* strand Acumen Fieldwork recruited 19 participants in Cardiff and surrounding areas, 17 of whom were retained for the second session. In Falkirk and surrounding areas a sample of 15 was achieved. All participants were retained for round 2.

More information on the recruitment fieldwork is available on page 1 of each of the technical appendices. The full recruitment specifications can also be found in the relevant appendix for each dialogue strand. In summary those who took part in the dialogue met all recruitment criteria. The criteria, set with advice from the relevant wellbeing sub-committee of the Oversight Group, specified that participants should fulfil broad and balanced demographic criteria appropriate for the location in which recruitment was being undertaken. In all locations except one the team used an appropriate test question to assess the interest in and knowledge and experience of the dialogue policy area in order to make sure there were people present at the dialogue sessions who had a range of interests, experiences in and knowledge of the subject, or none at all. The exception was Belfast where, on advice from the community wellbeing sub-committee the recruitment fieldworkers were briefed to include those who had lived through the Troubles as well as those who had been very young or been born after the ceasefire in 1994. Given that this was considered the most significant criterion no test question was used for recruitment in Belfast and surrounding areas.

## 1.5 Resultant reports

Transcripts resultant from written recording (on flip charts by facilitators and on sticky notes by facilitators) and audio recordings were produced providing a rich source of data on which the report writing team were able to draw.

HVM uses a process for analysing the data which ensures that the starting point is the views of the public as articulated in the dialogue sessions, rather than a hypothesis for which evidence is being sought. The team's aim is to look for patterns of similarity and difference of views which can be analysed per dialogue session and across each of the rounds. Using this approach, the steps for analysis were as follows:

## 1.6 Identification of key themes

In which each of the HVM team members separately reviewed the data write-ups noting their understanding of the headline themes around which the data can be collated.

## 1.7 Agreement on themes, codes and categories

Once each team member had clear themes in mind the team discussed them coming to agreement on codes which define similar content around which the data could be grouped and clear findings could emerge. These were then tested in a team meeting against the original dialogue aims and objectives.

### 1.8 Developing the themes in the four reports

HVM then summarised the key themes into four reports using verbatim quotes to illustrate each significant point made.

Working both as individuals and a group to produce the coding frame and the categories and testing them as the process evolves works well with a public dialogue. It allows the findings to emerge from the data and those findings to be validated in an iterative sense through group discussion. Each point made in all four reports is validated by verbatim quotes from participants at the sessions so that the voice of participants forms the central plank of each finding.

The cross-cutting dialogue findings drawn from all three dialogues are presented in the subsequent sections of this report. The three other reports on community wellbeing; sport, culture and wellbeing; and work, learning and wellbeing are all available from [www.whatworkswellbeing.org](http://www.whatworkswellbeing.org), [www.hopkinsvanmil.co.uk](http://www.hopkinsvanmil.co.uk) and <http://www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/public-well-being-dialogues-to-engage-www-users-around-three-policy-themes/>.

In addition to the reports during each dialogue the HVM team filmed a number of the dialogue participants asking them to respond to the questions:

- What are your views on discussing wellbeing in a public dialogue setting such as this?
- What are your views on how the What Works Centre for Wellbeing will use the findings that result from these discussions?
- What, if anything, will you think about or do differently as a result of taking part in these sessions?

As a result three short films have been produced by HVM collating the responses for each dialogue strand. These can be accessed from the final page of the technical appendix for the relevant theme or from the links below:

- Community wellbeing: [http://bit.ly/WhatWeAreSaying\\_CW](http://bit.ly/WhatWeAreSaying_CW)
- Sport, culture and wellbeing: [http://bit.ly/SCW\\_participantvoices](http://bit.ly/SCW_participantvoices)
- Work, learning and wellbeing: [http://bit.ly/SharingWorklearning\\_HVM](http://bit.ly/SharingWorklearning_HVM)

A cross-cutting themes film has also been produced to distil some of the views from across all three dialogue workshops. This film is available here: [http://bit.ly/WellbeingDialogue\\_2015](http://bit.ly/WellbeingDialogue_2015)

## 2. How people define wellbeing in the context of their own lives

The dialogues demonstrated that basic wellbeing needs include feeling safe and loved, having sufficient money, good physical and mental health and the opportunity to access good quality affordable food. Participants said that the more belonging people experience the happier they are. Belonging starts with connections with others, which may turn into friendships and ultimately grow into a sense of being part of something bigger where difference is appreciated. Self-esteem was seen as an essential component of wellbeing which stems from increased confidence as a result of strong connections and a sense of achievement and pride. A sense of opportunity and agency, inspiration, opportunities for personal growth, recognition and appreciation contribute to feelings of fulfilment.

In each of the three dialogues participants were offered opportunities to consider what building blocks are needed in their lives to enable them to flourish and lead a happy and fulfilling life in their communities, through sport and culture and in work and learning. Whilst in one of the three dialogues (work and learning) Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs was used to think about these building blocks, across the three dialogues a wider framework was used to analyse cross-cutting wellbeing themes which provides an insight into how people define their own wellbeing. In this section we describe the various elements of wellbeing identified by participants in the dialogue, from things that are fundamental to a basic sense of wellbeing to more complex issues such as valuing a sense of belonging, self-esteem and how fulfilment can be achieved.

### 2.1 Basic wellbeing needs

Across the three dialogues themes such as feeling safe, having sufficient money, good health, access to good quality affordable food and feeling loved were identified as basic components for a good quality of life and wellbeing.



Figure 1: Views on basic wellbeing needs

#### Feeling safe

Feeling safe and secure was discussed as a basic element of a good quality of life in the community wellbeing dialogue. Participants spoke about feeling safe from threat and harassment. Some participants

had direct experience of not feeling safe in their homes and often referred to the importance of having good neighbours to alleviate some of their concerns,

*It's got to be safe in the community and in your home because I live alone so it's very important to me. I have CCTV, I have lighting and I have a dog because my house has been attacked. I've had a car driven off my drive when I was fostering. So it's about when you wake up at two in the morning and if you haven't got a good neighbour or someone to phone. – Bristol*

For some participants in Belfast the peace walls, although not generally seen as being good for community cohesion, were felt by some to be important for people's safety,

*The peace walls are built where the war was. There's a reason why they are there, I'm not saying it's justified. I'm just saying it's understandable. If you were living there and getting bricks through your window every night of the week, you'd have a wall there. - Belfast*

In Bristol one of the groups discussed the impact of gang violence on people's wellbeing. Neighbourhood Watch schemes were cited as a useful way to increase a feeling of safety in the home and the community environment,

*My main thing is a good neighbourhood watch system in the area where you live, it's very active in my area and it seems to work. – Bristol*

In the work, learning and wellbeing dialogue a work and learning environment which is safe, clean, well-maintained and equipped with the resources to enable people to work or learn well was viewed as a sign of appreciation and respect. As someone said about work,

*A safe environment with all the right resources shows that your employer cares. - Cardiff*

Health and safety was a basic requirement for participants across the two locations,

*You are really not wanting to go to your work if you think that your health is at risk. The better the conditions you are under, the more likely you want to go into work. – Falkirk*

In the work, learning and wellbeing dialogue feeling safe had other connotations as well. Participants considered that a good manager can make people feel safe. Some pointed out that a good manager encourages staff to progress and provides access to knowledge about how to advance. This was seen as very positive for employee wellbeing,

*You feel safer if you know that you are in good hands and will be led along your desired path.*

In the work, learning and wellbeing dialogue feeling safe was also related to the sense of wellbeing people get from feeling in control. In both locations participants commented on the importance of a well-structured learning experience,

*It has to be structured so that you feel safe and you know what you have to do when. - Cardiff*

For a small number of participants in the sport, culture and wellbeing dialogue feeling safe was expressed as an important part of connectedness and therefore their own wellbeing,

*I feel safer where I live because of the connections I have with people in my area. – South Tyneside*

*If you're surrounded by four or five mates you are a lot more confident going out on the street on your own. – South Tyneside*

At the same time the perception of health and safety as a barrier to participation in organised or self-organised physical activities was strongly expressed by many. As someone in London said,

*I went to my old gymnastics club. Everything has changed because of health and safety regulations. They don't have a proper Olympic beam to practice on.* - London

There was a view in both locations of the sport, culture and wellbeing dialogue that society has changed for the worse in this respect,

*We are living in a strange culture. If your children are going to an activity, if your son gets an injury you will be the first person to go there and say to them, why did this happen? Before it wasn't like that. We can't blame them. This is the blame culture we are living in.* - South Tyneside

*As a child we were climbing trees and things. Now they take down trees in playgrounds in case a branch falls down.* - London

This chimed with findings in the community wellbeing dialogue, where one group discussed that children no longer have opportunities to explore, find out for themselves and learn from mistakes when they're playing. Health and safety measures were seen as stifling and therefore having a somewhat negative impact on the wellbeing of school age children,

*It is about giving them space to take risks.* – Belfast

### **Sufficient money**

Sufficient money to provide at least the basics and, ideally, some extras is essential for a good quality of life according to participants in the community wellbeing and work and learning dialogues,

*Without [money] you can't live so it's probably one of the most important things that contribute to a good quality of life I'd say.* – Bristol

In the work and learning dialogue there was consensus that appropriate remuneration is about having enough money to meet an individual's needs, not necessarily about having a high income,

*Although a good salary means different things to different people, it has to meet your needs otherwise it must be a horror to go somewhere and work all day, knowing that it's not even going to meet your needs. I don't mean making lots of money, but enough to survive on.* - Falkirk

And participants in the community wellbeing dialogue said that it is more important to have enough and feel comfortable,

*If you're not comfortable, you're not happy.* – Bristol

They reported feeling happier if they could afford more than the basic needs,

*When you work you get a wage and you can do things you wouldn't be able to do. So I've been saving for a holiday and I'm going away to Spain for two weeks. Without money I wouldn't be able to do it.* - Belfast

Issues around support for households in which two working adults struggle to make ends meet was a recurring theme under money and financial security,

*We've a huge hidden population of people who work and who are struggling big time, if not struggling more than people who don't work as such because they can't tap into financial help.* - Belfast

On a personal level participants said that financial struggle impacts on people's confidence with a knock-on effect on their sense of wellbeing. This was illustrated by a participant in Bristol who made reference to Channel 4's programme about people living on benefits<sup>5</sup>,

*There's that benefits programme and that woman Dee. When you see her on at first she comes across quite rough, you could see she had no confidence, but then as a result of being on that programme, you see her in an interview afterwards and she's all dressed up, smart and full of confidence. So you can see a lot of these young people and they're on the dole. Is that a choice they're making, "Oh I want to be lazy for £47 a week"? I don't think so, they've not got confidence. - Bristol*

As discussed in section 3.1 a lack of sufficient money was perceived as a barrier to wellbeing. In the work and learning dialogue this was discussed as one of the reasons why people struggle to make change through learning. Very few people are in the position to reduce their working hours or give up their work altogether to start a course which would improve their lives,

*It could be financial reasons, if I wanted to change my career I couldn't give up work to do a full-time college or university course because I need to work. – Cardiff*

In the sport and culture dialogue sufficient money was mainly discussed in the context of barriers to participation in sport and culture. Participants shared stories of how a lack of money had held them back from enjoying the wellbeing benefits of sport and cultural activities,

*My mum couldn't pay for all of the activities we wanted to do [as children] if they weren't free. I have four siblings. The people who could go for the [activities] you pay for would progress to a much higher level. - South Tyneside*

Community wellbeing benefits if sufficient money is invested in the local environment according to participants in the dialogue in Bristol. They called this *wealth in the community*,

*[Wealth in the community is] important because if you live in a deprived area then morale is low. - Bristol*

This group felt strongly that people are happier when there is more money invested in their environment. They said it feels safer and that people living in the community are more likely to invest in it because they appreciate their environment more.

