



what works
wellbeing

Wellbeing at the heart of policy

Executive summary





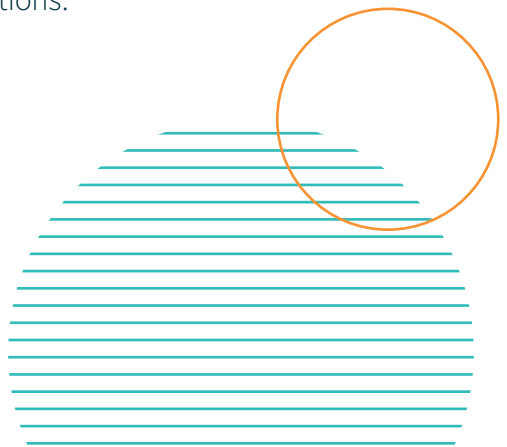
How are we doing as a nation?

Is life getting better?

Is it progress?

How do we know?

- If a policy helps people thrive, it's a success. Whatever the intended outcome of a policy is, if it leaves people struggling – and decreases their wellbeing – in their daily lives, we cannot call it a success. We cannot evaluate a policy without taking into account its consequences on national, local, and individual wellbeing.
- A wellbeing 'lens' helps us make sense of complex policy goals and impacts. Wellbeing is an essential complement to purely economic measures of success, particularly Gross Domestic Product.
- There is already evidence of what works to improve wellbeing, and how to measure impact. Wellbeing evidence can contribute a coherent and common approach for determining the efficacy of different policies and interventions.



What wellbeing factors matter?

We can now be more specific about which factors matter. Current evidence on the relationships between different aspects of our lives and individual wellbeing outcomes means we can identify categories that have the greatest impact. As individuals, we can distinguish between external factors that affect our lives, and our own internal psychological needs.

Health



Mental health

Physical health

Education and skills



Education level

Skills level

Personal finance



Income, wealth

GDP, growth,
poverty rates

Our relationships



Relationships
and support

Social integration

Where we live



Natural environment

Housing

Transport/access

Crime/safety

Culture/heritage

What we do



Employment
status

Job quality

Time use
(outside of work)

Spirituality/belief
system

Governance



How much we
trust government
and institutions

If we participate in
democratic processes

What can we do?

After five years of building the evidence base, the What Works Centre for Wellbeing is now able to build on the Commission for Wellbeing and Policy's 12 priority areas. Below are the implications for creating evidence-informed wellbeing policy.

The WISER wellbeing priority areas

Work

- Aim for stable employment and low unemployment.
- Good Work: Create jobs with purpose; challenge; decent income and good social connections; clear expectations; reasonable freedom, control and agency; consultation, support, recognition and opportunity; reasonable work-life balance to allow time with friends, family and for leisure.

Income

- Promote balanced, stable economic growth
- Look at effects of expenditure, debt and insecurity
- Invest in health and welfare systems to protect us, give us choice and free time for leisure, arts and education.

Society and governance

- Power and responsibility – treat citizens with respect and encourage citizen-led action and participation to happen in a meaningful way.
- Devolve power and control; carry out more meaningful consultation; increase trust in our collective institutions; reduce corruption; acknowledge our dignity, agency and control; reduce the hassle of bureaucracy; better feedback loops for services; faster less contracted legal process especially for children and families.



Measure wellbeing as a policy goal

- Use approaches like behavioural insights and design thinking to base understanding and action on how people actually behave rather than how we think they should
- Give citizens the wellbeing data they need.

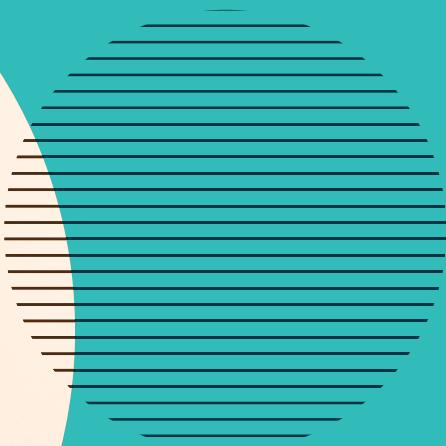
Emotional-mental health

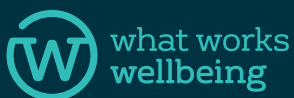
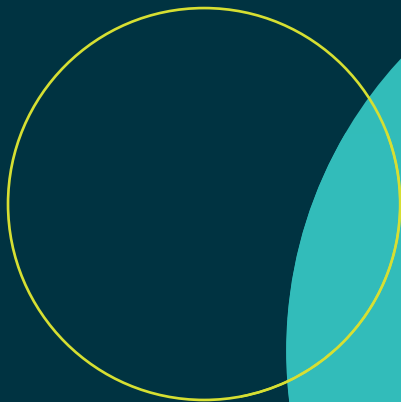
- Treat mental ill-health as professionally as physical ill-health.
- Support parents in their parenting, their relationships and mother's mental health.
- Build social and emotional skills in schools; life and work skills such as: character, resilience, empathy, self-control, perseverance, gratitude & savouring, cope with shocks.

Relationships and communities

- Promote volunteering, giving, and culture.
- Connections – develop opportunities for building social connections, which will also help to address loneliness.
- Livability – create a built environment that is sociable and green that allows for shorter, better commutes, and connection to the natural world, with reduced environmental stressors like noise and air pollution. Create opportunities for us to know neighbors, but give us a choice about the amount of contact.







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