### **Good mental and physical health**

Across the dialogues participants recognised that good health is at the heart of a good quality of life. Being active and staying fit physically and mentally were seen as essential to wellbeing. In the community wellbeing dialogue participants said that for that reason access to activities to keep fit should be available in all communities,

*It's the option to have it [exercise] in the first place isn't it? That's what's important. – Bristol*

The importance of having access to local, free activities was raised in the sport and culture dialogue as well. Some people felt that the positive benefits of doing something physical are enormously powerful and extend from physical to mental wellbeing and stamina,

*I used to run at six in the morning and then get to work. When I run in the morning fast and do a proper training, when I sit at my desk and I try to think I feel sharper than if I didn't do it. Your brain*

---

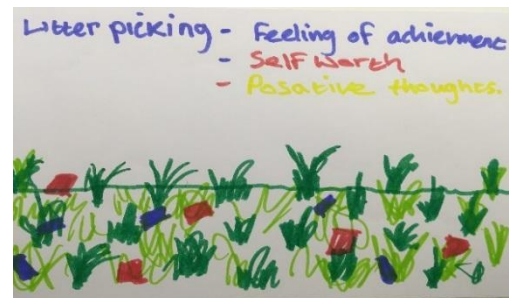
<sup>5</sup> Benefits Street, Channel 4



*wakes up quickly if you run in the morning, you don't feel tired at all and you can just keep going.* – London

Across the two sport and culture dialogue locations a number of participants cited examples of a physical or cultural activity which had helped them to recover from a mental illness, mental trauma, or simply improved their state of mind. One participant said that volunteering in a community activity was an important milestone in improving other aspects of his life, including moving on from depression,

*I went litter picking not long ago with some volunteers. I got the sense of self-worth out of it, it coincided with me getting a job. I do not think it is just coincidence that this really lifted me out of the depression. This helped me to get in to the community and actually do something good rather than just collecting my gyro every fortnight.* – South Tyneside



Some participants spoke of the positive impact of taking up sport on their physical and mental health when they

were recovering from a serious illness. A participant in South Tyneside said that following a heart attack and a quadruple heart bypass his mental health deteriorated severely and the impact on his life was very long lasting,

*I went into depression afterwards and then I did rehab for twelve weeks. I drifted about for about two years and that's when the depression really kicked in.* – South Tyneside

For him the solution was taking up squash with a friend, which, over time became more competitive and helped him to improve both physically and mentally,

*I started playing squash with a friend of mine. The idea was to play squash slowly, not competitively. About a year later my attitude completely changed. I improved my flexibility. That was really fantastic for my confidence, the little things that you can do really have an impact on your wellbeing.* – South Tyneside

Likewise, many participants in the sport and culture dialogue gave examples of when physical or cultural activities had helped them or a family member to recover from ill health,

*My sister has a son with cerebral palsy and she started taking him to riding school and it's really helped him. It is bizarre. Those kind of activities are super important and essential if you have any physical issue or mental illness you must have some kind of cultural or sporting activity in order to heal or make life easier.* – London

This was a view shared by another based on her personal experience,

*I suffer with asthma and I find doing things like yoga [really helpful] because it teaches you how to breathe properly as well as doing physical movements. I use less of my inhaler because this does help.* – London

A teacher in London described taking his class to the National Portrait Gallery which, because of the tranquility associated with the space, he saw as relaxing. He described it in terms of therapy,

*I liked it, it was quite therapeutic. You can't exactly run around there, but it was nice to be in a different, quieter, environment.* – London

In both the community wellbeing and the work, learning and wellbeing dialogues participants expressed the view that adults need access to support and guidance for good mental health,

*[We need] mental health services, particularly now people are worried about the future of their work. Some are in jobs that are so stressful now that they just take it on the chin. So mental health is a completely new thing, particularly amongst males. - Belfast*

In Belfast participants discussed that in communities traumatised by violence there is a greater prevalence of mental health issues. They felt that these negative impacts are continuing today as people strive to find a new purpose for their lives,

*There is an awful lot of mental health and there's a legacy in this for the people who were affected and lived through it and their children. - Belfast*

In the community wellbeing dialogue in Bristol a number of participants made a link between communities of place and mental health. They said that living in a poor and deprived area holds people back and potentially affects their mental health,

*I think it makes you feel depressed if there's nothing there. – Bristol*

Equally there was a view that inadequate housing impacts negatively on people's mental wellbeing. As someone in Belfast said,

*A lot of people are living in awful housing. That has a knock on effect on everything else, their mental health and within the community. - Belfast*

In the work and learning dialogue maintaining good health was mentioned as a challenge in the absence of a good work-life balance. A participant in Cardiff reported that working long hours in the construction industry and a lack of flexibility had impacted on his health,

*If you were to say, "I am willing to work 17 hours and then take a Tuesday off". Then you could take your children out on Tuesday when it's quieter. Or a day off to go and study maybe. It would be nirvana, wouldn't it? Altogether I have not experienced this in my life, not in my working career. I haven't had a lot of flexibility in my career, I have not been able to say yea or nay. It has impacted on my health. – Cardiff*

And someone else in Cardiff working in the same sector spoke about the impact on his mental health,

*A football club has costed me my marriage. I was working long hours [in London whilst living in Cardiff] and had little flexibility, it had an impact on my marriage. – Cardiff*

In the work and learning dialogue participants felt strongly that in a good work environment counselling or practical support must be available should employees face physical or mental health challenges. In Falkirk one of the groups discussed the substantial difference to an individual's wellbeing if this kind of support is in place,

*If you work for a company which has a department that can deal with your health issues, that... can have a major effect on your wellbeing. - Falkirk*

## Food

Food was identified as a basic building block of wellbeing in the community wellbeing dialogue and the sport, culture and wellbeing dialogue. Some felt that the value of good food and its effect on people's wellbeing is not recognised enough,

*I think good food is overlooked when it come to the GDP and money, it's always about the economy and output. - Belfast*

In the community wellbeing dialogue the point was made that higher wellbeing is linked to having access to good quality food,

*I think that it's crucial for a good quality of life that you have a healthy and balanced diet so you can actually go and do the things you want to do. If you're unable to afford good quality food and can just afford the literal minimum it's going to affect your life, it's going to affect your health, it's going to affect your mental wellbeing. - Belfast*

Participants in Bristol said that some communities lack local shops where good quality food is available at affordable prices,

*Good food that's locally available, nutritious and affordable. If you've got an estate with a convenience store selling tins of stuff, it's no good, you need to be able to buy fresh stuff. - Bristol*

*Poorer people can't afford to go out and buy fresh food because it's more expensive, it doesn't last as long, so they'll go to Iceland and buy frozen meals for their kids and stuff. - Bristol*

This means that families resort to unhealthy options and as a consequence children don't learn what a healthy diet looks like,

*If you just grow up with that's all you've ever tasted, that's all you've ever eaten then you're not likely to want to change [your eating preferences later in life]. - Bristol*

One of the groups in Belfast discussed how future community wellbeing would benefit from educating children and young people about broader life skills including mental wellbeing and the value of looking after oneself in terms of diet,

*It's about broadening the education for where we are going in to the 21st century, broadening on how to keep themselves well, like counselling or mentoring in schools about how to eat healthy, how to cook your meals, life skills. – Belfast*

The point was made that parents need to learn about nutritious food too and that schools, colleges and universities have a role to play.

One group in Bristol felt strongly that all school age children should have access to free healthy meals at school to remove the stigma perceived as being attached to receiving free school meals currently and to ensure children learn about a nutritious diet from a young age.

*If you're getting picked on because you're having free school meals because your parents aren't working, you're being segregated and singled out and potentially that can knock your confidence... They should all be treated the same and if that means they all get a free meal and it's a hot meal then good and we're not talking chips or something, we're talking a proper hot meal. - Bristol*

In the sport and culture dialogue participants in London discussed how poor food choices are often made when people's mental wellbeing is low,

*What we eat is linked to our wellbeing, but bad choices come from our state of mind. If we are lonely or depressed we start eating the wrong food. - London*

In the sport and culture dialogue food was also discussed as something that helps people share and bond with others and learn about other cultures, all of which were identified as supporting overall wellbeing. In

South Tyneside one of the groups made the point that food, whether in celebration or simply from need can bring people together and overcome the barriers they are facing to their own wellbeing,

*I know it sounds ridiculous but food breaks down barriers because everybody eats. Because, for example, in soup kitchens, people are eating together. It includes everyone, all the volunteers, everyone sits down together and eats with the homeless people. It's about creating an activity for everybody.* – South Tyneside

### Feeling loved

All groups referred to love, friendship and respect as the linchpin of wellbeing and the knock-on effect on an individual's confidence if those elements are not in place,

*Love and care, everybody regardless of age needs that.* - Belfast

Participants reported that being part of a social group increases a feeling of self-worth. As someone said about family,

*One of the things I think you need is support from your own family. If you have that support you are more confident.* – Belfast

## 2.2 Belonging

In each of the dialogues participants discussed how connecting with others and having shared values whether through culture, sport, community events or in work and learning offer specific wellbeing benefits for them. Equally the positive effect of a sense of belonging and identity was discussed in relation to place, sport, cultural or community groups and teams.

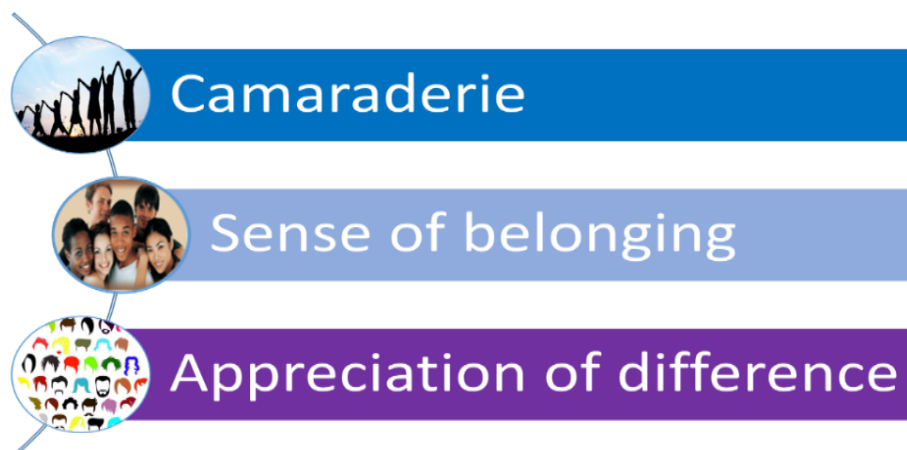


Figure 2: Elements of belonging as a wellbeing need

### Camaraderie

Participants in the sport and culture dialogue related very strongly to the idea of physical and cultural activity facilitating wellbeing by bringing people together. As one participant put it,

*Feeling connectedness. That's generally so that you feel part of a wider community. You feel like you are not alone. This is good for your wellbeing.* – London

This view was expressed across both locations, often linked to health outcomes as well as wellbeing. A participant in South Tyneside said,

*I think interaction is very important as part of our health and wellbeing. The more people interact through whatever activity it just alleviates isolation.* – South Tyneside

Participants gave many examples of their wellbeing being improved by connecting with others through sport and culture,

*I go to this street feast in different parts of my area which is North East London. You just see different types of people. It's not just [about] food, people are united. You get all different kinds of people, different age groups, different cultures. – London*

They particularly emphasised how being part of a group helps build confidence,

*If you're part of a group it can build your confidence, this make me happy. This is specifically from being part of a group. The connectedness. - South Tyneside*

Watching a live event with others around you provokes strong wellbeing feelings as well,

*I didn't get the chance to go to Wimbledon [but] I can watch on the big screen on the grassy area. People were really in a good mood. Everybody cheers. This is different from watching by yourself or with your family [at home], which [has] limited benefits. This was something different. – London*

Sharing an activity and spending time with the people who are important in your life were seen as particularly important aspects of wellbeing across the dialogues. A mother in the sport and culture dialogue spoke about how she used time at the local pool to bond with one of her children,

*I go swimming a lot with my youngest. He's old enough now to stay in the smaller pool by himself and I go and do some lengths. We hang out in the Jacuzzi and have fun and I always feel good about it after. It's not just for me, it's because I've taken him as well. I've made the effort and it's like one-to-one time. I have twin sons so I have to give them different things. - London*

In the work and learning dialogue comradeship was viewed as very positive for wellbeing as well. In both locations participants said that working or learning with people you like raises aspirations and makes work and learning more enjoyable.

*If I am going on a course, I know exactly which colleagues I want to go with...You want people around you who are as interested and excited as you are, so you can all learn together. – Falkirk*

Some said they felt they were more likely to be innovative and creative with a good team around them. They felt that working or learning with people one doesn't get on with stifles innovation,

*Nobody likes to open up their ideas with people who they think are not interested in their ideas or would try and shoot them down. – Cardiff*

Others recognised that getting on with the people they work or learn with is a motivation to make an effort,

*You want to do more work because you don't want to be the person who's lagging behind. - Cardiff*

Having a strong bond with colleagues was viewed as good for mental health as it means people can share their experiences and are less likely to experience isolation or loneliness,

*In my work I have long shifts, and it's a really hard and stressful job. Even having a wee debrief with everybody, a catch up is really good. Not everyone gets on all the time, that's never going to happen, but if you're a smaller group that is quite strong it's a thing that needs to be done. - Falkirk*

### **Freedom not to connect**

Despite a general recognition of the importance of connections with others for a good quality of life some participants in the dialogue stressed that the freedom not to connect was tremendously important to their wellbeing. Time for oneself was an essential need for some participants with a busy lifestyle as a result of

extensive work and family commitments and for others who simply gained benefit from time away from the company of others. As someone in South Tyneside said,

*I was particularly thinking about gardening. So for me it's the ability to take time out and be on my own. It's not about connecting, it's about freedom from having to connect.* – South Tyneside

### Sense of belonging

The positive impact of a sense of belonging and identity was experienced by participants in each of the dialogues. A participant in Falkirk compared an ideal work situation with the bond between family members who look out for each other and understand each other's needs,

*A family atmosphere that allows for flexibility and understanding.* – Falkirk



**Figure 3:** Elements of a sense of belonging

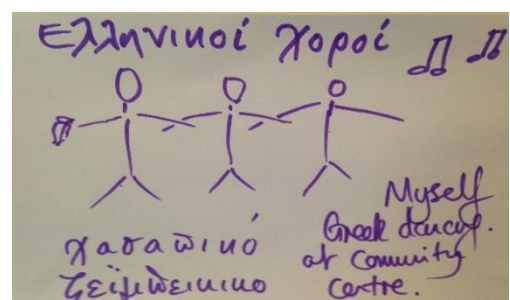
In the sport and culture dialogue people brought a range of experiences to the fore to illustrate their experience of belonging, ranging from watching sports events together and taking part in a team sport to being part of a cultural group or attending arts and craft courses,

*I belong to a craft group and develop my creativity. I had a great sense of friendship, of belonging and achievement when I completed the activities, developing new skills and escapism.* – South Tyneside

A sense of belonging is usually associated with a context in which people collaborate on a regular basis.

Meeting regularly creates a bond and allows for friendships to grow. As a participant in London said about her attendance at Greek dance lessons,

*It's a Monday evening for an hour and a half or so and there's a few of us who all know each other and we've been going for years and years. We get on very well and see each other socially when we can and it's a great sense of camaraderie and enjoyment.* – London



However, some participants said they had experienced a sense of belonging in one-off situations as well as a result of an atmosphere of togetherness,

*I went on an inter-faith walk which takes into consideration all different faiths... We just went to churches, mosques and a Sikh temple. I got an awful lot out of it because it gave me a sense of community and belonging. It was seriously uplifting and inspirational and I felt a sense of unity between religious groups.* – South Tyneside

*I was excited but nervous. It was Arsenal versus Aston Villa but obviously Arsenal won. But the whole sense of being together with everybody, you don't even know half the people in the pub but within seconds you're all talking together, singing together. – London*

In the community wellbeing dialogue there was a predominant feeling that a sense of belonging was stronger in times when home, work and life all happened in the same community.

Although in the community wellbeing dialogue having a sense of belonging was not identified as a basic requirement for a good quality of life, many participants said it does contribute positively to one's experience of wellbeing,

*If you don't feel a part of any community I think that's extremely detrimental. You need to be able to identify with people who share your culture, your heritage, all that sort of thing to make yourself feel as if you do belong there. It's crucial to respect other cultures and communities but it's also crucial that you're part of one as well and it doesn't matter the size of it, but community is crucial. - Belfast*

*It's nice to feel that you're part of something and that you've got people you can turn to even for trivial things you know, it's nice. – Bristol*

Those who spoke about their feelings of belonging to a community said that that was one of the reasons why they liked to be actively involved in their communities,

*It's a sense of belonging. - Belfast*

### **Appreciation of difference**

Participants in the community wellbeing dialogue felt that at the heart of a thriving community are people from all walks of life and ages connecting with each other, helping each other and working together. They said that communities thrive when people respect difference and appreciate each other's cultures,

*Respect for your community. In South Belfast we have a wide range of people living in the community so we need to respect people's culture and live with that in mind when we're going about our day to day [business]. – Belfast*

An appreciation of difference was seen as vital for community resilience. As a participant in Bristol said,

*In difficult times, instead of saying you're different, appreciate everyone's differences. I live in Easton and when it's Eid my Muslim neighbours bring round food and when it's Christmas we give them a box of chocolates and vice versa. So it's nice to be able to celebrate and learn about each other's cultures as opposed to being segregated. That will help you stand together in tougher times. - Bristol*

This chimed with findings in the work and learning dialogue, where participants stressed that it is important for employee wellbeing that managers appreciate difference, build on people's individual strengths and thereby create stronger teams,

*We all have something to offer even though [we're] from very different age groups and different places. That happens in the workplace... Everyone should be valued... People have different ideas and they [managers] put them together and they decide what's good. – Cardiff*

In the sport and culture dialogue connecting with different cultures was seen as an important element of developing shared values despite difference,

*Different cultural and physical activities [are important]. You are working with people from different backgrounds, different genders, different everything. You're working together to achieve something. This improves people's lifestyles, they can see someone who has something different to what they have. This can make you feel better.* – South Tyneside

There was an underlying sense in the London group that diversity was a really rich seam of connection for people with positive wellbeing effects,

*I go drumming in the park. I love people, all people, whatever colour or beliefs, coming up and being gathered in by the drumming. They join with me and we all enjoy it together. It's really good.* - London



### 2.3 Self-esteem

In each of the dialogues participants spoke about the importance of self-esteem for wellbeing. Self-esteem and self-worth were described in relation to a sense of achievement and increased confidence.

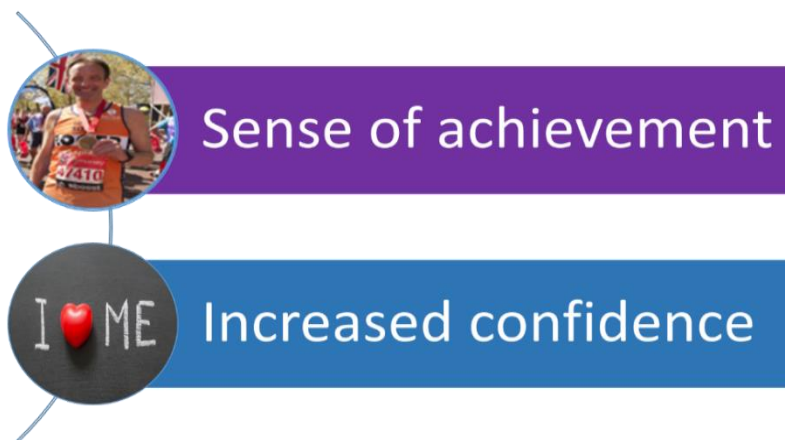


Figure 4: Views on the key elements constituting self-esteem

#### Sense of achievement

A sense of achievement was often described as a feeling resulting from completing a task, mastering a new skill, doing something outside of one's comfort zone or bringing a project to fruition. Someone in the sport and culture dialogue, for example, shared her experience of improving her skills in tennis,

*It's most memorable because I've only been playing for two years. It was a sunny day and that doesn't happen here very often, it was also about improving my skills...It's a sense of achievement for me.* – South Tyneside

Some participants referred to feeling good about someone else's achievement. In the sport and culture dialogue, for example, someone described seeing a play with Jude Law in the cast,

*The actor carried the whole thing; the sets there, the choreography. I felt quite proud of Britain as it's our national theatre. It belongs to everyone actually. The audience is full of tourists and what we have here is tremendous.* – London

And another participant described a similar feeling of contentment as a result of auditioning for being accepted as part of the chorus for a musical show. She said,



*I haven't sung for many years. I didn't really know what I was getting myself into. It was tiring. I nearly gave up on two occasions. We sang a song called, 'Lord don't move this mountain, but give me the strength to climb.' Which was so powerful it helped me to persevere. It finished nicely, it was tiring and stressful. I am left feeling a sense of achievement. – London*

A participant who had helped to organise a major kite flying festival in Gujarat state in India said that his sense of achievement came from being one of the people who arranged everything,

*There is a very competitive atmosphere there. That's during the daytime. In the night time there is music and dancing. We all put money in to buy the food collectively, we do everything together...it makes me feel amazing. – London*

### **Increased confidence**

Across the dialogues increased confidence was seen as an important element for overall wellbeing.

The majority of participants in the community wellbeing and work and learning dialogues acknowledged that education and training is a vehicle to boost confidence and therefore essential for a good quality of life as it opens doors to opportunities. As someone in Bristol said,

*I couldn't wait to get out of school at 16, but then later I needed something behind me and... I started to go to night school, did some courses and improved myself so I could get to where I wanted to go. But some people have got no interest or self-drive and I was one of those people. I wanted to just doss through life, but the reality is you can't doss through life if you want nice things. – Bristol*

This individual subsequently reported that what made him change was seeing other people around him progress and finding himself being repeatedly unsuccessful in job applications,

*All my friends were passing their driving tests and I was like, "I've got no money for a car or any of this stuff." So then I started applying for jobs and it was like, "Well you've got nothing, you've got no skill, what have you done since you left school?" So then I went out. It's surprising when you make that decision to improve, whether it's a night-school or whatever, it makes you feel better and it does boost your confidence and you become more driven as well. - Bristol*

In the sport and culture dialogue building one's own confidence, or the confidence of others, was described as a significant aspect of wellbeing by participants teaching physical and cultural activities. A personal trainer said that his work, particularly when he has to use a range of techniques to coax those he is coaching to enable them to make the most of sessions, makes him feel,

*Like I have really made a difference. – London*

A participant in South Tyneside talked about working towards the Sports Leadership Award and the Duke of Edinburgh Award,

*It's about communicating with people you don't really know. It's the same with the sports leadership award, both of them really build your confidence...It's nice to have a drive towards something...I probably wouldn't be able to sit here and speak to you lot, a group of people I didn't know, without it. So it has been very important to me. It made me feel more confident. – South Tyneside*

Increasing confidence by learning new skills in either physical or cultural activities was mentioned in both locations as an important aspect of wellbeing,

*Sport and culture, they build confidence. Once you're engaging with people, you can be very withdrawn, but as you get into a group you build confidence.*

It was mentioned in relation to leadership roles in team sports,

*Even in a team you have vice-captain and captain so you try to achieve more. This gives you more confidence within yourself to do something different than what you're used to...It's about taking part in something but it's also developing a skill. – South Tyneside*

Confidence building was seen as something relevant to all life stages. In the community wellbeing dialogue one of the groups in Northern Ireland discussed the importance of children having the confidence to speak up about what support they need to bolster them for later life,

*I think it's confidence, building the confidence. From the early years right through to the school years so that the school child is able to say what it needs and if there's difficulties, what it isn't getting...Building resilience, because life's difficult. - Belfast*

According to participants confidence-boosting actions at other life stages include access to career advice to give young people a sense of purpose; guidance and support for young people and adults at transition stages in their lives (when going from college to university; from education into the world of work; changing jobs; returning to employment after a career break or illness; from work into retirement).

In the work and learning dialogue participants linked employee confidence to higher productivity,

*People with low self-worth rarely achieve things. - Cardiff*

Participants believed strongly that there is an important role for managers in boosting the confidence of employees. There was a view that good communication within an organisation increases employees' sense of self-worth, particularly if an employer listens and demonstrates that they've taken concerns on board,

*If you can chat to your bosses and say you're not happy about something. Your wellbeing goes up if they do something about it. What makes that go up is an opportunity for you to express your feelings, [...] you feel respected. – Cardiff*

## **2.4 Fulfilment**

In each of the dialogues participants were asked to consider memories, the events in relation to the dialogue topic which had made them really happy. They produced a vast array of drawings illustrating communities in which people can flourish; work and learning environments which make people feel content; and inspirational and fulfilling experiences in sport and culture which had led to strong feelings of joy and happiness. A summary of the key elements of fulfilment resultant from this discussion is included over the page in figure 5.



**Figure 5:** Views on the key elements of fulfilment

### Sense of opportunity

An ideal work and learning environment enables people to progress and develop new skills. Participants associated the resultant sense of opportunity with positive feelings about the future and a belief that it's possible to follow dreams, develop oneself and achieve goals,

*The opportunity to advance is not just financially, but the sense of hope for your future. It's about personal growth.* – Cardiff

Learning was seen as a vehicle to facilitate progress and the ability to take advantage of opportunities,

*It is adding strings to your bow, the more you learn. Maybe something will lead you in a different direction, you'll be equipped for it.* - Cardiff

Participants with experience of being offered opportunities to advance in work, including through learning, reported a positive effect on their self-confidence. They pointed out that higher self-confidence as a result of having opportunities to advance spills over in to other areas of life, including feeling better about their position in the work place, in society in general and amongst friends.

*You can feel [more] valuable in your place in society and the workforce.* - Cardiff

Some made reference to an *increased desire to do well* at work as a result of being offered opportunities to advance. As a participant in Cardiff said,

*It causes an interest in the job, you want to go to work because you don't have to be stuck at the till for example, you want to be able to advance.* - Cardiff

Developing new skills in sport and culture was associated with a sense of opportunity as well,

*Having the opportunity to broaden and expand your skills. It means you are not capped, there's always something to reach for.* – South Tyneside

In the community wellbeing dialogue a sense of opportunity was discussed in relation to the life stages. There was a view that the wellbeing of young people benefits from a sense of direction and opportunity and that opportunities to improve quality of life through better housing and job prospects is relevant to young people, families and adults of working age; whereas the wellbeing of the actively retired benefits from opportunities to share knowledge and skills.

In Belfast a sense of opportunity was linked to a sense of hope. Participants said that in Northern Ireland there continues to be a sense of uncertainty following the Troubles and the economic recession, both of which negatively impact on the wellbeing of adults of working age. They said that communities need, and indeed have at a grass roots level, a sense of hope that things will get better,

*The wellbeing of the community is to have a sense of hope and not to be sitting in the situation we are in now where there is just so much uncertainty. - Belfast*

### **Sense of agency**

A sense of agency was particularly important for participants in the work and learning dialogue. In Cardiff they discussed how appropriate pay motivates people to do better at work because it provides them with options for how they lead their life outside work,

*You can make your own decisions. – Cardiff*

There was also a view that managers who encourage employees to take initiative provide workers with a sense of agency that benefits their wellbeing, particularly when,

*They're ready to implement and act on my ideas. – Cardiff*

Participants said that having little control over the tasks they do or the way their career develops impacts negatively on their confidence and motivation,

*If you're treated like you're not working with someone, but you're working for them, then it could create this kind of mental condition where your self-worth drops and you become less productive and less motivated. – Cardiff*

A participant working for Cardiff University said that one of the reasons why her job is fulfilling is that her manager encourages employees to come forward with their own ideas,

*I actually have a really good employer. I have a lot of training opportunities. Not only am I allowed to do what I want but I get to tell my manager what I want to do. – Cardiff*

Sensitivity for the individual needs of employees and learners was seen as something that enhances a sense of agency,

*Flexibility gives you this feeling that you are still in control of your life. - Cardiff*

Most participants associated learning outside work with something that is not stressful. When probed further it became clear that they associated stress with not having control over participation,

*The thing outside work maybe you've kind of chosen to do it because you want to do it. Those in work you're kind of expected to do it. – Falkirk*

They said that learning outside work is more likely to impact positively on an individual's wellbeing because there is an element of control and as a result an increased likelihood of having fun,

*I think even if you're doing ballet or fitness or something like that. You've got control over it. You can shut out as much as possible. So it can take you away from work in that short space of time. It is something that you chose. – Falkirk*

For some participants in the sport and culture dialogue the freedom to choose was linked to being inspired to do something,

*I put inspiration and choice. If you can't participate you can still be inspired by watching other people achieve. If you have a team for example, and your team does well, you feel enjoyment. – South Tyneside*

### Inspiration and personal growth

The experiences of some demonstrated how inspiration can be a catalyst for change and was therefore seen as an element of higher wellbeing. A number of participants reported that they had been inspired to believe in themselves as a result of watching others achieve. Someone in South Tyneside for example, described how watching television provided the backdrop through which she was able to recover from a difficult period in her life,

*When my marriage split up it was a very hard time for me. In a TV show I was watching one of the parents is also going through a break-up. It really encouraged me because through it I could come to believe that it was ok that I might be a single parent and that I can do anything. It was an inspiration. – South Tyneside*

And someone else spoke about how she had taken up running as a result of volunteering at the Great North Run,

*I sort of took part in the Great North Run, but I wasn't running. I was helping a friend with the catering at the finish line. I cheered on the last few runners once everyone else had left. I now have the goal to run it myself one year, so much so that I've given up smoking. – South Tyneside*

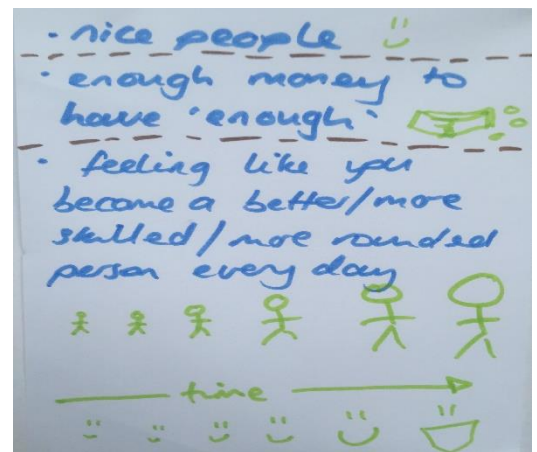
Participants also shared many stories of feeling inspired by watching and taking part in cultural activities. One man powerfully described the emotional experience of going to see War Horse at the Lowry,



*It was fascinating. I didn't expect the play to be fascinating. It wouldn't have been something which I would have chosen to do, but the animation of the horse and the puppeteering, the way they made the horses head snugly into the soldiers and the people, and the twists in the movement of the eyes and ears and the horse struggling on was the most emotional experience I've ever had. It really did affect me. I am not prone to crying too much. It was emotional because of the way it was done. The pure skill of the puppeteers, the drama side of it was brilliant. – South Tyneside*

In the work and learning dialogues some participants referred to personal growth when asked to describe the ideal work situation for maintaining a good quality of life. A free-lance actress had drawn a picture showing a person growing in size and explained why personal growth was the most important element of a good job for her,

*There are three points for me. One was nice people, two was enough money to have enough to not be struggling, three was perhaps the most important and feeling like I'm becoming a better/more skilled/more rounded person at the end of the day. In my drawing the person gets bigger every day. – Cardiff*



In terms of learning participants said that learning which is meaningful to an individual's life can lead to personal growth,  
*If you could utilise some of the things you are learning, how you can use them later in your life, either for yourself or for other people. - Cardiff*

They also said that the potential wellbeing benefits of learning inside work included a more positive outlook on life with a sense of opportunity and increased self-confidence as the key components of personal growth.

### Recognition and appreciation

Recognition and appreciation was more widely discussed in the work and learning dialogue than in the community wellbeing and sport and culture dialogues. All participants agreed that feeling recognised and appreciated makes a huge difference to their wellbeing. There was a view that saying thank you to staff is particularly important for people in low paid jobs,

*Especially for low paid jobs, it really changes your approach. I used to work in JD sports...When you send your staff home, they are not being paid much, they do not want to be there on Saturday anyway... To be thanked for giving their time meant a lot more to them than it actually did to give this [the thank you]. - Cardiff*

A simple thank you was associated with feeling recognised, rewarded and appreciated as an individual,  
*It is a sign of not being disposable, that you are actually an individual, a person, not a number, you are contributing. – Cardiff*

Equally, incentives and rewards were seen as a sign of recognition and appreciation that makes employees feel good, as was positive feedback in work and learning. Participants said that recognition and positive feedback leads to higher motivation, higher job satisfaction and improved performance because it boosts someone's self-confidence,

*I think you just feel a lot happier as well. If the employers or customers are giving you that feedback, you would rather be there than not. - Falkirk*

It increases a feeling of self-belief and pride. As someone in Falkirk said in relation to learning,  
*I think if you know that when you learn you're going to be, once you use the skills, you will be rewarded for it, and I don't mean with money. I just mean that sense of pride. Just to know that you have done a good thing. - Falkirk*

Participants with experience of unappreciative employers and tutors said that the lack of recognition had lowered their self-confidence,

*It can be stressful because you start doubting yourself and thinking you're not up for the job. – Cardiff*

They mentioned that this impacted negatively on their home life as they struggled to switch off,

*You can't really switch off because you're so hell bent on achieving these things at work that you're not getting any recognition for.* – Falkirk

### Happiness, enjoyment, fun

Feeling happy and fulfilled in work and learning was identified as hugely beneficial to people's lives. As the discussion below demonstrates, happiness and enjoyment were associated with work and learning that meets an individual's aspiration and interests,

*It would make you happy if it were interesting.* - Cardiff  
*Job satisfaction obviously comes first, you've got to be happy doing your job. If you go to work feeling happy and confident, you will have enjoyment.* - Cardiff

*You would have a more fulfilled life.* – Cardiff



A participant in Falkirk expressed the view that it was only possible to find fulfilment at work in self-employment. He had been running his own business for 45 years. He felt he had all the skills and experience he needed, had a perfect work-life balance and had as near fulfilment as he felt it was possible to reach. On reflection he added that actually being content in your life over-all is even better than being the boss,

*You can be the best that you can. You're so content that you can probably be the boss. Contentment fits in there, if you are content with what your life is, if you are content with what you are earning. That's just better than even being the boss. I would say content is better than that.* - Falkirk

In each of the dialogues participants identified being with like-minded people as a key component of happiness. Feeling happy because other people feel happy was seen as a very powerful component of wellbeing. Someone in the sport and culture dialogue said about an event he had attended,

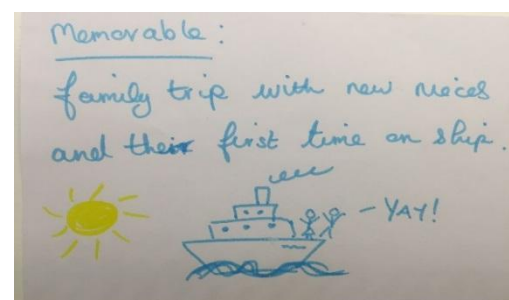
*It's the interacting with people, seeing people smile and talking to them. You're surrounded by people that are happy.* – South Tyneside

And someone who had attended a music event said,

*I went to see The Killers live. It was an amazing atmosphere and I met loads of new people. I think although I was watching it was actually participating. I really enjoyed it and felt elated for days. The enthusiasm of everyone around me was contagious.* – South Tyneside

Participants used words such feeling elated or uplifted to express the impact of other people's happiness on them. One person in the sport and culture dialogue for example, described a ferry trip to Blythe that she took with three generations of her family including her mother who is a wheelchair user and the two daughters recently adopted by her sister. She said,

*It made me feel very happy because there were three generations of girls out as a group. It was lovely for us*



*all just to be together. We loving being out on the sea. It made me feel uplifted. [It was] everybody else's happiness that uplifted us all. - South Tyneside*

In the community wellbeing dialogue happiness and enjoyment were discussed in the context of positive events in the community, which bring people together such as street parties or sport and cultural events. A participant in Belfast emphasised in his drawing the idea of having fun within the community,

*Like you need to have fun, you need to have a balance, it can't all just be about [work], just needed something that you want to do yourself. Then kind of like family, people, network, whatever around that. – Belfast*

One participant explained through his drawing that the community had moved away from using guns and now had culture, fun food (such as pizza), music and were striving for a good environment with flowers instead of violence.





### 3. Views on actions that can improve wellbeing

Each of the dialogues comprised discussions about positive and negative life events which had impacted on people's wellbeing. A lack of time and money, confidence and support, information, and balance were cited as the main barriers to wellbeing alongside a lack of affordable good quality housing and a reliable transportation system. To overcome issues of time and money participants felt strongly that appropriate pay, the availability of online learning options and low cost sport and cultural activities are likely to improve wellbeing. To overcome a lack of balance participants referred to the need for flexible solutions to cater for individual needs beyond work and for cooperation amongst colleagues to accommodate each other's needs. There was a view that a lack of confidence and support can be mitigated by friendly and reliable support services, intergenerational programmes, opportunities to advance and positive feedback. The creation of community information hubs and tailored information to different life stages were mentioned as measures to overcome a lack of information.

To understand what can be done to increase people's wellbeing in communities, work and learning and through sport and culture, participants were probed at different points in the discussion what they perceived to be the barriers to wellbeing and how those barriers could be overcome. This led to the identification of actions that can potentially affect people's wellbeing which are described in this section.

#### 3.1 Overcoming perceived barriers to wellbeing

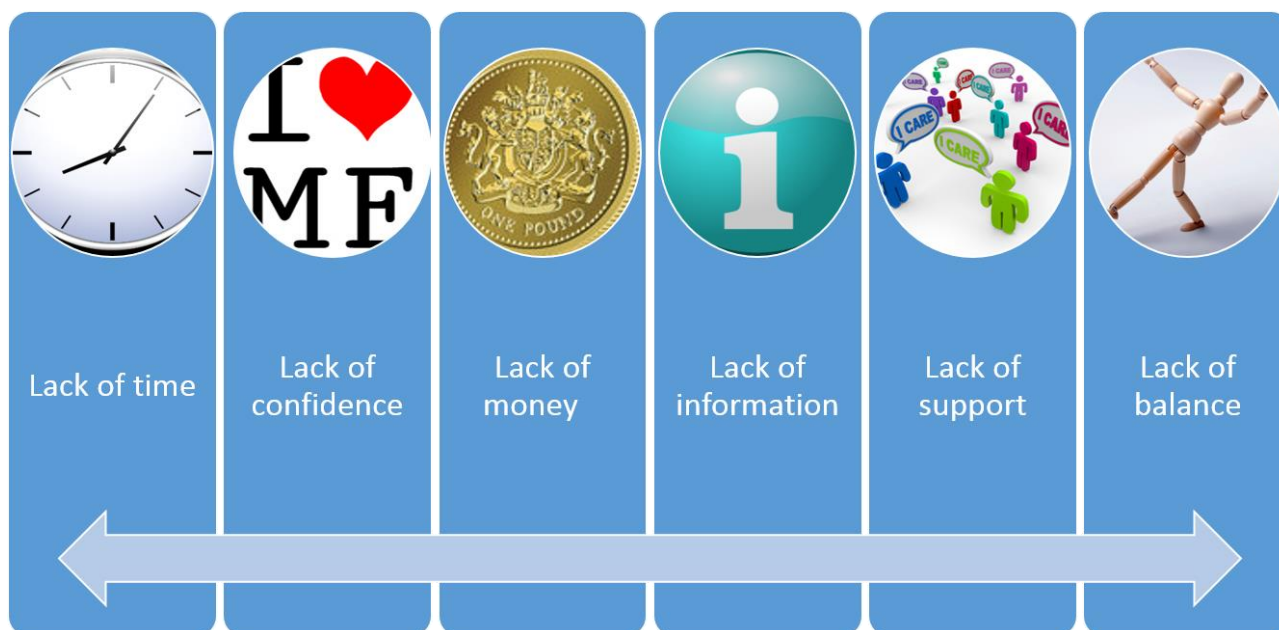


Figure 6: Views on barriers to wellbeing

#### Lack of time and money

In the sport and culture dialogue many participants cited a lack of time and money as the main reasons for not taking part in sport or culture. For some a lack of time was caused by working long hours,

*Work sometimes takes over and I get stressed. The intention [to take part] is there. It's just lack of time... Life gets in the way sometimes.* – London

A participant in South Tyneside agreed,

*I used to play cricket until I was 18. It's just fitting it in around work [which is an issue]. I've watched a lot of sport and stuff like that. – South Tyneside*

For others lack of time is not only caused by work, but also by juggling a range of commitments on a daily basis as an adult,

*We grow up and we realise we have lots of responsibilities. I have three kids at home. These are the choices that you have to make, these choices that your responsibility forces you into. You must dedicate more to earning money, you must work more hours, you must be there for parents evening, there is a lot of juggling going on. – London*

Participants in both locations raised lack of money as a barrier to taking part in sport and culture which had, for some of them always been a concern,

*My mum couldn't pay for all of the activities we wanted to do [as children] if they weren't free. I have four siblings. The people who could go for the [activities] you pay for would progress to a much higher level. – South Tyneside*

Someone in London said that she felt that prices had increased over time which had turned previously accessible events into something only wealthy audience members could consider,

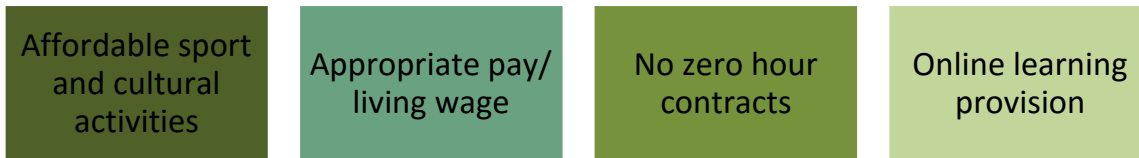
*There was a lovely opera festival. It was very accessible about five years ago, the price was good...The tickets are very expensive now, it's all smartened up...they are all dolled up. I think it's totally wrong...it's become very elite. It's gone for being everyman to only being for the elites. – London*

A lack of time and money was also cited as a barrier to taking part in learning. Participants in the work and learning dialogues in Cardiff and Falkirk recognised that a lack of money and low wages often impact on the ability to make change. They said that very few people are in the position to reduce their working hours or give up their work altogether to start a course which would improve their lives,

*It could be financial reasons, if I wanted to change my career I couldn't give up work to do a full-time college or university course because I need to work. – Cardiff*

They noted as well that people on low wages often work long hours to earn a decent living and have no time or energy to explore other options. This was a view shared in particular by participants working in the construction industry,

*In the construction related industries it's not uncommon for people to work seven days a week for months on end and of course they are relatively well off. When you look at what they're actually earning for the amount of hours and the time they are investing in it, it's not a good balance at all. Although they are not in working poverty. If you looked at their earnings on proper 37 1/2 hours or 35 hours, they are likely to be working two working weeks in order to bring home a decent wage. - Falkirk*



**Figure 7:** Actions to overcome a lack of time and money

As a result a number of participants in both locations discussed that *appropriate pay* is likely to affect people’s wellbeing positively as this will enable those in low paid jobs to work fewer hours. In Falkirk the *living wage* was considered as a positive intervention in this context. Most participants on *zero hour contracts* raised the negative effects of the policy on their wellbeing as such contracts mean there is no financial security at all.

For some participants the availability of an *online learning provision* was a solution to fitting learning in with their busy lives. A young mother in Cardiff said,

*Coming back to flexibility. To me, online I can do it when I have the time, rather than having to go somewhere and sit down every week.* – Cardiff

### Lack of balance

A lack of balance as a result of too many demands on one’s time was identified as a key barrier to wellbeing. This was discussed in detail in the work and learning dialogue where participants felt strongly that a *good manager takes account of the individual needs* of employees,

*It's also about understanding people's lives beyond work.* - Falkirk

Employers should offer *flexible solutions* to ensure a good work-life balance for staff,

*Employers taking consideration of your individual needs can impact both the employee and the whole family. Trying to work round people's needs, because eventually they'll stay loyal and come back to work.* - Falkirk

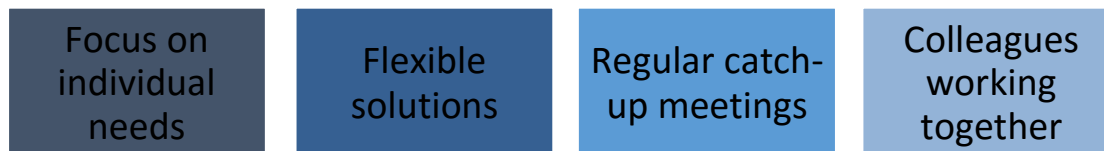
One of the groups in Cardiff discussed that managers should have *brief catch up meetings* with all their staff on a regular basis to check in on how things are going for them both in and outside work,

*Maybe every month sitting down with your manager and seeing if there's anything you want. Like a one-to-one five minutes or something like that...At this meeting they would ask you if you have any issues and if you are happy.* - Cardiff

In Cardiff one of the groups discussed how *colleagues should work together* to achieve a better work-life balance for all, for example by being considerate when taking leave,

*I was saying earlier that where I worked there are only five engineers. The whole six weeks holiday we are booked up this year, I can't take any of it at all. Some of the guys haven't even got kids and still took the time off. That's not good cooperation between workmates.* – Cardiff

*Having better cooperation between colleagues and working together to achieve that work-life balance for all.* – Cardiff



**Figure 8:** Actions to achieve a better work-life balance

### Lack of confidence and support

In the community wellbeing dialogue a lack of confidence was discussed as a barrier to wellbeing for young people who are unsure about their career prospects, adults of working age who are adjusting to change in the work environment and older people as they become frailer. *Friendly and reliable support and guidance* was seen as an action that would increase the wellbeing of all. Participants said that children of school age and young people would benefit from guidance in how to speak up for themselves and career advice for a greater sense of direction; the wellbeing of adults of working age, including parents, would benefit from emotional and psychological support to help them with the challenges of parenting and coping with change in the work place; and there was a view that for older people a reliable and friendly transportation service would make a substantial difference to their wellbeing,

*If you've got a small minibus company targeted at these people you know that it's going to turn up and you know you're going to get a friendly service.* - Bristol

In the sport and culture dialogue a lack of confidence and self-worth was in relation to mental illness,

*If you have a disorder for example. If you actually really have anxiety about leaving the house and doing things and meeting people. When you're not receiving the correct support to deal with that, you may be stuck in a vicious cycle.* – South Tyneside

For many isolation can lead to a lack of confidence which will make it more difficult for people to participate,

*When you feel isolated you certainly don't have the confidence to really join in, or be yourself. Once you gain confidence and you get over the isolation then that gets your mind to think, "Well I can develop myself."* – South Tyneside

*Intergenerational programmes* were seen as a positive way to increase confidence and organise support for those who need it. There was a view that younger people can encourage their older family members to try things they otherwise wouldn't consider and move in new directions that may support their wellbeing. In the community wellbeing dialogue in Bristol the suggestion was made that the active retired could perhaps help develop the flexible transportation services required by older people in their communities, whereas in Belfast the younger generation was seen as a potential vehicle for teaching the older generation about new approaches to community life.

In the work and learning dialogue participants discussed how low pay impacts on people's self-confidence. For many inadequate remuneration is a reflection of what an employer feels the individual employee is worth,

*A financial reward is like someone else telling you how much your work is worth. If you have a minimum wage job that is someone telling you that you are worth the minimum. This could be a spur to do better but it could also make you think you don't deserve more.* – Cardiff

*It might lead to mental health issues well... You can lose your confidence.* – Falkirk

*Appropriate pay* was therefore seen as important for wellbeing. Participants said that having a manager who is *focussed on individual needs* rather than sending employees to courses without consultation would increase their confidence as well,

*If...someone in your company is asking, gaining an insight into where you're at, what you want to achieve from that experience and don't just hammer people into learning experiences.* – Falkirk

*I think an employer, whether it's a humongous company or a small sort of business or company, [should be] getting to know the individual. I've seen a course which I really think you would like. It means that they've actually listened to what I've said.* – Falkirk

Those with experience of being offered *opportunities to advance* in work, including through learning, reported a positive effect on their self-confidence, which encourages them to keep improving and learning,

*You can be inspired to do more. You want to keep on pushing yourself to learn more.* – Cardiff

There was also agreement that *recognition and positive feedback* both in learning and in work lead to higher self-confidence,

*I think you just feel a lot happier as well. If the employers or customers are giving you that feedback, you would rather be there than not.* – Falkirk



**Figure 9:** Actions to achieve improved confidence

### Lack of information

In the community wellbeing dialogue concerns were raised about access to information about community decision making processes and community activities, both of which have the potential to impact positively on people's wellbeing. To address issues of inequality in communities, there was a view that information should go out to everyone in formats that work for different groups in communities including isolated and harder to reach people who are frequently disconnected from what is happening around them,

*There's a lot of inequality, especially in my BME community. People don't do stuff because they're not empowered or they don't know about these things.* – Bristol

In Belfast it was suggested that the information that is available is very fragmented, making it harder to find and use. Some participants suggested that *community information hubs* would benefit the wellbeing of all,

*Do we not need a more centralised hub? Every OAP needs heat, housing, community, is there not one centralised place they can go to, rather than access all these multiple things which is confusing at the end of the day. - Belfast*

This chimed with the views of participants in Bristol,

*It would be nice to be able to go somewhere where you can get help with everything, like mortgage advice, health, across the board. And if they don't know they can pick up the phone. It seems so hard to find information out these days. - Bristol*

Information about community services and activities should be *tailored to the needs at different life stages*. As one of the groups in Bristol said about retired people,

*Does the council retain information on people who are in that category of retired adults? Because if it does, why can't they send some sort of information flyer out? Numbers, useful information, if you need the community bus to come and pick you up from your address make a phone call and they can pick you up on and take you to Tesco's. - Bristol*

In the sport and culture dialogue it was felt that people, in order to take action themselves and thereby enhance their own wellbeing, needed more information on what is available locally. They suggested pubs as a good place to communicate forthcoming events, activities and programmes,

*You can get the message across in pubs. Parties are usually for drinking, but you can also promote healthy activities. – South Tyneside*

In the work and learning dialogue there was a similar call for greater visibility of learning opportunities. As someone in Cardiff said,

*I think learning providers need to be more visual. I probably couldn't name one that I would go to, and see the courses they had on offer. More targeted promotions. – Cardiff*

Local authorities and managers were identified as gatekeepers of information (see section 3.3 on actors in the delivery of wellbeing).



**Figure 10:** Actions to improve information provision

### 3.2 Reliable public transport

Issues relating to commuting and public transport were raised in each of the three dialogues. Many participants spoke about the time, expense and anxiety associated with it that undermines daily quality of life. Some cited important local amenities that are poorly accessible with a lack of transport connections to the main hospitals and car parks of insufficient capacity, particularly in Bristol,

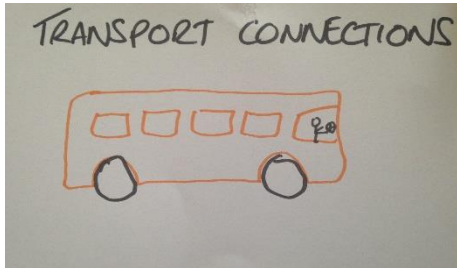
*My wife works in one of the main hospitals in town, there's no way she can park. She has to leave home an hour and a quarter before she's due to work to go 2.5 miles on a bus to guarantee getting to work [on time]. - Bristol*

A number of people in Bristol talked about the anxiety experienced by families who have difficulty doing the school run and getting to work on time due to a lack of transport connections or long travel times.

School busses were deemed to be too expensive. As a participant in Bristol said,

*It costs hundreds to get a school bus, much, much more than going on a normal bus, I'm talking hundreds. It's happened to me, it's frightening and if you haven't got the money, you can't afford it, what do you do? - Bristol*

Equally, participants in Belfast talked about very complex systems for getting to school which they felt were a challenge for a school-age child,



*I remember at my last school, and I had to take a community-run bus to the Translink bus stop, then get another Translink bus to the main bus stop, and then go to school. But if that first one hadn't been there because I lived in the middle of nowhere, I couldn't have said to dad,*

*"Do you mind going into work an hour later to drop me at the bus stop?" You know you can't do that, so unless that bus was there, it was actually the bus for the local primary school and they let us get on it to take us into Belfast, and without that, because the road networks, and the bus networks aren't great out there, we would have been really stuck. - Belfast*

For the wellbeing of older people public transport has to be reliable and accessible,

*Public transport has to be very good for the older people. Because they obviously don't go that far, the length they can walk for. - Belfast*

A patchy public transport network was a concern in both locations. Participants in Belfast shared experiences of older adults outside Belfast where a lack of reliable public transport increases social isolation,

*In Northern Ireland there is a very Belfast-centric approach to everything. There's a lot of older people, where I'm from back home, their public transport just isn't there for them and they just get isolated that way. My older grandmother lives down near Lurgan, she's entitled to the same things [as older people in Belfast], but because the infrastructure is not there she can't just jump on a bus and go somewhere. I think public transport is a very, very big one. - Belfast*

As discussed on p.33 (Lack of confidence and support) it's not just about the availability of appropriate transport services but also about support to ensure older people can make best use of them, as they often lack the confidence to use services they are not familiar with,

*My nan lives on her own and she's a widow and she wouldn't dream of getting on a bus on her own even though it's right outside her house...Not knowing where it's going to go, how to stop the bus, even how to pay, things like that she gets really nervous about. So I think there needs to be something to encourage the people to get out and start using the bus and getting their lives back. - Bristol*

Transport issues also featured as a barrier to participation in the sport and culture and work and learning dialogues. Participants mentioned infrequent services or a lack of services and some raised the issue of cost. As a participant in South Tyneside said,

*Money, it depends how much you've got, if you can't really afford going far. Some people are happy staying in their local area, some people go further. There might be an issue there for some people. Even taking a bus into South Shields now is £3.00. - South Tyneside*

### 3.3 Affordable good quality homes

In the community wellbeing dialogue good quality affordable homes were discussed as essential for a good quality of life. A lack of affordable housing for young people was seen to impact negatively on the wellbeing of families, with parents supporting their children well into their adult years, either financially or by continuing to provide space in the family home with potential overcrowding and a lack of personal space as a result. Younger participants spoke about the stigma they feel is attached to living with their parents as adults,

*And also there's that stigma as well, if you're 30, 35 years old and you're still living with your parents you don't want to tell everyone, I'm still living with my parents. - Bristol*

Most participants believed very strongly that inadequate housing impacts negatively on wellbeing. As someone in Belfast said,

*A lot of people are living in awful housing. That has a knock on effect on everything else, their mental health and within the community. - Belfast*

It was also felt to be important that people should have an opportunity to stay in their community should they wish to, so that they can draw on existing support networks particularly for those living in an environment with an inadequate transportation infrastructure,

*They move people away when all their support is in the local area. To look after the baby, she would have to get a bus and the transport is so bad to go from one side of town to the other. - Bristol*

In Belfast the point was made that housing ought to be appropriate to the needs of individuals, including those with physical disabilities,

*We talked about appropriate housing, adequate housing. It would also mean facilities for physical disabilities and those kind of things. - Belfast*



In both locations participants expressed their frustration about a lack of affordable housing. Some said they believed that people feel better if their concerns are being taken seriously,

*I think for the people in my community they need to have a sense that they actually matter and that they're not just a number and not something that can just be brushed aside. - Bristol*

Participants asked the What Works Centre for Wellbeing to consider an advocacy role on behalf of communities to ensure that the importance of affordable good quality homes remains a priority for policy makers (see section 4.4).

### 3.4 Wellbeing trade-offs

Throughout the three dialogues it became clear that in managing their own and their family's wellbeing people occasionally make trade-offs between different aspects of wellbeing, particularly in the context of work and learning.

#### Job satisfaction versus good wages

For all participants earning a living is an important reason for going to work. However, most participants said they would much rather have a job they enjoy and earn a little less than being in a job which doesn't



meet their interests. In both locations participants said that job satisfaction is better for wellbeing than high wages,

*I would hate to be miserable and be very well paid rather than be comfortable and happy. I think it is a balance. It is certainly why I go to work, but I wouldn't take a job that I absolutely hated just because at the end of the week I had lots of money in the bank. – Falkirk*

*I need to enjoy my job. Doing something that I love even if the reward is not as great financially. If I'm doing something I love that is what it is all about. - Cardiff*

Some people said though, that they had felt compelled at certain stages in their lives to give up a job they enjoyed to ensure a better income. This was particularly relevant for young parents. As a participant in Falkirk said,

*My first job was working with furniture, I loved it. It was brilliant for five years. And then my life changed to get married and move on. I couldn't stay with the job because I couldn't survive on the wages. [...] I would still be there if the money was good enough for me to survive as I really enjoyed working there. - Falkirk*

In Cardiff one participant spoke about a similar wellbeing trade off made by his brother, which had far reaching impacts on his mental health. He had decided to take a job as a social worker at an Australian detention island to facilitate a deposit on his first home,

*My brother is home from Australia at the moment and he is working on this Pacific Island where they hold migrants and the salary is unbelievable...Because they won't accept asylum seekers in Australia they put them all on this little island...His job is to stop them from killing themselves... The work is so unbearable. He needs to carry a nightstick and a Taser, there are lots of wild dogs on the island. He can tolerate it for a year before it will really affect his mental health... Within that year they would have saved enough to get a house deposit. - Cardiff*

### **Better work-life balance versus less money**

Participants reported on trade-offs between good wages and a better-work life balance as well. A male participant in his forties who had moved from a job that required long hours and a lot of travelling to a local job for less money said,

*I changed jobs to spend more time with my family, my girlfriend got pregnant. I was working all over the UK. I wanted to spend more time at home with her. I had to take a hefty pay cut but it was a positive experience because I got to see my first child being born. - Cardiff*

He spoke about the long lasting effect this had on his wellbeing as it had enabled him to see his family growing up,

*It is still with me now, because I'm not working far from home and every evening I get to see my kids go up [to bed] which wouldn't have been possible if I'd been with my last job. I'd have been missing out on a lot of things. - Cardiff*

Using some of the time he had gained he had achieved more qualifications, which enabled him to get back to the same level of pay he used to have, thus demonstrating that prioritising wellbeing over pay had been a positive decision in all respects,

*In 2009 I got an apprenticeship and I did a NVQ2 and 3 in engineering. This led me to get a better job and I basically got back to the sort of wages I was getting when I left in 2007 when I took a pay cut. - Cardiff*

### More variety versus job security

The third type of wellbeing trade off discussed in the work and learning dialogue was a combination of the two described above: having more job satisfaction as well as flexibility at the expense of job security. A discussion between self-employed participants in Cardiff demonstrated a range of views on the insecurity and unpredictability of their situation. It became clear that this has a different impact on different people, depending on their general outlook on life. A male participant in his fifties who had had several negative experiences in his work and private life said,

*It makes you feel a bit wary, doesn't it? You've got to try make the right decision all the time, don't you? - Cardiff*

Whereas a younger female participant who loved her job had a more positive outlook. She compared working as a freelance actor to gambling,

*Because you can take this, or you can wait till something better comes up. – Cardiff*

She said that for her wellbeing, job security is less important than having flexibility, variety and doing something she really loves,

*Just the fact that it's different every time.... Also I do something which, when I'm doing it, I really love it. The worst part of my job is when I'm not in the job. That's quite a luxury really. - Cardiff*

## 4. Actors in the delivery of wellbeing

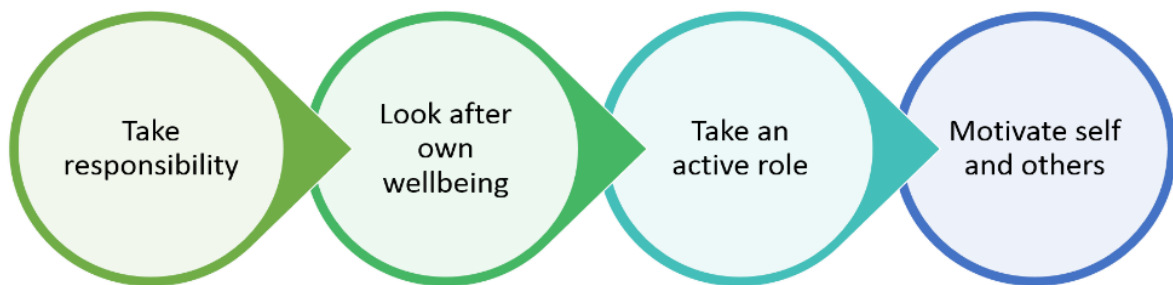
---

In each of the dialogues participants considered who should be doing what to increase people's wellbeing in communities, work and learning and through sport and culture. An overwhelming majority felt that individuals need to take responsibility for their own wellbeing first of all and motivate others to do so as well. Local and central government can support individual initiative by working with the third sector in getting the wellbeing message out, incentivising employers who introduce wellbeing programmes and promote life-long learning. Businesses should invest in local communities, develop wellbeing policies with a focus on the individual needs of employers and offer learning opportunities to all. The What Works Centre for Wellbeing was seen as the main advocate for wellbeing, who could build bridges between communities, policy makers and employers, advocate for the wellbeing needs of the public, identify and disseminate best practice and set up a network of wellbeing field specialists who provide information about wellbeing activities at regional level.

---

### 4.1 What individuals can do

There was recognition amongst participants that many wellbeing benefits derive from participants taking control of their own wellbeing. Discussions centred on taking responsibility, looking after one's own wellbeing, taking an active role and motivating oneself and encouraging others to improve their wellbeing.



**Figure 11:** What individuals can do to improve their wellbeing

#### Take responsibility

Across the locations participants felt strongly they have to *take initiative* themselves if they want to improve their lives. In the work and learning dialogue a participant in Cardiff participants said,

*It is the effort to find out. Whether that's going to places and asking people or just deciding that you're going to have to find out what is out there.* – Cardiff

Which chimed with the view of participants in Falkirk,

*I think you've just got to take responsibility for your work or your learning. You can't just say my manager never told me that, you've really got to be able to take responsibility.* – Falkirk

Participants said this is linked to *taking responsibility for their own actions* rather than blaming others,

*Have a better attitude. Some people are quick to blame circumstances, blame employers. Actually it is the attitude that holds them back.* - Falkirk

And trying to become more confident by *thinking positively*,

### Looking after own wellbeing

A participant in Falkirk took the concept of taking responsibility even further and said that individuals need to learn how to *look after* their own wellbeing at work, for example by delegating jobs to ensure they're not getting overwhelmed,

*Delegate... instead of taking all on by yourself, I just think from my own work point of view we had a large restructure and there's been a lot of new people coming in... They might as well just do it rather than me, you know I could just pass the buck to someone else, and not take on everything myself. – Falkirk*

Her group added to this that *being fit and healthy* helps to bring a positive outlook on work and life. They said that it is important to have regular breaks and *work reasonable hours* rather than taking on extra work. As someone said,

*Allowing yourself that break and not feeling guilty for actually leaving on time. – Falkirk*

Looking after one's own wellbeing includes being brave enough to *quit a job when it's not fulfilling*. A participant in Falkirk said,

*Also knowing when to quit. If you're working and you don't enjoy it, after a while it affects your mental health and you are 20 years down the line and you regret not quitting. - Falkirk*

For many *communicating individual needs* is core to improving one's wellbeing at work,

*I think communication in general seems to have been a massive thing. You might think that someone is holding you back and they [the employers] don't even know who you are, and they are not psychic. – Cardiff*

### Take an active role

In the community wellbeing dialogue there was a view that individuals need to take an *active role in their communities* to reap the benefits of community involvement,

*You have to be a stakeholder, really at the end of the day, in your own community, and through being a stakeholder, you have a belief in your community, you know where it wants to go, you act as a community, as one group, and then you can make decisions and plan ahead. – Belfast*

Where possible individuals should *help source and disseminate information* about community activities and *look out for each other* at all times, ensuring children are safe and older people get the support they need. As someone in Belfast said,

*Looking out for each other, looking out for the kids if they hurt themselves or seeing if they're getting bothered. – Belfast*

In Bristol providing *intergenerational support* was seen as something individuals can do for their communities,

*Young mums getting together with older adults is a great idea because it gives them something to do to look after the children. - Bristol*

## Motivating self and others

For some people whether you are able to motivate yourself to take part in sport and culture depends on childhood experiences,

*I was a Boy Scout since I was five. Thanks to the Boy Scout organisation I did so many outdoor activities. It did influence me quite a lot. – London*

Another participant said that he felt that it is very much up to the individual to motivate themselves, but he recognised that people's personalities play an important role, but that ultimately it is up to the individual whether they take part or not,

*If you are an extrovert or like contact with people then you will search out these activities. If an organisation wants to influence your activities, you don't have the personality, you won't do it. Any organisation can offer you anything, it's up to you whether you do it or not. – London*

Others raised a concern that not everyone is able to help themselves,

*Sometimes you are not in the right frame of mind to decide what is good for you. If you have a mental illness you need help to take those decisions. – London*

For some participants it was clear that not all individuals have the skills or capability to help themselves,

*Some people are weaker than others so they need support. – London*

There was a strong belief expressed particularly in London that individuals were the most important factor in motivating people to improve their own wellbeing through sport and culture. As one participant summed it up,

*There is no greater impact than taking personal responsibility. – London*

Individuals were also felt to have an important role in encouraging others to embrace actions that improve wellbeing,

*Spreading your own personal experience and what you've gained from it is helpful. When people talk about something with passion it makes you want to go. We've seen that just sitting here. – London*

Someone else agreed saying that it is important not only to tell someone about an activity, but also to go with them and encourage them,

*Sometimes it's nice to do something with someone who is good to drive you. Someone who will help you pass your limits. – London*

## 4.2 Views on the role of local and central government

In the community wellbeing dialogue participants in both locations talked about a breakdown of trust between communities and policy makers. In both locations people felt that those representing local authorities and government need to be held to account and talk to communities. There was a view the breakdown of trust could be resolved if *polycymakers* engaged more with communities and get real (as opposed to arranged) tasters of what life is like at grass roots level,

*They could take off their suits and go get their hands dirty every so often. – Belfast*

*I think they need to see how things really are in situations that are not staged for them. - Belfast*

## Getting the wellbeing message out

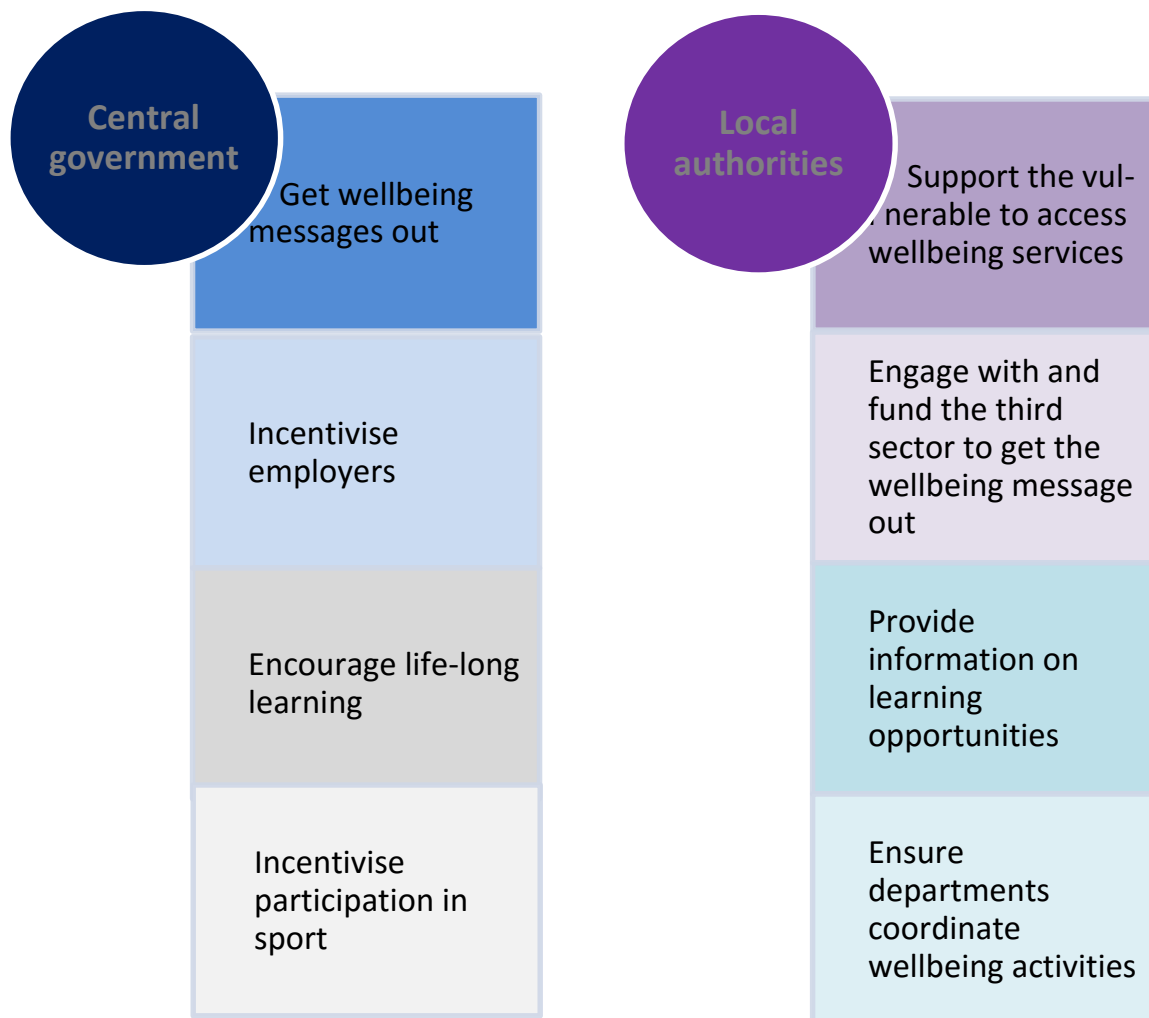
In the sport and culture dialogue participants recognised that there is a limit to how motivated some individuals could be to take part in sport or cultural activities without some kind of external support. In response to another participant suggesting that wellbeing was entirely up to the individual one participant said,

*That's nice, but in reality it is not as simple as that. Sometimes there are many obstacles. The local government and local authorities should in fact be supporting things.* – London

For some there is a barrier between the work of a local authority and what is happening to people on the ground. It was suggested that there is an opportunity *for local authorities to really engage with third sector organisations to get the wellbeing message out,*

*[Local authorities] could save money in the long run by creating a network within a local authority. I know we've got Health Watch up here which kind of helps to promote [wellbeing] doesn't it? You've still got that kind of barrier between the council and the people.* – South Tyneside

Figure 12: Views on role for government



Another person also explored what they felt to be a break-down in communication between local authority departments which was counter to providing useful information on the wellbeing services available to the community,

*Some departments do different things. There is no real co-ordination. I am not complaining, because I know the fact is there are cut-backs. We've been in recession for 12 years now and it hit councils really bad. They now need to get back on track and the PR needs to be sorted out. The diplomacy to come together [across departments] and talk and make sure they get the [wellbeing] message out.*  
– South Tyneside

People also spoke of the role of local authority run organisations,

*Libraries and leisure centres. Local people always go there so it's a good place to advertise.* – London

For some it is really important that the wellbeing message is promoted centrally from the national government to ensure it has the necessary reach and impact,

*I think all things should be addressed at a national level. Have things downstream from central government. I think it would have a bigger impact from a local perspective.* – South Tyneside

It was felt that a *national promotional campaign* would help to get the wellbeing message out very widely,

*Government should encourage people as well towards these opportunities with lots of advertising, "If you do these activities there will be certain rewards to personal wellbeing".* – London

For some participants a top-down approach would work well,

*It's like a pyramid. It comes from the very top. Originally from Ministers, then to the MPs, then to the local councillors, then to the local people.* – London

Whereas for some there needs to be a much greater focus on local needs,

*Each area has different individual needs. I think that obviously you couldn't really have a blanket covering all the same areas. I don't know how you really get round that. That's like coming from a national to a local level. It could be different for each area.* – South Tyneside

### **Promotion of life-long learning**

Participants felt that government has a big role to play when it comes to *encouraging people to continue learning*. With reference to the Inspire Awards case studies presented by NIACE someone in Cardiff said,

*What struck me from watching those videos was how a lot of those people were not people who think to themselves without any prompting, "I'm going to take a course". It was actually so good that they did because one of them who was homeless now has got a new life. I would say to reach out to the people that wouldn't think of it themselves.* – Cardiff

There was a view that the cost of funding and *promoting learning opportunities* such as those offered through NIACE in Wales is money well spent,

*It's so good that they do that because otherwise that woman probably would not have thought about it. Then actually the government might have thought that it is money to spend, but it's less money than she might have been drawing out using benefits.* – Cardiff

Participants said that it is essential for the wellbeing of learners that *programmes continue to receive funding once they've started*,

*If you are going to offer a service make sure you follow it through. Don't pull the plug on it after two years.* – Cardiff

## Incentivising employers

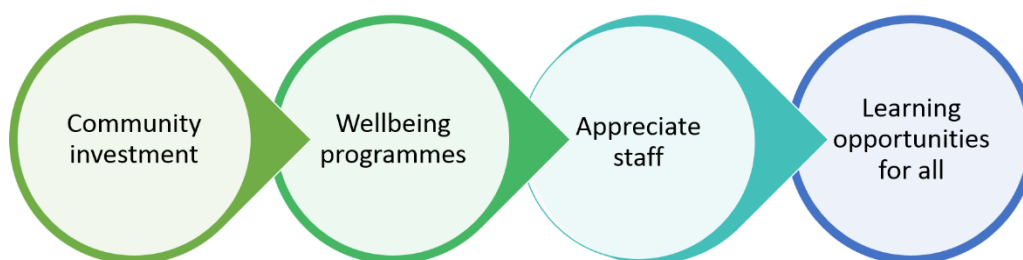
A role for government was also identified in incentivising the promotion of wellbeing to employers running small-to-medium-sized enterprises (see Section 4.3).

One participant felt that national government could also incentivise sporting and cultural activities to the unemployed through Universal Credit and other benefit schemes,

*Has there been any thought being put in to Central Government to give a larger scheme for people that are on benefits? If they take part in a show or join a club and whatever they might get added benefit. This might be wellbeing and help them to get off benefits or something like obesity.* – South Tyneside

## 4.3 Views on the role of businesses

The private sector wasn't at the forefront of people's mind when considering who could be doing what to improve community wellbeing or wellbeing through sport and culture. The work and learning dialogue generated a lot of messages for employers. Figure 13 provides an overview of the key roles identified for businesses.



**Figure 13:** What companies can do to improve wellbeing

### Invest in local community

Someone in Belfast spoke about how the company he works for encourages employees to volunteer in the community,

*My company are doing quite a lot of community days where we go out and volunteer. Even at weekends and during work hours we do different activities. We clean the beaches, clean the parks, housing and stuff like that.* - Belfast

Others spoke about building programmes in Belfast where local community groups had ensured that 20% of the workforce has to be sourced locally. There was support for companies that invest in local areas. As someone in the sport and culture dialogue said,

*Private companies should do things for the public as well and for the community, not just employees. McDonald's in my area provides all the equipment to clean the canal.* – London

### Introduce wellbeing programmes

In the sport and wellbeing dialogue there was a view that there should be an onus on businesses to support the wellbeing of their employees. One participant felt this was particularly true of a large workforce working in very sedentary roles,

*I think big companies need to deal with [wellbeing] issues. If you're sitting in a call centre for 40 hours a week you've got to have some social responsibility. Maybe getting a big corporate discount on a gym [membership].* - South Tyneside



Others felt this would work well for large corporations, but would be more of a challenge for small and medium-sized enterprises who would not necessarily have the available funds,

*SMEs are cash-strapped. There are no incentives. If the government were to give tax incentives for this exact thing...then that could be a possibility even for small to medium-sized companies. – South Tyneside*

In London participants had mixed experiences of being offered wellbeing programmes at work. One participant felt that third sector organisations could work with companies to make sure they understand the wellbeing message. It was felt this was a specific role for the What Works Centre for Wellbeing,

*It's really important that if some charities, like your Centre, communicate with people in the workplace that there are lots of benefits of having high wellbeing at work. I used to work for British Airways, they used to mention wellbeing. – London*

Others didn't have such a positive experience,

*In my company no one thinks about wellbeing, even internally. They only care about the fire alarm practice once a week. This is health and safety. That's all. – London*

Some suggested that larger corporations could take a role in sponsoring wellbeing programmes,

*If there is a series of [wellbeing] courses around the country. You may have Nike promoting it because it's a sports group. They may pay for it. – South Tyneside*

### **Value staff and consider individual needs**

In the work and learning dialogues participants shared the view that employers need to *value staff* and *put people before profit*,

*Just appreciate your employees. If you treat your employees well they will want to work hard. You want to work hard for someone who appreciates you. - Falkirk*

There was recognition of an immediate link to higher employee wellbeing when employers respect their staff, *treat them as individuals* and *communicate well*,

*The wellbeing of your workforce is much easier to control if you treat them as people and not just as numbers. – Falkirk*

This means that employers should have a structure in place which enables managers to get to know staff, which includes *being aware of their lives outside of work*,

*It's also about understanding people's lives beyond work. - Falkirk*

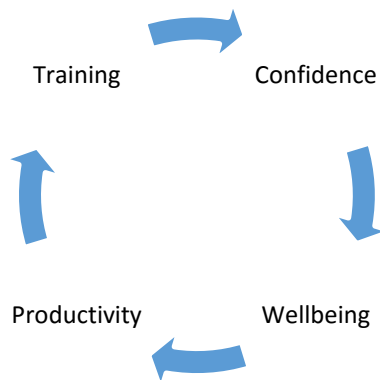
And offering *flexible solutions* to ensure a good work-life balance for staff,

*Employers taking consideration of your individual needs can impact both the employee and the whole family. Trying to work round people's needs, because eventually they'll stay loyal and come back to work. – Falkirk*

Participants in Cardiff called for the introduction of wellbeing policies in the work place, in particular a wellbeing policy around work-life balance which applies to all employees.

## Learning opportunities for all

In terms of learning the most important message was that employers need to *offer learning opportunities to all employees*. This will enable employers to create a virtuous wellbeing-productivity circle described by one of the groups in Cardiff as in figure 14.



Across the locations participants believed firmly that employers need to have a better understanding that a *happy workforce is a more productive workforce*, *They need to hear that if you increase your workforce's wellbeing there is less time off sick and it is more cost-effective. Increasing productivity.* - Cardiff

**Figure 14:** Wellbeing-productivity cycle

## 4.4 Views on role of the What Works Centre for Wellbeing

### Promote the Centre

For one of the groups in Falkirk a key message for the What Works Centre for Wellbeing was,

*Promote yourself.* – Falkirk

This group said that it is essential that the Centre is clear about its role and who it is trying to reach with its work,

*Quite often organisations of this type can have a bit of overreach and can't ever promote themselves because they don't really know who the client is. It's about understanding themselves and see who they wish to reach and it can't be everyone.* - Falkirk

### Building bridges

In the community wellbeing dialogue participants saw a role for the What Works Centre for Wellbeing in building bridges between communities, MPs and policy makers and making the case for community wellbeing. They felt that the Centre could translate community concerns into a language that is understood by stakeholders in local and national government,

*They [The What Works Centre for Wellbeing] know how to voice things or put them in writing, we don't. We go in there mad and angry and it all comes out wrong. We all swear, which we would if we're angry, but they know how to word it properly.* - Bristol

Advocating for affordable housing in communities so that generations can support each other was mentioned as an example of an issue participants would like the What Works Centre to take up,

*Are our children going to be okay when they need to get a house? No, they're not, because there's no houses about.* - Bristol

The What Works Centre for Wellbeing could,

*Really push policy makers. Fight for us, speak up for us.* - Bristol



**Figure 15:** Views on the role of the What Works Centre for Wellbeing

In Belfast participants said they didn't need the What Work Centre for Wellbeing to advise them on wellbeing issues. In their view communities in Belfast have learned what they need to do to sustain or improve their wellbeing due to their experiences of living through difficult times. What communities in Belfast are seen by participants to need is an advocate who can help them to retain and access funding for community work,

*Keeping funding in the community groups, because it's really the community groups [who contribute to a thriving community].* - Belfast

Equally, the What Works Centre for Wellbeing as an intermediary, to reinforce the messages of the community was also seen as a key role. As one participant said when being interviewed for the short film about the dialogue,

*I think that any information that's gathered at these workshops needs to be shared as widely as possible and it needs to go up to government. Governments need to know. Those who have the power to make decisions and make changes need to actually hear it, because there is too much disconnection at the moment between politicians and what is actually happening on the ground. If the What Works Centre for Wellbeing can in any sort of way be an intermediary that would have a very positive effect.* - Belfast

### **Network of local field specialists**

It was hoped that the What Works Centre for Wellbeing can help identify what works in terms of information sharing in communities and subsequently advise on what's the best way to give information in different formats to different groups of people.

Someone in London suggested that the What Works Centre for Wellbeing could offer advisers who would co-ordinate national and local information on wellbeing,

*These are like field specialists. Someone who is able to advise you on what's going on in your area. Let you know how and where to go. Someone who is a specialist in his or her field, who is passionate about the activity who can advise you on what to do.* – London

### **Identify and disseminate best practice**

In Bristol participants felt that the What Works Centre for Wellbeing is well placed to help communities help themselves, for example in providing best practice in electing community leaders,

*Or work with local communities to help us organise our process and elect a leader, really just helping communities to help themselves. – Bristol*

*It's putting you on the right track with how to start it otherwise you get a headache, you think where am I going to start? But if someone can start you off and say, "I'm on the end of the phone if you get stuck or if you need any more help then they'd be there". - Bristol*

### **Selling the wellbeing message to employers**

Participants in the work and learning dialogue expressed the hope that the What Works Centre for Wellbeing will *take the learning from the dialogues to policy makers and translate the benefits of improved employee wellbeing to employers* with a focus on low cost measures.

*Show it to employers something they can do to improve their wellbeing of their workers which will cost them nothing. – Cardiff*

### **Act on findings of the dialogues**

There was a lot of appreciation for the What Works Centre's initiative to conduct a public dialogue to inform future strategies,

*I think they've made a damn good start by asking not telling. – Belfast*

Participants in Belfast said they'd hope the What Works Centre for Wellbeing will act on the findings of the dialogue so that trust is established,

*Come and ask us, but if nothing happens at the other end, then there's no trust. There has to be an outcome. – Belfast*

And participants in all locations look forward to hearing how findings from the community wellbeing dialogue will be taken forward,

*It was very interesting to hear everyone's point of view, the topics were good. I'm interested in what's going to happen to this report and will we hear more about it and everything else. – Bristol*

## 5. Wellbeing messages

---

Participants in the sport and culture dialogue considered what messages would nudge people to improve their own wellbeing. Although using the term wellbeing was seen as a useful way to get the message across, participants were more comfortable with words in relation to happiness and fun. Messages need to be tailored to ensure they chime with the experiences and language use of people at different life stages. Some felt that employers need guidance about the meaning of wellbeing and how to communicate wellbeing programmes.

---

### 5.1 The pros and cons of using the term wellbeing

In the sport and culture dialogue participants were asked to consider whether those involved in organising and promoting physical and cultural activities in participants' local area should talk about the ways in which these things have the potential to improve quality of life. Their reflections chimed with a lot of the comments in the other two dialogue strands.

Some participants across the dialogue felt that they were aware of wellbeing messages through the activities with which they are already involved. One participant mentioned her participation in a group for the over 50s which she felt used wellbeing effectively as a way of encouraging people to get involved,

*I belong to an organisation called New Horizons. We do Pilates, learn foreign languages etc. They have a teacher in and it is all promoted as good for one's wellbeing.* – London



Other people in London said they were unaware of any organisations that used wellbeing as a core element in their marketing messages,

*No one says if you do this you will have a better life. I think they should, but they don't. They don't promote their activities in this way. If someone said if you do this you would be better mentally I would do it.* – London

In a consideration of the pros and cons of using a wellbeing message participants reflected on the value of adapting the message for the audience and getting the language right so that it is accessible to everyone. They also thought about the extent to which the term *wellbeing* is helpful to society to describe a good quality of life or ways of living well.

Participants in South Tyneside were somewhat more convinced that a wellbeing message should be incorporated in to local promotional materials for sporting and cultural events. Although in both locations the concept did gain traction over the two rounds of the dialogues. In round one two participants in South Tyneside summarised the views of many,

*I think they should do it [promote wellbeing messages locally] massively. The reason being, when you're doing something physically, you are increasing your endorphins and that's supposed to increase your happiness in itself.* – South Tyneside

*[Using a wellbeing message] should be the main thing because everybody's main goal in life is to promote their own wellbeing and to be happy. I think it would encourage a lot more people to take part in them as well. – South Tyneside*

A concern was aired that wellbeing messaging could have the opposite of the desired effect if it was interpreted as telling people how to live their lives,

*That's what we're up against. The public sector telling you that you should be good and you can go running. It seems very preachy and very patronising and it's the nanny state again and that's something that I think people might question. – London*

For some people the term *wellbeing* is potentially a barrier to people who might otherwise be excited by sporting and cultural events. They suggested subtler techniques,

*Does there have to be a wellbeing message at the local level? Local people will be getting it in a subliminal fashion...they can promote it without using the actual word wellbeing. People are getting the message without the actual word being used. – South Tyneside*

Or alternative wording might be more appropriate when people are not clear what is meant by the term *wellbeing*,

*I don't think we're actually clear properly on what the word wellbeing means. So maybe to say that it's fun, to say that you'll get a better sense of the community, say how many other people will be going. – South Tyneside*

## 5.2 Adapting the message for the audience

Participants were more positive about the use of wellbeing messaging when they discussed how people might receive the message. Throughout the sport and culture dialogue, particularly in London, it was felt that a tailored approach to wellbeing messages was important,

*The older you get the more aware you get about how important doing activities can be in wellbeing. People of different ages receive messages in different ways. – London*



For a minority of participants the purpose of the wellbeing message should be to present options and enable people to decide on their own course of action, not tell people what to do,

*You don't like to be told what to do as human beings. However, to be given options, to be empowered as people is a better option. – London*

A discussion by a sub-group in South Tyneside raised the point that particular consideration should be given to how to target the wellbeing message to children and young people, building on their use of social media,

*Teenagers and young people are really good at communicating with each other, maybe just pulling the main points, not over complicating it could be a good start. – South Tyneside*

Participants said that children are given a lot of knowledge at school and as such are able to reinforce to others, including their parents, the importance of health and wellbeing,

*My children are constantly coming home telling me how I can be more healthy, how I can change my life and what I should be doing and all about the NHS things. – South Tyneside*

A small number of people said that they felt that the enjoyment of the activity should over-ride any quality of life messages,

*I think the issue of fun is more important than health or wellbeing. If you're 12 you just want to have some fun, you're not thinking about your health, you don't want to go on a run. – South Tyneside*

### Getting the language right

Participants in South Tyneside were very conscious of the need for the use of Plain English using an authentic voice, to which the intended audience can relate, when communicating the wellbeing benefits of sport and culture.

*Using the right language [in messages]. If you see something in the Queen's English you might think that's not me, especially if you are working class. You look at it and it seems inaccessible, you wouldn't feel connected to it. – South Tyneside*

This short exchange demonstrates the importance of getting the language used right to avoid putting off people who would otherwise be interested,

*It can also be patronising to use more colloquial language. – South Tyneside*

*There is nothing more irritating than a fake Geordie accent. – South Tyneside*

### Use of wellbeing messages by employers

In the work and learning dialogue participants had mixed experiences of being offered wellbeing programmes or receiving wellbeing messages at work. One participant felt that third sector organisations could work with companies to make sure they understand the wellbeing message. It was felt this was a specific role for the What Works Centre for Wellbeing,

*It's really important that if some charities, like your Centre, communicate with people in the workplace that there are lots of benefits of having high wellbeing at work. I used to work for British Airways, they used to mention wellbeing. – London*

Some suggested that larger corporations could take a role in sponsoring wellbeing programmes,

*If there is a series of [wellbeing] courses around the country. You may have Nike promoting it because it's a sports group. They may pay for it. – South Tyneside*

Others echoed this view and said they had specific examples of this happening in their local area,

*Private companies should do things for the public as well and for the community, not just employees. McDonald's in my area provides all the equipment to clean the canal. – London*

## 6. Concluding remarks

---

Using wellbeing as a way in to discussing policies has proven very productive in the three public dialogues commissioned by the What Works Centre for Wellbeing. As in the wellbeing public dialogues run by the New Economics Foundation, delivered by Hopkins Van Mil and supported by the Cabinet Office and Sciencewise in 2014, the wellbeing lens enabled participants to relate quickly to the policy under discussion, shed a light on what matters most to them as they go about their daily lives and reflect on what holds them back from improving their wellbeing.

Discussing policies from a wellbeing perspective shows that policy makers need to recognise the interconnectedness of people's lives to make better decisions. A policy intervention in one area might enhance one aspect of wellbeing but not contribute to a better quality of life overall. Participants in the What Works Centre for Wellbeing's dialogues cited examples around housing. Some had experience of being relocated to a better home outside their local area and a subsequent loss of support networks due to social dislocation. Equally, they shared experiences of decisions about local (public) transport infrastructure. This demonstrated that wellbeing interventions are unlikely to bear fruit if policies that facilitate the connectedness of people turn into barriers to a good work-life balance due to long commuting times; barriers to participation in sport, culture and learning; and barriers to the use of green spaces. If policies can facilitate a contented state of flourishing their impact is more likely to be long lasting. Participants in the three What Works Centre for Wellbeing dialogues all reported that achieving a state of flow made them feel happy and contributed to a more positive outlook on life. In communities this feeling is generated by connectedness and being part of something that improves community relationships; in work and learning being really focussed and inspired leads to feelings of joy and a readiness to do more; and a moving experience in cultural or sporting event transports people to an improved state of being. Participants said that even reflecting on those experiences after the event can bring back a sense of wellbeing.

An interesting finding of the three dialogues is that some of the interventions that have the potential to improve people's wellbeing are extremely low cost. Wellbeing in, and as a result of work and learning, benefits most from a more employee/learner-focused approach with managers and course providers who treat workers/ learners as individuals, recognise their achievements, offer them flexible solutions and opportunities to advance. For enhanced community wellbeing two-way dialogue between communities and government would make a substantial difference. To take steps forward policymakers need to be willing to engage with the public and meet with them for conversations at grass roots level to ensure that regional differences are understood and taken in to account. Likewise, providing information about the wellbeing impacts of community, sport and cultural activities can be very low cost once messages are brought in line with how different segments of the public think and feel. This includes demonstrating that activities are open to everyone and not confined to particular groups in society.

The dialogues demonstrated that there is a lot to be gained from putting wellbeing at the heart of policymaking. When people are happy and their quality of life is good they are more likely to be productive in work, learning and in their communities; and more likely to engage with sport and culture.



## 7. Acknowledgements

---

Hopkins Van Mil would like to thank the Oversight Group and each of the sub-committees for their support and guidance during the dialogue process. Please see the dialogue strand reports for full acknowledgements in relation to each dialogue theme. In addition the following people gave time to the process through presentations, resources and materials for which we thank them:

### Community wellbeing

- Dr. Susan Hodgett of the University of Ulster
- Dr. David Clark of the University of Cambridge
- Dave Wall of the Northern Ireland Executive
- Liz Zeidler and Sam Wren Jones of Happy City
- Alison Comley, Bristol City Council
- Joe Reynolds, Northern Ireland Executive
- Helen Winstanley and Emma Harvey of Trinity Arts
- Alexey Janes and Geraldine Nelson of the North Belfast
- Jacinta Linden of the Space - MARA project
- Gregor Henderson, Public Health England
- Councillor Jim Dickson, Lambeth Borough Council

### Sport, culture and wellbeing

- Nancy Hey, What Works Centre for Wellbeing
- Sue Owen, Catherine Mottram and Andrew Honeyman, Department for Culture, Media and Sport
- Louise Mansfield, University of Brunel, London and Sport and Culture Evidence Team Member
- Catherine Parker, Public Health England
- Councillor Moira Smith, Councillor Alan Kerr, Alison Saleh, Tom Hall and Richard Barber from South Tyneside Council
- Lucy Smith, Councillor Jim Dickson, Councillor Barrie Hargrove, Tara Quinn, Coral Flood, Donna Wiggins from Lambeth and Southwark Councils
- Catherine Parker, North East Public Health England Centre;
- Gregor Henderson, Public Health England
- Brett Berger and Edwina Brocklesby, Silverfit
- Michael Chandler from Cardboard Citizens.

### Work, learning and wellbeing

- Professor Huw Davies, Dr. Richard Thurston and James Carey, Welsh Government
- Cerys Furlong and Kay Smith, NIACE Wales
- Fiona McFarlane, Falkirk Council

Francis Stuart, Oxfam Scotland

- Professor Kevin Daniels, University of East Anglia (work and learning evidence team lead) and Mark Bryan, University of Sheffield (work and learning evidence team member)
- The team at Galgael

Hopkins Van Mil is particularly grateful for the commitment of the Project team, with whom we worked very closely to ensure the dialogues met the project requirements:

- Dawn Snape, Research and Evidence Manager, What Works Centre for Wellbeing

- Nina James, Policy Officer, Cabinet Office
- Robin Clarke, Dialogue and Engagement Specialist, Sciencewise
- Anna Macgillivray, Ursus Consulting (Evaluator)

The 108 public dialogue participants were extraordinary. We would also like to thank them for giving up their time to work with the team for two days and for providing such fascinating insights in to their wellbeing experiences whether through community; sport and culture; work and learning.

Dialogue findings prepared by:  
Hopkins Van Mil: Creating Connections Ltd  
Company No. 0903788  
Registered Office in England and Wales: 6a Dean's Yard, London SW1P 3NP  
T: 07985 514638 / 07961 887081  
E: [info@hopkinsvanmil.co.uk](mailto:info@hopkinsvanmil.co.uk)

With the support of:

