



Community wellbeing

# The role of local government in promoting wellbeing

Healthy Communities Programme

## About this report

This report presents the findings of a project commissioned Local Government Improvement and Development and the National Mental Health Development Unit.

The report was written by Jody Aked, Juliet Michaelson and Nicola Steuer at the centre for well-being at nef (the new economics foundation). The project included a roundtable event hosted by nef involving leading experts, practitioners and decision-makers. There were also individual discussions with local authority officers, leaders, and elected members whose ideas and experiences have informed the content of the report.

## Acknowledgements

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Mental Health Foundation



The views expressed in the publication are those of the editor and the contributing authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Local Government Improvement and Development or those of the National Mental Health Development Unit.

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# Foreword

## from Councillor David Rogers OBE

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I am delighted to introduce this new publication from Local Government Improvement and Development and the National Mental Health Development Unit. Written by nef (the New Economics Foundation) and informed through a collaborative process that brought together many of the leading organisations and individuals in this field, this publication represents a significant milestone in our thinking about, and actions on, individual and community wellbeing.

Promoting the wellbeing of individuals and communities is fundamental to the work of local government, and is a strong motivator for local councillors everywhere. This report speaks to the heart of what local government is about; supporting a better life for its citizens and helping to build strong and resilient communities, now and over the long term. It considers the role of local government in promoting wellbeing within the context of the challenges and changes local government face today.

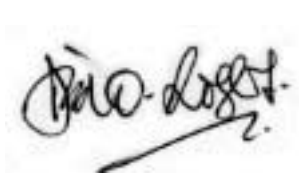
It is a particularly opportune moment to explore the role of local government in promoting wellbeing. The recession continues to impact on individuals and on communities, creating the need to bolster the wellbeing and resilience of local populations. Local government today is facing up to the challenge of unprecedented cuts in expenditure and services, and more than ever must demonstrate cost effectiveness and the economic and social value of its services. Looking at outcomes

from a wellbeing perspective helps us to demonstrate the value of local government.

This thought provoking publication reflects on a positive picture of the new role for local government set out by the coalition government - on the power of general competence, on the proposed role in public health and in coordinating the commissioning of health and social care services and on the opportunities provided by the Big Society agenda.

Drawing on the latest evidence from the field of wellbeing research and the practical experience of local authorities, the report provides a guide to further action across the levels and functions of local government. It is accompanied by a series of expert opinion pieces, and through a series of case studies it shares learning from some of the innovative and exemplary work being undertaken by local authorities and their partners across the country.

This report is designed to stimulate future thinking about the role of local government in promoting wellbeing. I very much welcome the challenges it brings for the sector and for us all as individuals. Promoting wellbeing is, after all, everyone's business.



**Councillor David Rogers OBE**  
Chair, LGA community wellbeing board

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# Preface

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This report has been written for local authority chief executives, leaders and elected members, and also for officers working throughout service departments.

It is also likely to be of interest and relevance to central government departments and to health promotion and improvement specialists working in local government, the NHS and voluntary and community sector organisations.

## How to read this report

We want you to be able to read this report in the way you feel most useful. We have designed it to be read from start to finish, but we have also structured it so that you can be selective based on your particular area of interest or responsibility.

**Part 1** explains the focus of the report. It then explains the latest thinking on wellbeing, and how this applies to the role of local government. It sets out the benefits that councils and their communities can gain by promoting wellbeing. This will be particularly useful if you are new to the wellbeing field.

**Part 2** sets out how action can be taken to promote wellbeing at different levels of government. The priority action areas include: a strategic leadership role for chief executives and leaders; a rethink of service design and the commissioning process by service managers and commissioners; a reconfiguration of community engagement

practices by officers employed throughout local government; operational and cultural change undertaken by HR and procurement officers; and the measurement of wellbeing outcomes by performance teams.

**Part 3** considers how local government can start or build on work to promote wellbeing. It suggests the first steps for councils to take, ways to build capacity and confidence, and wellbeing resources that can help local government to develop its role.

## Supporting material

This report is supported by a collection of online material that offers a number of expert contributions to the arguments found in these pages (see Section 3.3 for a list of topic areas). You can find links to these contributions throughout the report. You can also access the entire collection of expert contributions online, along with the complete set of case studies that we refer to here: [www.idea.gov.uk/wellbeing](http://www.idea.gov.uk/wellbeing)

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# Part 1:

## Making sense of wellbeing, and local government's role

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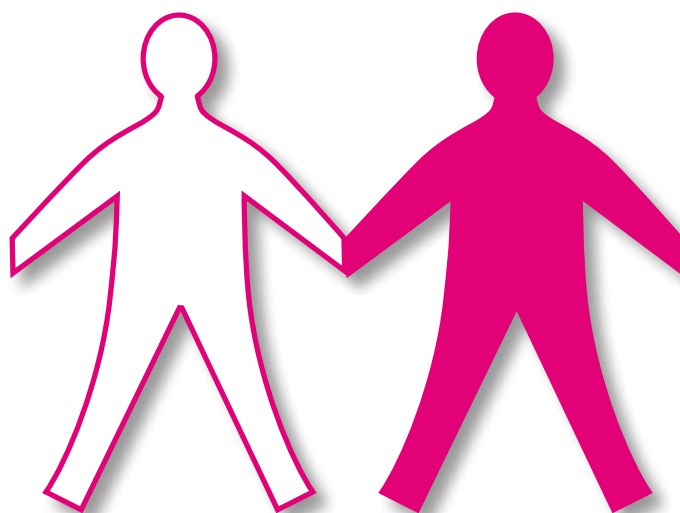
This report speaks to the heart of what local government is about: supporting a better life for people and helping to build resilient communities, now and over the longer term.

Part 1 is in three sections:

- our introduction explains why creating the conditions for wellbeing requires a whole-population focus, including the need to consider nurturing psycho-social wellbeing alongside material wellbeing
- 'understanding wellbeing' explores the qualities of wellbeing and establishes how local government can influence it
- 'the social and economic case' explains how action on wellbeing can help councils to save money and deal with many of the complex issues facing communities (including the adverse economic climate, the threat of climate change, and discrimination).

Together, these sections aim to dispel a common misconception – that wellbeing is first and foremost a health issue to be dealt with by health professionals. We know that the factors underpinning wellbeing are largely social, not medical, in nature. So why do we rely on health practitioners alone to provide the solutions? Several of the most important levers for improving wellbeing – for example planning, transport, education, leisure, and housing – are instruments of local government.

This means that councils and the local partnerships they form have real power to affect change in the wellbeing of our communities.



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# 1.1 Introduction

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Wanting to make a positive difference to people's lives is what motivates many to get involved with local government in the first place. Individuals, families and communities share this aspiration. They want local councils to spend time and resources on the things that will have the greatest positive influence on their lives.

Massive reductions in public sector budgets create an urgent need to bolster the wellbeing and resilience of local populations to prevent ever increasing demand for services – at a time when the fallout from the deepest recession since the 1930s has already been placing severe pressure on many communities.

Although there are many questions still to be answered, the field of wellbeing research has reached a state of relative maturity. We know more than ever before about the many causes and consequences of people doing well and feeling good in life, and about the interventions that are known to make a difference.

Building on the opportunities presented by the Big Society<sup>1</sup> agenda and local government's new responsibilities, this report is the first attempt to apply the wellbeing evidence base to the task of fundamentally re-shaping local government's role.



## Promoting population wellbeing

It has long been recognised that local government is a key player in creating the conditions for material wellbeing. It does this through increasing employment opportunities, regenerating the physical environment and strengthening the local economy. But more recent evidence also highlights the importance of nurturing psycho-social wellbeing in local populations, so that all residents can reach their potential and live a good life.<sup>2</sup>

This report calls for new ways of thinking and working in local government. We need an approach that:

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1 <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/latest-news/2010/05/big-society-50248> [6 August 2010]

2 HM Government (2010) *New Horizons - Confident Communities, Brighter Futures: a framework for developing well-being* (London: Department of Health).

- recognises that the material *and* psycho-social wellbeing of residents is influenced by all the core functions of local government
- acts on wellbeing at the population level, combining some targeted interventions for the benefit of the most vulnerable<sup>3</sup> with a concerted effort to improve outcomes for all.<sup>4,5</sup>

We know from some of the latest evidence on the importance of taking a population-level approach to promoting wellbeing that:

- *only* focusing on those who are experiencing difficulties does not necessarily help to reduce the overall prevalence of deficits and vulnerability for the population as a whole - the causes of problems and inequalities remain the same.<sup>6</sup>
- the number of people with mental health problems in a community relates directly to the average number of symptoms in the local population. This means that intervening at the population level to create the conditions for more people to flourish can be doubly effective. It can do more to enhance wellbeing in general and reduce the number of mental health problems than interventions targeted at specific individuals.<sup>7</sup>

3 This is what the Marmot review of health inequalities refers to as “proportionate universalism”. The report explains that focusing solely on the most disadvantaged will not reduce health inequalities sufficiently. To reduce the steepness of the social gradient in health, actions must be universal - but with a scale and intensity that is proportionate to the level of disadvantage. Marmot M, Allen J, Goldblatt P, Boyce T, McNeish D, Grady M, Geddes I (2010) *Fair Society, Healthy Lives: A Strategic Review of Health Inequalities in England Post-2010*. (London: The Marmot Review). Available at <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/gheg/marmotreview>.

4 In 2008 the UK Government’s Foresight Review on Mental Capital and Wellbeing concluded that government policies “need to nurture the mental capital and wellbeing in the wider population, so that everyone can flourish in their lives”. Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project (2008) Final Project Report (London: The Government Office for Science).

5 The Marmot Review Final Report (2010) *op. cit.*

6 Huppert FA, Baylis N and Keverne B (2005) *The Science of Well-being* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

7 Huppert, F (2009) ‘A new approach to reducing disorder and improving well-being’. *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 4(10) 108-111.

- focusing continually on those labelled as ‘at risk’ or ‘vulnerable’ can undermine the psychological and social wellbeing of those individuals and their communities.<sup>8</sup>
- the more people there are in a community who have high levels of emotional and social wellbeing, the more resilient a community is and the more able it is to support those with acute problems.<sup>9</sup>

Of course, local councils are already working hard (under increasing financial constraints) to improve the lives of their citizens. But more can be done at the population level. Some councils are doing pioneering work that goes beyond their statutory obligations. This includes trials of innovative service-delivery approaches to promoting wellbeing. Other councils are developing and using new indicators of wellbeing to measure outcomes and assess progress.

This report covers these practical examples, together with the latest findings from the field of wellbeing research.

## Is this the right time?

Local councils – whether county, district, unitary, metropolitan, town or parish – face unprecedented challenges. They are experiencing massive reductions in their finances and are striving to make huge efficiency savings at a time when demand on public services is growing as a result of economic recession and demographic changes.

But local government is also experiencing unprecedented opportunities to reshape its role. The Big Society agenda is putting a new spotlight on a key mechanism for improving wellbeing – making people feel

8 Stephens L, Ryan-Collins J, Boyle D (2008) *Co-production: A manifesto for growing the core economy* (London: nef)

9 Friedli L (2009) *Mental Health, Resilience and Inequalities* (Denmark: WHO).



free and powerful enough to help themselves and their own communities. And the additional responsibilities that the Coalition government has set out for local government – responsibilities for health improvement and strategically coordinating the commissioning of public health and social care<sup>10</sup> – mean that promoting all aspects of wellbeing, from good health to strong social networks and local economies, will become an even more central part of local government's work.

Care will need to be taken to ensure that involvement in the Big Society is open to all.<sup>11</sup> As public institutions with links directly into their communities, councils have a pivotal role to play in providing equitable access to resources and promoting wellbeing so that everyone can experience the sense of agency, autonomy and self-confidence to participate.

We have some distance to travel. On the international stage, the UK fares comparatively poorly on a number of indices measuring material and psycho-social wellbeing. It is the fourth most unequal country in the western world.<sup>12</sup> In Europe, the UK is at the bottom of the pile on almost every preventable social problem – including crime, mental ill health, family breakdown, drug abuse and obesity.

When it comes to the psycho-social wellbeing of our children, the UK ranks ninth out of 13 countries in Europe.<sup>13</sup> And levels of trust and belonging among young people aged 16-24 in the UK are the lowest in Europe.<sup>14</sup>

This report argues that there is no better time for local government to begin realising the cost savings and added value generated from pro-actively acting to improve the material and psycho-social wellbeing of its local population. Taking action on wellbeing has the potential both to help insulate councils, their staff and their communities from the worst effects of the adverse economic context, and to build resilience for the future.

We have found that much of what is needed to support local government action to promote wellbeing is already in place, including the Wellbeing Power, the forthcoming power of general competence, and partnership working structures. This means that there is scope for councils to adapt mainstream services cost-effectively rather than requiring new and expensive initiatives. Our aim in this report is therefore to reveal where opportunities exist to effect positive change. We draw on local authorities' own experiences to provide guidance and tips for how to make this happen.

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10 These new local government responsibilities are set out in the health White Paper: Department of Health (2010) *Equity and excellence: Liberating the NHS* (London: Department of Health).

11 Coote A (2010) *Ten Big Questions about the Big Society and ten ways to make the best of it* (London: nef).

12 Wilkinson R and Pickett K (2009) *The Spirit Level: Why more equal societies almost always do better* (London: Penguin Books)

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13 WHO Regional Office for Europe (2008) *Social Cohesion for Mental Well-being among Adolescents* (WHO/HBSC forum 2007 final report).

14 Michaelson J, Abdallah S, Steuer N, Thompson S and Marks N (2009) *National Accounts of Well-being: Bringing real wealth onto the balance sheet* (London: nef).

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# 1.2. Understanding wellbeing

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People's lives are most acutely influenced at the local level – in their homes, at school, in their places of work and in their neighbourhoods. This is also where citizens are most likely to come into contact with services and support mechanisms to improve their lives. There is enormous potential, therefore, for local government to influence the wellbeing of its local population.

## Making sense of wellbeing

'Wellbeing' is a term that has cropped up increasingly frequently over recent years, in politicians' speeches, in policy documents, in mental and physical health strategies and in the names of local strategic partnership (LSP) sub-groups all over England. It was also given prominence in legislation: the Local Government Act (2000) granted local authorities the power to promote social, economic and environmental wellbeing in their areas.

In asking the public about wellbeing, it becomes clear that people tend to have a good understanding of its various dimensions. Typically they mention practical considerations (such as health and financial issues)<sup>15</sup> and subjective feelings and emotions (such as a sense of happiness and hope for the future).<sup>16</sup> They also position

their own wellbeing according to their personal experience of family relationships, friendships and community.<sup>17</sup>

But because 'wellbeing' is a term that can be used to mean many different things, there is a risk that it will end up losing its meaning altogether. In view of this it is worth recalling the various existing policy definitions of wellbeing<sup>18</sup> to inform how we should define and improve it in a local government context. They share some key characteristics:

1. Wellbeing is about how people experience their own lives, so for example, people must feel able to achieve things or feel they have a sense of purpose to have wellbeing.
2. Wellbeing is more than the absence of problems or illness. This requires a shift in focus from what can go wrong in people's lives to what makes them go well.
3. Wellbeing is about the personal and the social, so improving the wellbeing of local populations needs to involve a strengthening of local social connections, support networks and the sense of

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officers working on wellbeing as part of this research, and to Aked J, Steuer N, Lawlor E and Spratt S (2009) *Backing the Future: why investing in children is good for us all* (London: nef).

17 We refer to discussions that took place with local authority officers working on wellbeing as part of this research, and to Bacon *et al.* (2010) *op. cit.*

18 nef reviewed a range of policy definitions in a report for NHS Northamptonshire's Flourishing Communities Programme. The definitions reviewed include those of the Whitehall Wellbeing Working Group (W3G), a cross-department committee established to fulfil commitments in the UK's 2005 sustainable development strategy; the Foresight Project on Mental Capital and Wellbeing (2008) and the 2010 government report *New Horizons*.

15 We refer here to discussions that took place with local authority officers working on wellbeing as part of this research, and to Bacon N, Brophy M, Mguni N, Mulgan G and Shandro A (2010) *The State of Happiness: Can public policy shape people's wellbeing and resilience?* (London: The Young Foundation).

16 We refer to discussions that took place with local authority

belonging that make up the social fabric of communities.

4. Wellbeing is more than happiness. The aim of local government, therefore, should not be to set out to make people happy, but to create the conditions that enable citizens and communities to do well in life, to flourish.

If local government's role is to create the conditions for wellbeing, what aspects of wellbeing should it focus on?

### Material wellbeing

Research has found that the material and economic circumstances of people's lives have a direct impact on their overall wellbeing:

- Certain physical and socio-economic features of place – accessible health provision, learning and employment sites, a strong local economy, local shops, public transport, accessible natural environments – help people to live good lives.<sup>19</sup>
- By contrast, poor quality environments, poverty, spatial inequalities and high levels of crime are known to undermine people's wellbeing, their capacity to flourish and their resilience.<sup>20</sup> Extreme events or 'shocks', such as economic recession or flooding, also present risk factors for wellbeing.

### Psycho-social wellbeing

People's sense of how their lives are going, and the strength of relationships that sustain community life, are strongly influenced by psychological and social wellbeing:

Having a positive outlook in life and feeling good about oneself – the elements that make up emotional wellbeing – directly promote a

more positive experience of life.<sup>21</sup>

Resilience – the ability of individuals or communities to cope positively with change, challenge, adversity and shock – can reduce the impact of risk factors in the external environment, such as the recent recession.<sup>22</sup>

Feeling connected to others, feeling in control, feeling capable, and having a sense of purpose all contribute to enabling a person to flourish.<sup>23</sup>

## Inequalities and wellbeing

The factors driving both material and psycho-social wellbeing are not equally distributed among local populations.<sup>24</sup> Some individuals or population groups live in better-quality housing than others. Some have fewer money concerns. Some have stronger support networks. Some feel valued, respected and included in a way that others do not. Some have the time and facilities they need to engage in activities to promote their wellbeing.

Wellbeing is highly dependent, therefore, on the distribution of social, economic and environmental resources in any population. The prevalence of social or cultural discrimination (on grounds of social class, gender or ethnicity, for example) impedes equality in the distribution of social determinants of wellbeing.

In one of our online contributions ([www.idea.gov.uk/wellbeing](http://www.idea.gov.uk/wellbeing)) Lynne Friedli distinguishes between "efforts to address the symptoms of inequality - for example, the steep social

19 Aked J, Michaelson J, Steuer N (2010) *Good Foundations: Towards a low carbon, high well-being built environment* (London: nef).

20 Friedli (2009) *op. cit.*

21 Beddington J, Cooper C, Field J, Goswami U, Huppert F, Jenkins R, Jones H, Kirkwood T, Sahakian B and Thomas S (2008) 'The mental wealth of nations' *Nature* 455 1057-1060.

22 Lambeth First, Lambeth Council (2005) *Lambeth Mental Health Promotion Strategy 2005-2008 - Promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing in Lambeth: Achieving impact through partnership* (London: Lambeth First and Lambeth Council).

23 Thompson S and Marks N (2008) *Measuring Well-being in Policy: Issues and applications* (London: nef).

24 Friedli (2009) *op. cit.*

gradient in health and education – and the wider strategic challenge of reducing the gap between rich and poor”. Research suggests that high levels of inequality are damaging to communities and society as a whole.<sup>25</sup> There is growing evidence that relative deprivation and social injustice erode mental wellbeing and increase stress,<sup>26</sup> and some have argued that the differences between us put a strain on social relations, by reducing trust and interaction.<sup>27</sup>

The conclusion from all this is clear: local government cannot improve the wellbeing of its local population without directly addressing inequalities.

## A new direction for local government?

Wellbeing is sometimes seen by local government as the remit of those concerned with health provision. But health services are primarily designed to treat illnesses, not to address the broader aspects of people’s lives that create the conditions of wellbeing. Intervening only at the point when someone has become unwell is unlikely to be the most effective way to achieve significant and enduring change. To fulfil local government’s forthcoming responsibility for public health improvement, wellbeing will have to become central to local government’s agenda and no longer solely a matter to be dealt with by those with ‘health’ in their job titles.

Dr John Ashton, Joint Director of Public Health for NHS Cumbria, argues in his online contribution that the pursuit of a wellbeing agenda will result in a welcome return to the origins of local government. Given their success in delivering services, Ashton argues that local authorities have

come to think of service delivery as their core business, and have stopped paying enough attention to the wider determinants of health. A population-level focus on wellbeing has the potential to improve outcomes for all and reduce inequality significantly.

Joint directors of public health have a key role to play here, acting as a point of partnership between the worlds of health and local government. But this is an agenda that members and officers throughout a local authority must embrace to make it truly effective. Focusing on both the material and psycho-social aspects of wellbeing does not require an about-turn. Many councils have been moving in the right direction. The long-standing interest in the importance of ‘quality of life’ has firmly established local government as a key player in creating the conditions for material wellbeing. However, more recent evidence suggests that material wealth alone cannot be thought of as synonymous with wellbeing:

- Income produces diminishing wellbeing returns: the richer you are, the less you will find that additional wealth increases your wellbeing.
- Traditional risk factors such as low income cannot tell us why some people do well, even in the face of adversity.<sup>28</sup>
- Many of the characteristics associated with material wealth – including materialism, consumerism, high levels of personal debt and ‘spatial inequalities’<sup>29</sup> – have unwelcome psychological and social impacts.<sup>30,31</sup>

25 Aked et al. (2009) *op.cit.*

26 Friedli (2009) *op. cit*

27 Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) *op. cit.*

28 Friedli (2009) *op. cit.*

29 The concentration of wealth and poverty in separate neighbourhoods

30 Marks N and Shah H (2004) *A well-being manifesto for a flourishing society* (London: nef).

31 Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2009) *Contemporary social evils* (UK: The Policy Press).

- Research has shown that the most ‘pro-social’ neighbourhoods are not among the poorest or the richest. The level of support someone receives from their social networks is what predicts their altruistic behaviour.<sup>32</sup>

The Young Foundation recently pointed out that “decades of economic growth have created a society which by past standards is materially abundant” but also observed that “society’s ability to meet people’s psychological and psycho-social needs appears to have declined”.<sup>33</sup>

Greater emphasis on psycho-social wellbeing represents an important shift in focus, which better recognises, just as the Local Government Act does, the complex range of social, environmental and economic factors that promote wellbeing. It requires more of a focus on people’s subjective experience of their lives, which requires that councils think not just about what they do but also the way they do it. As a minimum, it suggests that more attention should be paid to the manner in which services are designed and delivered, if councils are to ensure that local people really experience their lives as going well.

Working to treat mental illness may be the remit of specialist providers. But wellbeing is everybody’s business. It is relevant to all tiers of local government, whether county, district, unitary, metropolitan, town or parish councils. Service areas, from education and strategic planning to housing and leisure services, all have the scope to influence the wellbeing of local residents, for better or worse.



32 Wilson DS, O'Brien DT, Sesma A (2009) Human prosociality from an evolutionary perspective: variation and correlations at a city-wide scale *Evolution and Human Behaviour* 30: 190-200.

33 Bacon *et al.* (2010) *op. cit.*

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# 1.3. The social and economic case

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The evidence base on wellbeing began to have a significant influence on national policy-making under the previous government<sup>34,35</sup> and the signs are that it will continue to do so.<sup>36</sup> It is also being welcomed by many councils keen to apply the latest thinking to their work. However, some are concerned that the increased focus on psycho-social wellbeing and population level interventions represents yet another additional agenda, which will only add to existing pressures.

But it can be argued that a focus on wellbeing is a crucial part of improving performance in many existing areas of work. Crucially, a wellbeing approach to policy and service design can enable councils to do more with limited resources. The key planks of the business case for a focus on wellbeing are that it can:

- limit the long-term impacts of the recession on communities
- help achieve positive outcomes efficiently
- reduce discrimination and stigma for those experiencing poor wellbeing and mental health
- encourage positive behaviour change.

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34 Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project (2008) *op. cit.*

35 HM Government (2010) *op. cit.*

36 For example, the government's Coalition Agreement document makes a number of references to the need to address 'wellbeing and quality of life'. Cabinet Office (2010) *The Coalition: Our programme for government* (London: The Cabinet Office).

## Limiting the long-term impacts of the recession

While financial reports indicate that the UK economy has officially come out of recession,<sup>37</sup> many communities are facing significant psychological and social pressures for the foreseeable future.<sup>38,39</sup> Like any period of prolonged economic downturn, the recent recession is likely to be associated with increased unemployment, homelessness and debt – all of which contribute to feelings of uncertainty about the future and undermine wellbeing. The upshot of this is likely to be an increase in immediate need, combined with a greater proportion of the population experiencing lower wellbeing or 'languishing'. When this occurs people are at a higher risk of developing more serious problems.

To survive lean economic times, councils will need to provide immediate help to communities with significant needs, while working to limit the impact of the recession and spending cuts on the wellbeing of the

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37 BBC News online (27 January 2010) <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8479639.stm>.

38 Tunstall R and Fenton A (2009) *Communities in Recession: The impact on deprived neighbourhoods* (York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation) - see <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/communities-recession-impact-neighbourhoods.pdf> (19 May 2010)

39 The Audit Commission describes three waves of a recession: economic, social, and unequal recovery respectively. The social wave is a long period in which output growth returns, but job losses continue. Unemployment remains high, bringing with it increasing housing, health and domestic problems. Audit Commission (2009) *When it Comes to the Crunch... How councils are responding to the recession* (London: Audit Commission) – see <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/AuditCommissionReports/NationalStudies/whenitcomestothechunch12aug2009REP.pdf> (19 May 2010).

remainder of the population. Unless this kind of dual action is taken, local government risks storing up problems for several years down the line, when public spending is likely to be equally or even more stretched.

One way for local government to respond to significant reductions in its budgets is to focus on reducing the amount spent on tackling problems that could be prevented.<sup>40</sup> In the spirit of a preventative approach, a focus on wellbeing is less concerned with the symptoms of problems and far more interested in the underlying causes.

As the 'River Story' attributed to community organiser Saul Alinsky illustrates, a strategy aimed wholly at helping those who have fallen in the river cannot also stop the next lot of people falling in. To do this, local government has to understand why anyone is falling into the river in the first place. It has to focus some of its efforts 'upstream'. Spending a little money upfront to prevent problems has the potential to save large amounts down the line in the budgets of front-line services. For example:

Promoting positive mental health in children with moderate health could save £75,000 per case in lifetime costs. The costs of initiatives to achieve these savings (parenting programmes, for example) are low, ranging from £1,350 to £6,000 per child.<sup>41</sup>

In populations near green space (parks, woodland, open spaces), the income-related health gap is half what it is in populations living with fewest green spaces nearby.<sup>42</sup>

This suggests that reliance on local services such as housing or health provision could be reduced for populations living in green environments.

It has been estimated that investment in children's centres can bring wellbeing benefits to children and parents, ultimately delivering over £4 worth of benefits to society for every pound invested. Value is generated from preventing spend on provision like alternative school arrangements as children grow older.<sup>43</sup>

While many councils do experience high population churn, with large numbers of people moving in and out of the area, many people live in the same locality for most of their lives. This means that the lifetime costs of not preventing problems pose a significant challenge to any local authority committed to making good use of council taxpayers' money.

Recent research by nef calculated that the cost of the UK's preventable problems amounts to £161 billion each year.<sup>44</sup> It is undoubtedly the case that these social problems – such as crime, substance misuse, mental health problems, teenage births and obesity – have a knock-on effect on expenditure at a local level through dealing with damage to the built environment, through providing housing and through social work costs. Work to calculate the costs and savings to local authorities of a wellbeing approach would significantly help this debate and provide insights into ways of working. Preliminary work at nef, for example, indicates that savings accrue to different departments than those who make the initial investment, highlighting opportunities for new approaches to commissioning and new ways of recognising financial and other returns between stakeholders (see section 2.2 – 'Commissioning for wellbeing outcomes').

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40 LG Improvement and Development (2009) *Valuing Health: Developing a business case for health improvement* (London: LG Improvement and Development) - see <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelid=15246382> (19 May 2010).

41 Friedli L and Parsonage M (2009) *Promoting Mental Health and Preventing Mental Illness: The economic case for investment in Wales* (Wales: Mental Health Promotion Network).

42 Friedli and Parsonage (2009) *ibid.*

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43 Aked *et al.*

44 *ibid.*

Michael Parsonage of the Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health suggests in his online contribution that “effective prevention and early intervention may offer substantial scope for ‘quick wins’”. But, he similarly concludes that this will mean allocating resources in lean times differently (see the box on ‘Spending on wellbeing in the current economic climate’).

The experience of Hampshire County Council in case study 1 shows how focusing explicitly on the wellbeing of older people makes economic sense. The incentive for getting it right is a ‘double prize’ – more wellbeing for all, and at the same time the sustainability of public services is safeguarded for the future.

## Spending on wellbeing in the current economic climate

Some key considerations for senior commissioners and service managers include:

### **Prioritise and follow the evidence**

The public mental health agenda is potentially very broad, and it is unrealistic to pursue improvements on every front. Prioritisation should be based on the available evidence, which suggests strongly that many of the ‘best buys’ are to be found in programmes aimed at children and young people. Some workplace-based interventions, and low-cost environmental improvements such as noise reduction, are also particularly effective.

### **Avoid short-term cuts**

Temporary reductions in funding are likely to reduce the effectiveness of established programmes. One review of evidence on interventions in the early years found that among the key characteristics of effective programmes are that they are long-term in nature and sustained by committed funding.<sup>45</sup>

### **Implementation matters**

It is a false economy to cut corners on the implementation of evidence-based programmes, for example by employing staff with inadequate training. One review of mental health promotion programmes found that the outcomes for well-implemented programmes are typically two to three times better than for poorly implemented ones.<sup>46</sup>

### **Mainstreaming**

Many things affect mental health, and better mental health has many potential benefits. A concern for mental health and wellbeing should therefore be everybody’s business. A key role for local government should be to foster this wider perspective and encourage the mainstreaming of wellbeing in as wide a range of settings and organisations as possible.

For more information contact Michael Parsonage, Ex-Treasury Economist and Senior Policy Adviser, Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health.

45 Titterton M, Smart H and Hill M (2002) ‘Mental health promotion and the early years: the evidence base for interventions’ *Journal of Mental Health Promotion*, 1:10-24.

46 Durlak J and DuPre E (2008) ‘Implementation matters: a review of research on the influence of implementation on program outcomes and the factors influencing implementation’ *American Journal of Community Psychology* 41:327-350.



### Case study 1: The business case for gardening support in Hampshire

The county council in Hampshire has commissioned a gardening support service through Supporting People in response to what local older people said they needed. The results of the Older People's Wellbeing Strategy consultation had identified support with gardening as one of the main priorities for older people, to enable them to remain independent in their own homes. At the same time, Supporting People's strategic review of older people's services highlighted a similar need.

The gardening support service is open to anyone over the age of 60, and each can have six two-hour visits a year with two levels of payments (depending on benefit status). The aim of the service is to encourage people to enjoy their gardens and participate in their upkeep. This can happen either by improving people's skills or by re-modelling their gardens so that they need less maintenance.

A garden can be an important contributor to a sense of wellbeing. But when gardens are neglected and overgrown, this can have negative effects on an individual's wellbeing. It can result in homes becoming the targets of crime, which affects both the individual and the whole community.

One of the biggest challenges for local councils is how to justify the expenditure associated with a wellbeing approach at a time when budgets are getting squeezed. Hampshire County Council found that the financial 'buy-in' for gardening support becomes clear when you look at research findings showing that 77 per cent of those who enter supported accommodation do so because they cannot manage their gardens.<sup>47</sup> By responding with a low-level intervention to support older people, the council realised that it could not only improve wellbeing but also possibly delay the point at which residents may need more intensive, and expensive, care.

The support service has been running for six months, and examples of client feedback reflect the wellbeing value of providing gardening support:

"The hedge especially looks better, as it had not been done since my husband died in 1997, and the front garden looks as if someone cares."

"They have given me back my life - thank you so much."

For further information contact Alex Burn, Head of Older People's Wellbeing Team, Hampshire County Council.

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<sup>47</sup> Spurgeon T (2007) 'Creating gardening independence – working with older and disabled people at home' *Growthpoint: Journal of Thrive* 108: 9-11.

## Helping to achieve positive outcomes efficiently

Positive wellbeing has been associated, among other things, with healthier lifestyles, better physical health, improved recovery from illness, higher educational attainment, improved employment and earnings, better relationships, more social cohesion, and less crime.<sup>48</sup> These are outcomes all local authorities, and their residents, would welcome.

In striving to meet these outcomes we often focus on the ‘what’ (the numbers of people smoking, the numbers of children with antisocial behaviour orders (ASBOs) or the numbers of low GCSE scores) and forget to think about the ‘why’ (how positive people feel about the future, if they feel they trust and belong to their local community, how much they believe in themselves). In fact, it is often small improvements in people’s psychological or social wellbeing that lead to a positive change in outcomes.<sup>49</sup>

Because a wellbeing approach encourages a more rounded understanding of how residents experience their lives, actions to improve the wellbeing of the local population can contribute to a range of policy outcomes that different council departments are working towards. With a single initiative, goals across different departments can be realised. Through urban design and transport policy, for example, local government can encourage people to walk or cycle, which improves physical and mental health as well as reducing carbon emissions.<sup>50,51</sup>

48 Friedli (2009) *op. cit.*

49 Aked *et al.* (2009) *op. cit.*

50 Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (2009) *Future Health: Sustainable places for health and well-being* (London: CABE) – see <http://www.cabe.org.uk/files/future-health.pdf>.

51 Michaelson *et al.* (2009) *op. cit.*

‘Win-win’ opportunities such as these show why initiatives to improve wellbeing are effective points of intervention that can have a ripple effect across the business of the council. They can save councils money and make better use of scarce resources.

## Reducing discrimination and tackling stigma

For those people who do experience poor wellbeing and mental health, strategies to promote population-level wellbeing can help to reduce discrimination and tackle stigma.

For example:

- By promoting wellbeing at the population level, councils can increase understanding about what it is to ‘be well’ across the whole population. Creating this understanding can reduce discrimination against those who have poor mental health.
- The wellbeing lens looks at someone as a whole person, not defined only by their problems or needs. This helps to tackle stigma. It encourages an assets-based approach that starts first and foremost with people’s energy, skills, interests, knowledge and life experience.
- Greater understanding of the wide range of factors that influence mental health and wellbeing increases awareness that mental health and mental illness are social indicators, needing social solutions. Influential factors such as sense of community, the quality of the built environment and levels of income inequality cannot be tackled by individuals alone.
- As Jeff Walker from Mind explains in case study 2, the added value of wellbeing promotion and prevention initiatives is that they focus much more on local activities

that everyone can be a part of, such as gardening, singing and timebanks. This makes these initiatives non-stigmatising.

### **Case study 2: Promoting wellbeing among mental health service users**

Can wellbeing promotion help mental health service users? This is an issue that often concerns mental health service providers and users. Jeff Walker, who has experienced mental ill-health and now works as Wellbeing Programme Manager for Mind, has strong views on this issue. He feels that wellbeing initiatives can benefit both the local community and mental health service users and ex-users by using a non-stigmatising approach. He believes local authorities are well placed to help prevent mental health problems by delivering such initiatives.

Jeff suffered from depression over a long period without accessing mental health services. He became very unwell but his subsequent involvement with Bristol Mind and the attention paid to nurturing his own wellbeing (through physical activity, for example) has helped his recovery.

Jeff is now a passionate advocate of local, universal wellbeing initiatives that are based around key local authority functions such as leisure, parks and open spaces, and libraries. He points to a number of advantages in this approach:

“The wellbeing approach is more inclusive – it doesn’t matter whether you see yourself as a service user or just a member of the local community. It is particularly good for people who may not be using any service but are vulnerable or languishing.

“Access is easier, as the opportunities are provided in mainstream, local and non-stigmatising environments.

“The whole population can be reached locally, but the offer can be tailored to local need. For some ethnic minorities a non-stigmatising approach is essential if anyone is to come anywhere near.”

Jeff is acutely aware of the danger that people with an established mental illness may not want to participate, and may resist attempts to offer ‘their’ services to a wider population. This may require a model of specialist support being offered while still encouraging access to universal wellbeing services.

Jeff is excited about the role local authorities can play in developing initiatives such as reading groups in local libraries, walking groups in local parks and dog walking initiatives. These are all approaches that can bring together diverse groups including both service users and non-service users. He said: “Local authorities have a crucial role – most local authority functions are not associated with mental health services. Their spectrum of responsibility is ideally suited to universal wellbeing interventions.”

Jeff Walker was interviewed by Dr Andrew McCulloch, CEO of the Mental Health Foundation.

## Encouraging positive behaviour change

Giving greater emphasis to wellbeing is gaining ground as a mechanism for encouraging behaviour change. It is increasingly recognised that many of the outcomes which local government aims to achieve, especially around public health and environmental behaviours, involve a shift in the attitudes and behaviours of the local population. Taking a wellbeing approach has been found to be helpful in engaging people about changing both health and environmental behaviours.

On the whole people do not like change. By taking a positive approach to focus on what people in a local population are doing well, councils can provide feedback that incentivises certain behaviours, like exercise. This strategy is likely to be more effective at shifting the 'norm' than one which emphasises how little exercise is taking place; something which leaves people feeling comfortable that their low exercise levels are fairly normal. Similarly, by focusing on what people stand to gain, rather than what they need to give up, councils can support behaviour change. Caerphilly County Borough Council, for example, has linked its sustainability agenda to wellbeing through its 'Living Better, Using Less' strategy. This is helping to engage residents in pro-environmental behaviours through the things that really matter to them – the way they experience their lives.<sup>52</sup>

A focus on increasing people's psychological and social wellbeing can be particularly helpful in encouraging positive health-related behaviours. As Professor Richard Wilkinson said when giving evidence to the

House of Commons Select Committee in 2008: "Health-related behaviour is all about resolutions to give up things you do not want to give up and do the things you don't want to do. You cannot do that, you cannot make the resolutions and stick to them, unless you are feeling on top of life."<sup>53</sup>

## Summing up the social and economic case for wellbeing

A pro-active approach that works at the whole-population level to create the conditions that enable people to flourish will help local authorities to achieve some of their most challenging goals. As Dr Marcia Brophy of The Young Foundation explains in her online contribution, this type of approach helps prevent the kind of risk factors that lead to poor wellbeing and promotes the material and psycho-social conditions that lead to a positive experience of life. It can strengthen community networks, build resilience and influence positive behaviour change. This is likely to prevent problems such as crime, improve educational and economic outcomes, and ultimately reduce reliance (and spending) on frontline services.

<sup>52</sup> Abdallah S, Thompson S, Michaelson J, Marks N and Steuer N (2009) *The Happy Planet Index 2.0: Why good lives don't have to cost the Earth* (London: nef).

<sup>53</sup> Campbell F (ed) for LG Improvement and Development (2010) *The Social Determinants of Health and the Role of Local Government* (London: LG Improvement and Development).

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# Part 2: Making it happen

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The following sections of this report address the question of how local government can begin to act on wellbeing at the population level and make the vision of ‘wellbeing for all’ a reality.

These sections, under the collective banner ‘Making it happen’, look at the role that local government can play in supporting the flourishing of individuals and communities in five key areas:

- strategic leadership
- services and commissioning
- strengthening communities
- organisational level activity
- measuring wellbeing outcomes.

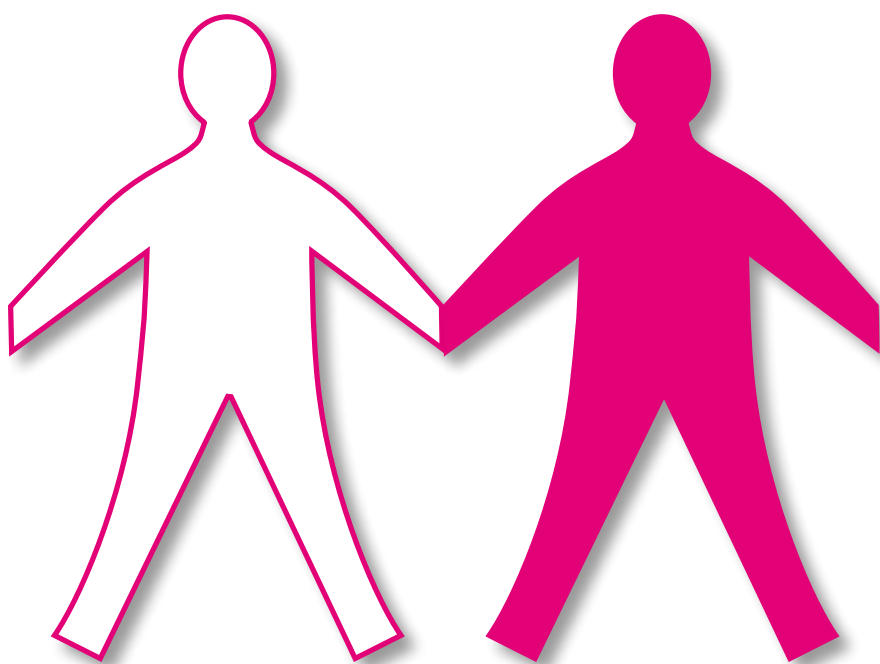
Each section draws on the experiences of local authorities. The examples and case studies are likely to be of particular interest to local authorities looking to respond to the vision set out by the Big Society in a way that supports sustainable and equitable wellbeing.

These sections highlight a number of mechanisms – existing and new – which support local government to act on wellbeing. These include:

- The Local Government Act 2000, which empowers local authorities to promote the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of an area and the new power of general competence.
- Legislative changes set out in the Local Government and Public Involvement Act 2007 and the Duty to Involve (2009) which enable local authorities to devolve power to local communities.
- The proposed new responsibilities for local government in public health, as set out in the Health White Paper (2010).
- Local area partnership working, which can help ensure that a wellbeing lens is applied both to a council’s policies and services and to the work of its partner organisations and agencies.
- The Total Place pilots which encouraged innovation by re-imagining service provision across a geographical area. This type of ‘whole area’ budgeting approach provides opportunities to think how a wellbeing approach might be built into new ways of conceiving, designing and delivering services.

- Joint strategic needs assessments (JSNAs), which focus on early intervention and prevention, and the current development of joint strategic asset assessments (JSAAs), which are intended to focus attention and energy on the real needs and assets of an area, rather than just on the delivery of traditional services.

As this section will illustrate, the foundations for local government action on wellbeing have been laid. Permission has been granted. Many of the solutions are there to be found in legislative and policy frameworks. Their use is set to be reinforced by the government's vision for a Big Society. And some councils are already beginning to innovate. For others, it is time to act.



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# 2.1. Strategic leadership

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As direction from the centre diminishes, strong strategic leadership at local level will become ever more important to ensure that local government's additional scope for innovation is used as far as possible to improve wellbeing. This section sets out why leadership and strategic oversight are essential for making action on wellbeing part of the day-to-day business of a council. It explores the levers that leaders and senior managers have available to them and the actions they can take to:

- position wellbeing as an overarching framework
- allocate resources differently
- make innovative use of local authority powers and structures.

## Effective leadership

Leaders, elected members, chief executives and directors all have a critical role to play in making greater wellbeing for all residents and communities an aspiration that the council can deliver on.

To date, it is probably fair to say that much of the innovative and exciting activity around wellbeing in local government has relied on the initiative and enthusiasm of individual officers, managers and front-line staff who see the benefit of making wellbeing a central goal of the council's activities. Other work has been driven by external partners working with local government, such as primary care trusts (PCTs).

Engagement with people at the top of the organisation on these issues can be difficult, especially when it comes to practical support and encouragement for action.<sup>54</sup> The relative lack of senior support and involvement makes the initiatives so far all the more impressive. But the experiences of 'early adopters' highlights what a difference senior-level buy-in could make. Where there has been clear leadership on the issue, it has been possible to give wellbeing a central role in council strategy. Sir Richard Leese, Leader of Manchester City Council, explains in an online contribution based on his experience:

"While there is certainly still room to increase happiness by increasing wealth, we know that wealth on its own is insufficient. If the city and its neighbourhoods are lacking a sense of wellbeing, residents will move away and take their wealth with them...In Manchester we have a very clear definition of what we mean by wellbeing: increasing aspiration, improving optimism and fostering resilience. Wellbeing through this lens shows that there are tangible outcomes for local government in addressing wellbeing and happiness."

Local authorities are arguably best placed to be the ultimate custodians of citizens' wellbeing, because of their wide-ranging remit and involvement in people's lives. The challenge for council leaders is to set a compelling overarching vision (for example, as part of an overarching local strategy document such as a sustainable community

<sup>54</sup> Lambeth First (2009) *op. cit.*

strategy, or similar). This needs to be broad enough to be relevant to all departments and partners and specific enough in its objectives to be integrated into the work of LSPs, strategies and objectives.

In Liverpool the importance of wellbeing has been elevated by making 2010 the Year of Health and Wellbeing. As well as having buy-in at senior level in the city council, this initiative is being supported by a wide range of public, private, and voluntary sector and community organisations (see case study 3).

### **Case study 3: The Year of Health and Wellbeing in Liverpool**

Following on from the success of Liverpool's year as European Capital of Culture in 2008, and recommendations from Liverpool's Health is Wealth Commission, Liverpool City Council and Liverpool Primary Care Trust developed the 2010 Year of Health and Wellbeing programme.

To help drive the programme forward, a stakeholder steering group and an operational working group were established, reporting to the LSP and regional health boards. Members hold senior positions, including the executive member for health in the council and the assistant chief executive of Mersey Care NHS Trust. The membership also represents a wide range of sectors.

Through an interactive arts and cultural engagement process, which presented communities and local authority partners with an opportunity to shape the year, 13 work streams have been identified. Some activities that are planned or underway include:

- the country's first accredited workplace wellbeing charter, which has been warmly welcomed by public, private and third sector employers
- the use of singing to reduce the prevalence of asthma attacks among children, to reduce levels of blood pressure in adults and to improve recovery time among stroke patients
- incorporating health and wellbeing information, advice and referrals into the Healthy Homes Programme, aimed at improving living conditions for vulnerable residents
- the development by Merseyside Transport Partnership of a new local transport plan with a focus on walking and cycling to increase physical activity, cut carbon emissions and increase access to employment, education and services.

The Year of Health and Wellbeing has already led to a real transformation in the way partners from all sectors are prioritising health and wellbeing as key strategic goals. The use of the 'Five Ways to Well-being' (see Appendix) is being adopted widely as a framework for improving wellbeing by numerous organisations, including Mersey Fire and Merseyside Dance. The year has also inspired many local community events and activities, drawn together on a website [www.2010healthandwellbeing.org.uk](http://www.2010healthandwellbeing.org.uk).

For further information contact Robert Corbett, City Treasurer, Liverpool City Council or Catherine Reynolds, Strategic Lead, Public Mental Health, Liverpool PCT.



## The role of elected members

It is no secret that many councillors are over-worked and spend much of their time dealing with issues raised by individual residents. A focus on wellbeing presents an opportunity to change their role to be less about 'picking up the pieces' and more about working towards a positive future. Our consultations with elected members suggest they see themselves as having a role in councils' activity around wellbeing. They have noted that they can add value in a number of important ways, such as:

- Being prepared to push at the executive level for a focus on the needs of people with poor wellbeing or mental health, particularly to highlight the fundamental role local government plays in influencing the quality of local jobs, inequalities, cross-cutting health issues and local support networks.<sup>55</sup>
- Considering setting up a cross-party task force on wellbeing issues.<sup>56</sup> This could involve writing reports to the council leader and cabinet members on key wellbeing issues affecting the local area, with practical suggestions for action.
- Initiating cross-party campaigns on specific wellbeing issues, involving residents and the local press in building up momentum for change.<sup>57</sup> These are also likely to involve the organisations with key roles to play in the Big Society agenda: co-ops, mutuals, charities and social enterprises.

- Lobbying for structural changes within the council to reflect people's experience of local life, as opposed to the internal processes and functions of local government. During his time as an elected member at Camden Council, Alexis Rowell lobbied for over two years for an assistant director for sustainability, to increase the influence of sustainability issues in decision-making processes. His longer-term aim was for a department for ecology (minimisation of natural resource use), resilience and wellbeing.<sup>58</sup>
- Raising issues with external bodies and partners – such as the LGA, central government, the police and strategic health authorities – to win practical and public support for local government's role in promoting population wellbeing.<sup>59</sup>

Linking to networks such as Local Improvement and Developments healthy communities peer network, to learn about existing initiatives in other parts of the country and good national initiatives that can be promoted locally.<sup>60,61</sup>

## The need for strategic oversight

We know that the factors determining wellbeing are wide-ranging. They fall under the remit of every department in the council. This means that the policies and activities of all directorates and departments are likely to have an impact on population wellbeing, for better or worse.

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55 Thanks for this suggestion goes to Councillor Graham Gibbens, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services at Kent County Council.

56 Rowell A (2010) *Communities, Councils and a Low Carbon Future: What we can do if governments won't* (London: Green Books).

57 *ibid.*

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58 *ibid.*

59 Thanks for this suggestion goes to Councillor Graham Gibbens, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services at Kent County Council.

60 Thanks for this suggestion go to Councillor Graham Gibbens, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services at Kent County Council.

61 For more information see the LG Improvement and Development Healthy Communities Programme <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageld=13633767> (19 May 2010).

There is therefore a clear need for strategic oversight, to ensure that different strategies and policies work together to produce improvements in material and psycho-social wellbeing at the population level. Where this does not happen, wellbeing gains in one area of local life may be cancelled out by losses elsewhere. For example, the economic policy of a council may advocate the use of compulsory purchase orders to get small businesses and homeowners to sell their land to developers for town centre renewal, while at the same time some council directorates are working hard to promote distinctiveness, a sense of belonging and good community relations.<sup>62</sup> A mechanism that ensured the alignment of all council policies towards wellbeing goals would avoid conflicts such as this. As Liverpool's Joint Strategic Framework for Public Mental Health states:

“Managing the implementation of government policy across wellbeing, health and social care, community regeneration and social inclusion at a local level requires an overarching strategic approach so that change becomes purposeful, manageable and coherent.”<sup>63</sup>

In 2005, Lambeth LSP offered the first example of an overarching strategic approach (see case study 4). To date, it represents the most comprehensive example of local partners working together to align programmes of work and locally defined goals (as had been set out in their local area agreement [LAA] targets) to wellbeing objectives, as identified by the local community.

Lambeth's strategy tackled the wide inconsistencies in the efforts of different parts of the council to improve wellbeing. As with the initiative in Liverpool, one of the biggest challenges was to establish a sense of common purpose among all the stakeholders involved.<sup>64</sup> Lambeth has found that even with the strategies in place, it is crucial to find senior-level sponsors who will ensure that wellbeing objectives form part of mainstream service planning, commissioning and delivery throughout all departments.<sup>65</sup>

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62 Minton A (2009) *Ground Control: Fear and happiness in the 21<sup>st</sup> century city* (London: Penguin).

63 Liverpool First, Liverpool City Council, Liverpool PCT (2009) *Mental Health is Everyone's Business: the Joint Strategic Framework for Public Mental Health 2009-2012*.

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64 *ibid.*

65 Lambeth First (2009) *op. cit.*

#### Case study 4: A strategic focus on wellbeing in Lambeth

In 2005 Lambeth LSP launched its pioneering Mental Health and Wellbeing Promotion Programme (2005-2008)<sup>66</sup>, and this was updated in 2009 to form the Wellbeing and Happiness in Lambeth Programme 2009-2012.<sup>67</sup> Implementation of the council's strategy is led by the LSP, with actions mapped against each of the four LSP theme groups (health and wellbeing, economic development, children and young people, safer Lambeth) and against LAA targets.

Critical to the development of Lambeth's latest programme was the use of a participatory process to arrive at a set of principles and areas for action. These are based on the aspirations and views of people living and working in Lambeth, captured by a series of events, in-depth interviews, case studies and consultation responses.

There are a number of initiatives working to further the aims of Lambeth's Wellbeing and Happiness programme, including:

- wellbeing impact assessments on a mental-health day centre, a timebank, and an advocacy service
- development of a wellbeing indicator set
- three timebanks working together to make the business case for a shared commissioning budget for timebanking, operated jointly by the PCT and the council
- a project to help schools develop a whole-school approach to emotional health and wellbeing.

For further information contact Ian Jackson, Director of Lambeth First or Lucy Smith, Public Health Manager, Mental Wellbeing, at NHS Lambeth.

66 Lambeth First (2005) *op. cit.*  
67 *ibid.*

## Positioning wellbeing as an overarching framework

Our research suggests that the process of establishing wellbeing work as core council business could be helped by the development of an overarching wellbeing framework, guiding all council activity:

- There should be a framework that covers all the local drivers of material and psycho-social wellbeing. All council strategies, policies, programmes and initiatives need to pay heed to this framework and operate in harmony with it.

- The framework should include objectives for sustainability, as the action taken to enhance the wellbeing of local populations today should not be allowed to seriously undermine the wellbeing of future generations.

Consider the way in which the Equality Framework for Local Government<sup>68</sup> aims to position equality objectives within core council business. A wellbeing framework would operate in a similar way, ensuring that wellbeing issues are considered at the point of decision-making. Work to define a good strategy or project proposal will be concerned as much with improvements in

68 <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelid=9491107> (19 May 2010).

wellbeing as with the financial implications. This is a new way of looking at value for money, which makes more explicit the links between council activities and the experience of local populations.

Developing and implementing this sort of framework is likely to require a number of actions. These include:

- The development of a shared local understanding of wellbeing. This will help ensure that all areas of local government and its external partners are able to work towards the same objective. Involving local people and service-delivery partners in the initial development of the framework will establish a direct link from the outset between what matters to residents and communities and what happens at the strategic level.
- Leadership from the leader and chief executive to encourage all directorates, services and senior officers and members to think of the business of the council in wellbeing terms. Local area partnerships also need to provide leadership by communicating wellbeing objectives.
- Identifying a senior lead person responsible for implementation – someone who wields significant influence over the council's day-to-day business. They will need to ensure that impact assessments and evaluations take place. Drawing on the lessons learned from its 2005-08 strategy, Lambeth specified that its new programme should have visible leadership beyond health, and particularly beyond mental health.<sup>69</sup>
- Looking at council activity already underway through a wellbeing lens. By highlighting activity that is making a contribution to population wellbeing, councils can raise the profile of wellbeing and help ensure that its importance is

understood at all levels. Carrying out an audit can also protect policies and work programmes that contribute to wellbeing, highlight those detracting from it, and identify gaps. In Northamptonshire, for example, an audit has been conducted with a view to informing the strategic approach to wellbeing.

- Ensuring that a council's key local strategy document (the sustainable community strategy or similar) reflects its overarching wellbeing framework as a key mechanism for guiding local action.

## Allocating resources differently

A strategic approach to resource allocation is an important lever for helping councils to change their culture and target resources where they are needed most.

In order to allocate spending to enhance wellbeing, local authorities and their strategic partners should take account of the material and psycho-social aspects of wellbeing previously outlined, by asking of all spending decisions:

- How can we make best use of resources to improve the material conditions of life for families and communities in our locality?
- How can we make best use of resources to enhance the psychological and social wellbeing of those in our locality?

Aligning public expenditure in this way, and demonstrating a return on any investments made, will be crucial if councils are to bring about a shift in wellbeing at a population level. Council leaders and chief executives - together with local strategic partners such as police forces, fire and rescue authorities, and primary care trusts – ideally need to work collaboratively. Their aim should be to:

69 Lambeth First (2009) *op. cit.*

- Identify how various investment streams (such as local taxes, grants and central government funding) can be brought together in a strategic way to contribute to the wellbeing of the local population.
- Demonstrate an ability to manage and use resources effectively to achieve value for money and better, more sustainable outcomes for local people. Some key considerations are highlighted in the box on ‘Spending on wellbeing in the current economic climate’ in section 1.3.

Even during the recent recession there have been some good examples of local authorities and their partners thinking innovatively about how best to use their resources for improved wellbeing. For example:

- Lancaster County Council has diverted resources to services designed to support psychological and social wellbeing by setting up a social prescribing project, which uses non-medical interventions to improve wellbeing.<sup>70</sup> It sees its decision to team up with the PCT to jointly fund a social prescribing service as a way to address some of the underlying problems that local people face.
- In Hertfordshire the county’s schools forum decided to set aside £250,000 of direct schools grant for a year to support the roll-out of its resilience programme following a successful pilot. Resilience training has also been incorporated into other strands of work including ‘Think Family’ and parenting programmes. The programme should become financially self-sustaining within a year, as training places will be sold to other local authorities.<sup>71</sup>

70 In conversation with Hilary Abernathy, Senior Public Health Improvement Specialist at North Lancashire Primary Care Trust, as part of this research.

71 In conversation with Lindsay Edwards, Head of Young People’s Substance Misuse, Crime Reduction and Emotional Wellbeing Services, Hertfordshire County Council.

A shift in investment will also need to be accompanied by a more creative assessment of the resources councils have available to them. These resources can often be found in the very communities that councils are looking to serve (see section 2.3 – ‘Strengthening communities’). This approach is most effective when efforts are made at the strategic level to:

- Decentralise funding from the upper tiers of local government to allow spending decisions to be taken closer to the beneficiaries of council services, which is an approach very much in line with the Big Society agenda.
- Build in the kind of flexibility in funding provision that will allow officers to start with where people are and respond accordingly. For example, community-led budgets could be used to invite residents to submit proposals for any initiative that opens up possibilities for local people to promote wellbeing. This approach would work well in parallel with – but would not replace – the proposed investment to finance social enterprises, charities and voluntary groups through the Big Society Bank.

## Making innovative use of local authority powers and frameworks

Given the centralisation of recent decades and the plethora of targets and indicators used to assess performance, local government officers have often felt that they had little room for manoeuvre.<sup>72</sup> This has now been recognised in the Coalition government’s stated intention to introduce a power of general competence for local government. The aim is to support councils to take distinctive decisions to provide for the needs of a place, rather than administering

72 Rowell A (2010) *op. cit.*

the decisions of central government. This is not a completely new idea. The discretionary Well Being Power, introduced in the Local Government Act 2000, enabled local authorities to “do anything they consider likely to promote the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of their area”.<sup>73</sup> The subsequent Lyons enquiry defined the concept of ‘place shaping’ as “the creative use of powers and influence to promote the general wellbeing of a community and its citizens”.<sup>74</sup>

However, in a review conducted in 2006, it was found that while 92 per cent of LSPs were aware of the wellbeing power, only 8 per cent had used it.<sup>75</sup> Senior staff were aware of the power, there was little awareness among practitioners. In short, the wellbeing power did not become a general power of first resort.

There were a number of problems that will need to be overcome if the power of general competence is going to effectively enable local government to act innovatively and beyond its statutory remit. Part of the challenge in using the wellbeing power was its ambiguous definition, which added to its legal complexity. It stated that local authorities can do “anything”, unless “explicitly prohibited elsewhere in the legislation”. The lack of an accompanying definition of economic, social and environmental wellbeing has left many councils unsure of how best to use the wellbeing power. And when the Brent LBC versus Risk Management Partners court case did not favour the local authority in its use of the wellbeing power in 2009, this

reduced confidence in the legal power.<sup>76</sup>

Despite these challenges there are good examples of local authorities invoking the wellbeing power to support local initiatives, which provide interesting insights into how local authorities can make use of the power of general competence going forward. In Essex, for example, the power was used to respond quickly to the impact of the recent recession on local populations, and the actions taken have been praised by the Audit Commission (see case study 6 in section 2.2).

The role for those in leadership positions is to communicate the benefits of using local government powers to enhance wellbeing, encouraging concerted action by officers, practitioners and community groups and civil society organisations.

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73 Office of Public Sector Information (2000) *Local Government Act 2000* [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/ukpga\\_20000022\\_en\\_1](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/ukpga_20000022_en_1) (19 May 2010).

74 Lyons M (2007) *Executive Summary of the Lyons Inquiry into Local Government* (London: The Lyons Inquiry) – see <http://www.lyonsinquiry.org.uk/> (19 May 2010).

75 Department for Communities and Local Government (2008) *Practical Use of the Wellbeing Power* (London: CLG).

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76 Local Government Association (2010) Draft Local Government (Power of General Competence) Bill <https://member.lgiu.org.uk/briefings/2010/Documents/LGA%20PGC%20Bill%20final%20050310%20with%20introduction.pdf> [2 August 2010].

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## 2.2 Services and commissioning

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The spending cuts and the emphasis on the Big Society agenda are likely to see the commissioning of local provision and the design of local services change. Services are likely to become more scarce; the contribution of individuals and communities likely to become larger. But the existing infrastructure underpinning the public sector and the voluntary sector will not result in a shift in focus without a council's willingness to reassess its fundamental role. This section discusses a number of ways in which local provision can be commissioned, designed and delivered to place wellbeing at the heart of local government. These include:

- commissioning for wellbeing outcomes
- designing services with wellbeing outcomes in mind
- using established wellbeing evidence in service design
- supporting psycho-social wellbeing through co-producing services
- directly promoting psycho-social wellbeing.

### Commissioning for wellbeing outcomes

The commissioning process can act as a valuable lever to shift services towards producing wellbeing outcomes. Recent years have seen a shift towards outcomes-based commissioning. But a focus on efficiency without enough attention paid in parallel to effectiveness is still the norm – and value-

for-money assessments tend to follow this pattern. This means that wellbeing outcomes are consistently under-valued in the commissioning process. In addition, current practice continues to limit the ability of local authorities to take a preventative approach, despite the evidence that allocating resources 'upstream' yields much greater returns in the long run.

The Total Place initiative piloted by the previous government asked 13 local authorities to consider how a whole-area approach might help deliver improved services at modest cost.<sup>77</sup> While efficiency remained a key driver, Total Place also presented a real opportunity to transform the nature of public service provision. This is because there was increased recognition that simply slicing budgets – even in the context of public sector spending cuts – will not deliver the efficiencies or improvements needed. What is required is innovation: overhauling current commissioning and service-delivery models so that they are designed and built around people and place. Some authorities are already beginning to take action to shift their commissioning practice towards promoting wellbeing outcomes (see case study 5).

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<sup>77</sup> Local Government Leadership (2009) *Total Place* [www.localleadership.gov.uk/totalplace/](http://www.localleadership.gov.uk/totalplace/) (19 May 2010).

### Case study 5: Sustainable Commissioning for Wellbeing in Kirklees

Kirklees Council and NHS Kirklees have been gearing their commissioning practices towards promoting wellbeing, and to demonstrate the benefits and cost savings from doing so. Since 2009 they have worked with nef, Mental Health Matters (provider of an employment service for people experiencing mental health problems) and Lifeline (provider of drug support services) to:

- Raise awareness in the council and the primary care trust (PCT) of the evidence base on wellbeing, how this links to the prevention agenda, and how to incorporate wellbeing aims in the commissioning of services. A report has been produced to assist this.
- Support commissioners to move beyond unit price when assessing tenders or the performance of existing services, and to also explore different forms of value. This has included working with the performance team and training on social return on investment techniques.
- Encourage new approaches to service delivery that are based on co-production between service professionals, service users and the wider community. A practical guidance document on 'Co-producing for Wellbeing' has been produced to support this.
- Introduce practical changes at the service-design stage to embed a population wellbeing approach in commissioning. To outline how this could be achieved, nef worked with NHS Kirklees on an existing service specification for adult drug services. In addition to including service-specific outcomes, the specification was amended to illustrate how providers could be encouraged to contribute to previously identified local economic, social and environmental outcomes. The PCT and nef also reviewed and suggested amendments to the specification to illustrate how service providers might fulfil co-production characteristics and meet wellbeing outcomes (based on the 'Five Ways to Well-being'). Kirklees plans to use the learning from these approaches to inform future tendering activity.
- Introduce robust ways of measuring wellbeing outcomes to help demonstrate the value being created by local services and strengthen the case for investing in population wellbeing. Many services in Kirklees are already using the 'Outcomes Star' to measure changes in wellbeing at the service user level, and work is underway to explore whether a population wellbeing measure should also be introduced to support the shift towards wellbeing promotion throughout the local authority area.

For more information contact Trudi Wright, Yorkshire and Humber Joint Improvement Partnership Project Manager, Kirklees Council.



To make a difference through commissioning, a review of current practice suggests there are a number of principles worth applying. These apply to procurement from in-house suppliers, external providers and in the context of user-led commissioning.

- **Commission for outcomes, rather than services**

Commissioning should be outcomes-based, focusing on material and psycho-social wellbeing outcomes for citizens, communities and service users and not on the services that might deliver them. This reflects the shift local government experienced under the last government away from comprehensive performance assessment to comprehensive area assessment. It requires a whole-system approach, building on the assets and needs of communities, users and providers, as well as local strategic priorities.

- **Use the commissioning process with strategic intent**

This involves adapting service specifications and tender documents to ensure that providers identify how they will meet priority community outcomes as well as service-specific goals. For example, a service contract to support people into work might ask providers to achieve service outcomes in relation to building people's confidence, developing new skills, and helping participants to find jobs. But it could also require a contribution to improved community outcomes such as social cohesion. Joint commissioning, and multi-agency commissioning, could help in combining the efforts of different local agencies to enhance wellbeing.

- **Be flexible about how positive wellbeing outcomes might best be achieved**

Flexibility will allow for innovation and creativity. This may be through

commissioning a new service, redesigning an existing service, providing direct payments to individuals or communities, or developing a behavioural change programme at the local level. Similarly, this approach allows for diversity with regard to who the 'provider' is. Reflecting a co-production approach, the provider could be citizens or service users themselves, as well as the co-ops, mutuals, charities and social enterprises charged with a leading role in building the Big Society. Improving wellbeing is a multi-dimensional, dynamic process, which means that it is likely to lead to commissioning forms of provision that differ from those conventionally used to address needs.

## Designing services with wellbeing in mind

Designing services with wellbeing in mind is an important part of embedding them into local provision. The factors that support positive wellbeing outcomes need to be placed at the heart of how services are delivered.

### Addressing material wellbeing in the current context

While addressing material wellbeing is already a major component of the vast majority of existing local services, their design should be reviewed to take two important elements of the current context into account.

- **The increasing importance given to the social determinants of health inequalities**

As set out in the recent Marmot Review, these extend far beyond long-recognised health-related factors to include multiple influences on people's lives, including education, employment and the local

environment.<sup>78</sup> They therefore largely overlap with the determinants of material wellbeing.

Local Government Improvement and Developments report 'The Social Determinants of Health and the Role of Local Government' sets out how local government can address inequalities in the delivery of services - by ensuring a better spread of good education throughout a local area, for example.<sup>79</sup> Looking at service provision through a wellbeing lens can help identify additional community goals and benefits. An example of this is adapting the design of public spaces so that they promote social interaction as well as providing access to employment and public services.

- **The current context of spending cuts, following the recession**

This raises the bar in terms of the need to take rapid action to prevent spiralling problems. During the recession Essex County Council invested in the economic and social infrastructure of local life. The council's approach reflected a particular concern to enhance psycho-social wellbeing alongside material wellbeing. By providing direct financial support to individuals it promoted autonomy by allowing people to decide how best to spend the money. By supporting post offices, it has supported social connections (see case study 6).

It is often by supporting local social enterprises or credit unions that councils can find ways to support the local market economy while also promoting the psycho-social wellbeing of communities. Given the relationship between debt and mental ill health,<sup>80</sup> councils should support organisations that provide credit at more modest rates of return than those offered by private doorstep lenders. In Hackney, for example, the social enterprise Fair Finance adds wellbeing value to microfinance loans to low-income clients and the self-employed by offering borrowers therapy and emotional support. The aim is to help people begin to see some possibility of a debt-free future.<sup>81</sup>

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78 Marmot *et al.* (2010) *op. cit.*

79 Campbell (2010) *op. cit.*

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80 Mind (2008) *In the Red: Debt and mental health* (London: Mind) – see [http://www.mind.org.uk/campaigns\\_and\\_issues/report\\_and\\_resources/896\\_in\\_the\\_red\\_debt\\_and\\_mental\\_health](http://www.mind.org.uk/campaigns_and_issues/report_and_resources/896_in_the_red_debt_and_mental_health) (19 May 2010).

81 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2010/mar/21/microfinance-faisal-rahman-muhammad-yunus> (19 May 2010).

### Case study 6: Enhancing material wellbeing in Essex

Essex County Council is recognised as one of the most innovative local authorities in the country. This is a reputation rooted in the council's interpretation of the local government wellbeing power.

At a time when many regarded local authorities as no more than delivery agents for Whitehall, Essex developed genuinely local approaches to improve residents' quality of life. Essex treated the wellbeing power as a licence to create and innovate, in order to respond quickly to increasing local need.

As the UK lurched from a banking crisis toward a full-blown recession, Essex and its partners recognised the need to act quickly and effectively. As part of a range of interventions, the council:

- Provided direct financial assistance to economically vulnerable residents. Essex offered a one-off payment of £100 to its most economically vulnerable council tax payers, with a suggestion that this could be used to offset council tax bills.
- Increased the capacity of local credit unions. Essex pledged £170,000 over three years to support Essex Savers, the county-wide credit union, and offered further support to smaller, localised credit unions. This helped ensure that residents could get ethical and affordable sources of credit as bank lending contracted.
- Stepped up its programme to reopen local post offices. Recognising that both residents and businesses depend on local post office services, Essex developed a £1.5 million grant programme to preserve threatened branches. Ten branches have successfully reopened, with two more expected. The innovative 'Essex funding model' has since become a guide for other councils and communities looking to sustain local services.
- Launched the 'Banking on Essex' initiative (in partnership with Santander) to combat the effects of the credit crunch. Focusing on otherwise viable enterprises struggling to get finance, the initiative provided short-term and medium-term loans, typically over £10,000, to small and medium-sized businesses. This initiative marked a return to 'community banking', a service based on local knowledge and a personal relationship between bank and business.

These measures have won plaudits nationally. The Audit Commission praised the county's activity, while the national media have highlighted Essex as an example of local government at its most effective. Most importantly, these interventions have provided reassurance, opportunity and support to local residents and businesses during what was the worst recession for 60 years.

For more information contact Alastair Gordon, Policy Analyst, Essex County Council.

## Attending to psycho-social wellbeing using impact assessments

Wellbeing impact assessment is a way to ensure that a concern for wellbeing, including psycho-social wellbeing, is designed into services and local government provision across all departments. New or reconfigured services and specific projects or programmes, as well as draft and current strategies and plans, can be checked to make sure they contribute to the promotion of population wellbeing.

There are a number of ways in which local authorities might wish to undertake this assessment. One existing technique is Mental Well-being Impact Assessment (MWIA). MWIA uses a combination of methods, processes and tools to assess the potential for a policy, plan (as in case study 7), service, programme or project to affect the mental wellbeing of a population. It is a technique that enables councils to make evidence-based recommendations to strengthen the positive and mitigate against negative impacts, which can be particularly useful in the context of spending cuts. It also includes a process that councils can follow to develop indicators that can effectively measure improvement (see section 2.5).

MWIA can be used to focus on population groups who may experience health inequalities and social injustice, with a particular emphasis on those most at risk of poorer mental wellbeing. Alongside the development of a toolkit,<sup>82</sup> the National Mental Health Development Unit is currently investing in a national programme to support local government and other public sector bodies in undertaking the MWIA process.

## Using established wellbeing evidence in service design

We have known for some time about the type of material conditions that enhance or detract from people's quality of life. While research on interventions for promoting psycho-social wellbeing is still a new field, robust evidence is increasingly becoming available. For example:

- In an online contribution, Dr Andrew McCulloch of the Mental Health Foundation shows how research evidence on wellbeing can help shape local government services by using what is known about the links between physical activity and mental health.
- The previous government's framework for developing wellbeing, 'Confident Communities, Brighter Futures', draws together the evidence on interventions that help to improve mental health and wellbeing.<sup>84</sup> Each intervention or programme is graded on the quality of evidence of its effectiveness and the scope it offers to promote good mental health and wellbeing.
- There is evidence on interventions such as those piloted by the three local authorities involved in the Local Wellbeing Project.<sup>85</sup> These councils have shown the value of lessons in school that build children's resilience; parenting programmes that support parents' wellbeing as well as that of their children; guaranteed apprenticeships for teenagers; community provision and support that encourages neighbours to get to know each other; and support for isolated older people to help them create and maintain social networks.

82 Health Impact Assessment gateway - [www.hiagateway.org.uk](http://www.hiagateway.org.uk) (19 May 2010).

84 HM Government (2010) *op. cit.*

85 Bacon *et al.* (2010) *op. cit.*

## Case study 7: Using Mental Wellbeing Impact Assessment (MWIA) in developing local priorities

In setting local priorities when developing its 2008-11 LAA, the Lancashire Partnership chose national indicator 119 – self-reported health – as a ‘proxy’ indicator for mental health. The steering group for the indicator recognised that mental wellbeing was a cross-cutting issue – not just important for the ‘health and wellbeing’ theme in which it sat. It was felt that use of the MWIA Toolkit<sup>83</sup> would enable a structured analysis of how action plans, programmes and projects across all seven LAA themes might influence mental wellbeing. Lancashire’s aims were to raise awareness of the impact of all policy on mental wellbeing and to develop effective strategies and actions with a wide range of partners – showing that good mental wellbeing is everybody’s business.

With the consent of the LAA chair and the leads for the seven themes, the Lancashire Partnership agreed a programme of events over 18 months. These included a workshop with the steering group for each theme. A rapid assessment was made of their indicators to prioritise those with the biggest impact on mental health. Lancashire also involved its joint strategic needs assessment (JSNA) team, who provided much of the community profiling data for the events. After the workshops the MWIA task group met again to compile an action plan that was circulated to all participants for agreement.

One of the most beneficial aspects of this process has been the increase in mental wellbeing awareness among a range of individuals and agencies who would not have thought previously that mental wellbeing was ‘their business’, and had no understanding of the issue.

For more information contact Hilary Abernethy, Senior Public Health Improvement Specialist, NHS North Lancashire.

83 Cooke A, Friedli L, Coggins T, Edmonds N, O’Hara K, Snowden L, Stansfield J, Steuer N and Scott-Samuel A (2010) (2nd Ed.) The mental well-being impact assessment toolkit. 2nd ed., London: National Mental Health Development Unit – see [www.hiagateway](http://www.hiagateway) (26 October 2010).

- ‘The Five Ways to Well-being’ is a set of evidence-based actions to improve wellbeing (see Appendix). Originally designed to provide pathways for individuals to improve their own wellbeing, these are also being used by local authorities and NHS organisations to provide a framework for strategic planning, service design and commissioning to improve wellbeing outcomes (see case study 8). nef is currently working with the National Mental Health Development Unit to map the use of the five ways and inform guidance about how they can be used to greatest effect as a mental health promotion tool. Table 1 uses examples from current local authority activity to show how the ‘Five Ways to Well-being’ could be designed into six major service areas of a council.

**Table 1:** Examples showing how the Five Ways to Well-being can be designed into service areas<sup>88</sup>

	Children's services	Adult social care	Planning and transport
Connect	<b>Intergenerational activities</b> – facilitating contact between younger and older residents (for example Merton Council's Intergenerational Centre)	<b>Local area co-ordination</b> – work with individuals, families and communities to support people with disabilities (for example Middlesborough Council)	<b>Designing traffic-free spaces into developments</b> to encourage social connections (for example Sutton Council)
Be active	<b>Support buddies for disabled young people</b> to help them take part in sport and physical activities (for example Nottingham City Council)	<b>Healthy walks scheme</b> to encourage physical activity and use of the natural environment (for example Adur District Council)	<b>City centre cycle paths</b> to encourage physical activity and low-carbon travel (for example Herefordshire Council)
Take notice	<b>Public art project devised in collaboration with young people</b> to encourage appreciation of public spaces (for example Bristol City Council, whose scheme included a meditation space)	<b>Arts festival for social inclusion</b> (for example Lambeth Council's Springforward, which engages people experiencing discrimination or social exclusion and explores links between creativity and wellbeing)	<b>Auditing green space provision</b> to ensure access to the natural environment (for example South Gloucestershire Council, which carried out an audit as part of its aim of improving health and wellbeing)
Keep learning	<b>An online directory of informal learning activities for young people</b> , to encourage participation and enjoyment of learning (for example Essex County Council)	<b>Adult learning as an alternative to prescribing anti-depressants</b> for mild mental-health problems (for example Northamptonshire County Council and partners' Learn 2b scheme)	<b>Identifying sites for self-builders</b> to encourage people to learn the innovative and entrepreneurial skills needed to build their own homes (for example Swindon Borough Council)
Give	<b>Peer support awards for young people</b> to recognise their efforts in helping others (for example Bradford Metropolitan District Council)	<b>Timebanking to encourage skills swapping and reciprocal volunteering</b> as a route to build social networks and reduce isolation of older people (for example Bromley Council and partners)	<b>Supporting volunteer-led 'walking bus' schemes</b> to encourage volunteering, physical activity and safe travel to school (for example Thurrock Council)

<sup>88</sup> The electronic version of this document contains web links to more information about the initiatives mentioned.

	<b>Housing and community services</b>	<b>Environmental services</b>	<b>Work, worklessness and the local economy</b>
<b>Connect</b>	<b>The Big Lunch</b> – events to encourage neighbours to get to know each other (for example St Albans City and District Council)	<b>An area-based growing competition</b> to improve local environments through collaboration between residents (for example Rushmoor Borough Council)	<b>A local procurement policy</b> to connect local government activity to the local economy and support local businesses (for example Camden Council)
<b>Be active</b>	<b>Enabling council tenants to grow their own food</b> by creating edible gardens for council-owned housing (for example Southwark Council)	<b>Green Gym</b> , a BTCV scheme to promote health and fitness and support conservation activities (for example Bath and North East Somerset Council)	<b>Green space apprenticeships</b> to boost job opportunities and promote skills for green space management (for example Tamworth Borough Council)
<b>Take notice</b>	<b>Gardening support for vulnerable residents</b> to maintain outdoor spaces (for example Hampshire County Council’s scheme to enable elderly residents to remain in their homes, see Case Study 1)	<b>Resident involvement in wildlife protection</b> to encourage appreciation of local biodiversity (for example Fareham Borough Council)	<b>Helping local people understand the local economy</b> by mapping local money flows (for example South Somerset District Council, which was the approach taken during the development of the Milborne Port parish plan)
<b>Keep learning</b>	<b>Providing training as part of resident involvement</b> in decision-making for council tenants, to encourage learning through participation (for example South Kesteven District Council)	<b>Community planting day events</b> to teach basic gardening skills and improve public spaces (for example Banbury Town Council)	<b>Local entrepreneurship coaching</b> to unlock potential and skills to stimulate the local economy (for example Norwich City Council and the BizFizz programme)
<b>Give</b>	<b>Using peer-support models to enable independent living and residential support</b> to promote mutual support (for example Lincolnshire County Council and KeyRing scheme - see also case study 9)	<b>Encouraging volunteers to ‘adopt’ their local area</b> and help maintain the quality of the public space there (for example Manchester City Council’s Community Guardians scheme, see also case study 12)	<b>Local business support networks</b> of local people volunteering their time and expertise to provide business support to local enterprise (for example Malvern Hills District Council)

### Case study 8: Use of the 'Five Ways to Well-being'

Between July 2006 and October 2008 the UK government's future-focused think-tank, Foresight, reviewed the current state of knowledge about promoting and maintaining mental capital and wellbeing now and in the future. In the latter stages of the project the Centre for Well-being at nef was asked to look at the academic evidence that had been gathered and draw out the public health messages that emerged. nef's subsequent report, 'Five Ways to Well-being: The evidence'<sup>86</sup>, developed five key messages from the review. These were 'connect', 'be active', 'take notice', 'keep learning' and 'give'.<sup>87</sup>

As policy makers increasingly recognise the importance of enhancing people's wellbeing, use of the 'Five Ways to Well-being' for population-level interventions has been gaining ground. Examples include:

#### **Promoting wellbeing in health settings**

The NHS in Worcestershire is running a Life Channel campaign on plasma screens in the waiting rooms of each of its 40 GP surgeries. A 60-second advertisement talks viewers through each of the 'Five Ways to Well-being', raising awareness about positive mental health and the actions people can take to protect theirs.

#### **Re-imagine your high street**

As part of the Dewsbury Renaissance programme, Kirklees Council asked architects BLA and nef to conduct workshops with local residents to inform the planning process. The 'Five Ways to Well-being' were used as a frame for participants to 're-imagine their high street': what they wanted to see in the town centre in ten years' time. This helped to open up debate about how a town centre can offer more than just spaces to shop and consume.

#### **Wellbeing education: five ways and fairy tales**

Four schools in Stockport have worked with the council-run Stockport Art Gallery to create and publish two children's books based on the 'Five Ways to Well-being'. Students from secondary schools worked with primary school pupils to adapt well-known fairy tales according to the five ways and then collaborated with professional artists to develop illustrations and linked performances. The project actively engaged pupils in thinking about their own wellbeing and ways to promote it. 10,000 copies of the books have been distributed freely to schools, libraries, Sure Start Centres and community groups.

<sup>86</sup> Aked J, Marks N, Cordon C and Thompson S (2008) Five Ways to Well-being: the evidence (London: nef).

<sup>87</sup> *ibid.*



## Supporting psycho-social wellbeing through co-producing services

Co-production of public services – where there is an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and their neighbours – is growing in prominence throughout the public sector. It is a key mechanism for realising the government’s vision for a Big Society.

The concept of co-production stems from the idea that people who use services are not a problem to be dealt with but instead represent vital assets; they are the ‘very resource that can turn public services around’.<sup>89,90</sup> It is rooted in an understanding of the value of the core economy of family, neighbourhood and community, and recognises the contribution that citizens make to society, even when this contribution takes place outside the market economy.

Co-production has a part to play in making better use of public-sector resources over the longer term, by ensuring that people do not become passive recipients of services. It also has the potential to foster improvements in wellbeing. This is because it shifts the balance of power, responsibility and resources from professionals to beneficiaries. In so doing it can increase self-esteem, encourage positive emotions, promote engagement with local activities and support strong social connections.<sup>91</sup>

The principles of a co-production approach are that it:

- recognises people as assets, because people themselves are the real wealth of society
- values work differently, recognising as work everything that people do to raise families, look after one another, maintain healthy communities, and deliver social justice and good governance
- promotes reciprocity (giving and receiving) because it builds trust between people and fosters mutual respect
- builds social networks, because a person’s physical and mental wellbeing depends on strong, enduring relationships.<sup>92</sup>

Increasingly the principles of co-production are being put into practice in service settings (see case study 9 as an example).

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89 Boyle D and Harris M (2009) *The Challenge of Co-Production* (London: NESTA).

90 Stephens L, Ryan-Collins J and Boyle D (2008) *Co-production: A manifesto for growing the core economy* (London: nef)

91 Aked *et al.* (2009) *op. cit.*

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92 Boyle and Harris (2010) *op. cit.*

### Case study 9: KeyRing in Lincolnshire – co-production in practice

One of the many examples cited in a recent nef and NESTA report on co-production in practice is KeyRing, a service providing support for independent living for people with learning difficulties.<sup>93</sup> KeyRing sets up local networks of nine adult members and one volunteer, each living independently but usually within a 10-15 minute walk of each other. These networks provide mutual support and links into other local networks and resources. Initially, the volunteer gives regular housing-related support and receives free accommodation in return. Once networks have matured, the support becomes more mutual within the network, and the volunteer role is reduced as members turn to each other.

Andrew Wells, former Partnerships Manager at Lincolnshire County Council, oversaw the introduction of KeyRing locally. He has described a number of wellbeing benefits associated with this approach. He sees KeyRing's 'philosophy of inclusiveness', where users sign up to give something back, as enhancing choice and control. The emphasis on building on people's skills led to a growth in confidence among users. And the idea is also cost effective: users ultimately support each other instead of relying on paid professionals. In his new role working on personalised budgets, Andrew envisages this type of mutual support becoming a key option for service users making decisions about spending on service provision.

For more information contact Andrew Wells, Workstream Manager, Putting People First Team, Lincolnshire County Council.

93 Boyle D, Slay J and Stephens L (2010) *Public Services Inside Out: Putting co-production into practice* (London: NESTA).

## Direct wellbeing awareness and promotion

Activity directly aimed at mental health and wellbeing promotion is another important way in which local authorities can help enhance wellbeing. Here actions can be taken to raise awareness among citizens and within communities about what wellbeing is, and how it can be supported. For example, the DIY Happiness programme that is being rolled out across London as part of the Well London initiative combines workshops with the design and delivery of a 'happiness intervention' (see case study 10). The 'Five Ways to Well-being' have also been used widely for public messaging and education (see case study 8 earlier in this section). Positive psychology, meanwhile, is an academic discipline that is

being used to inform local authority action on wellbeing. This encompasses actions by councils that aim to promote:

- positive emotions, such as gratitude
- psychological resources, such as optimism or hope
- wellbeing-related behaviour, such as setting goals.

Interventions such as these have been shown to promote wellbeing in general. But they can also help to alleviate specific symptoms of depression for those experiencing the condition,<sup>94</sup> and can build resilience (see case study 11).

94 Sin NL and Lyubomirsky S (2009) 'Enhancing wellbeing and alleviating depressive symptoms with positive psychology interventions: a practice-friendly meta-analysis' *Journal of Clinical Psychology: In Session*, **65**:467-487.

Wellbeing-related considerations also have an important role to play in interventions aimed directly at changing health-related behaviours, by helping to frame messages in terms of ‘feeling good’ rather than ‘avoiding illness’.<sup>95</sup> This is likely to be of direct relevance to local authorities as they begin to respond to the new responsibilities around public health set out by the government.<sup>96</sup>

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95 Mulgan G (2010) *Influencing Public Behaviour to Improve Health and Wellbeing: An independent report* (London: Department of Health).

96 Department of Health (2010) *op. cit.*

### Case study 10: DIY Happiness in London

DIY Happiness (DIYH) was developed by South London and the Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, and is a project designed to promote an integrated approach to wellbeing. It uses a combination of conventional health promotion wisdom (diet and physical activity), mental health awareness, and ground-breaking findings from scientific research into happiness.

The initial phase of the DIYH project has been the design and delivery of a series of eight group workshops for women, called ‘Can Money Buy Women Happiness?’ This activity is linked to the ‘Five Ways to Well-being’ (see Appendix). On completion of the eight workshops, each participant is then invited to ‘dare to dream’. That is, they are asked to design and deliver a ‘happiness intervention’ that they think might improve local wellbeing, costing up to £500. The project then pays for the intervention to be road-tested locally.

“I will recommend it to anyone. The course is so brilliant, and I learnt more positive things and how to connect with people.” (DIYH participant)

DIY Happiness workshops are now being rolled out across 20 of the most disadvantaged areas of London as part of Well London, a five-year health improvement programme created by the Mayor of London’s London Health Commission and funded by the Big Lottery.

For more information contact Alison Pearce, Programme Manager, Well London, London Health Commission.

## Case study 11: Development of the resilience programme in Hertfordshire County Council

The UK Resilience Programme aims to improve the emotional resilience of children aged 11 to 13 by enabling them to deal constructively with daily problems and challenges. Initial evidence suggests that the programme has improved depression and anxiety scores for pupils. Anecdotal evidence also suggests a positive impact on the school community, classroom behaviour and teacher wellbeing.<sup>97</sup>

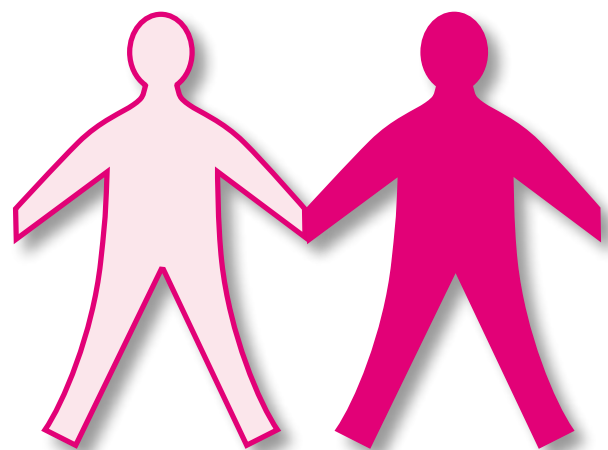
Hertfordshire County Council took part in the first UK pilot of the initiative three years ago, as part of the Local Wellbeing Project, alongside Manchester City Council and South Tyneside Council. An evaluation carried out by the London School of Economics indicated good local feedback about improved outcomes for children, including improved attendance and behaviour in the classroom. As a population-level intervention, much of its value is seen as avoiding the stigma that could be generated from more specifically targeted interventions.

Hertfordshire is now applying the elements of the programme to parenting courses, training for staff working with young people, and its leadership programme for head teachers. The momentum around the initiative has enabled the children's services department to begin discussions with local partners and other local authorities about its benefits. Because the programme provides tangible improvements quickly, it has captured people's imaginations.

A key priority for the council is to ensure the initiative becomes financially self-sustaining. A local training team has been recruited, and Hertfordshire is now able to sell places on its training courses to train teachers from other local authority areas. The UK Resilience Programme is being rolled out to all the schools in Hertfordshire over the next two to three years.

For more information contact Lindsay Edwards, Head of Young People, Substance Misuse, Crime Reduction and Emotional Wellbeing, Hertfordshire County Council.

<sup>97</sup> Challen A, Noden P, West A and Machin S (2009) *UK Resilience Programme Evaluation: Interim report* (London: Department for Children, Schools and Families).



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## 2.3 Strengthening communities

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Creating the kind of conditions that reduce risk factors and enable the whole population to flourish is likely to be easier when councils think more creatively about the resources they have available to them. Councils cannot deliver wellbeing as straightforwardly as they can provide services. They cannot make improvements to population wellbeing on their own. Fortunately they have at their disposal a resource that is often overlooked: the very communities they serve.

Since undertaking the background work for this report in late 2009 and early 2010 – work which identified strengthening communities as crucial to promoting wellbeing – some of the ideas laid out below have grown in prominence, linked to the Big Society agenda. This Big Society provides a renewed focus on giving more power to people locally and encouraging people to take an active role in their communities.

If the Big Society is going to be effective at promoting wellbeing, it will need to ensure that people's wellbeing is high enough to enable them to get involved in the first place, as well as making sure that the way in which the Big Society is built helps support the wellbeing of everyone, not just the few.

This section explores the benefits of supporting action in communities, and what needs to change to facilitate such action. It also explains the role that officers employed across local government can play to:

- develop asset-based working
- strengthen community networks
- encourage residents to exert control over local circumstances.

### Why supporting action in communities is important

Supporting action in communities is important both for generating direct wellbeing gains and for benefiting existing service provision. The framework for 'an ideal empowering authority', published by the then IDeA, states that community engagement (the process) and empowerment (the outcome) are important because they can help deliver three things:

- resilient communities with strong social networks and active citizens taking responsibility for their own wellbeing
- vibrant democracy
- better services.<sup>98</sup>

#### Direct wellbeing gains

Given what we know about the factors influencing wellbeing, it should not be hard to see why community engagement is such a powerful mechanism for promoting it. Engagement initiatives can positively influence wellbeing by:

- enhancing local people's autonomy

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<sup>98</sup> LG Improvement and Development (2010) *The ideal empowering authority: an illustrated framework* (London: LG Improvement and Development).

- promoting social connections and strengthening communities
- stimulating meaningful involvement with local issues.

### **Benefits to existing service provision**

Supporting community action also benefits local services, and the council itself, by:

- encouraging a more effective relationship between local government and civil society, including community groups and individual citizens
- bringing in extra resources in the form of help, support and effort from clients, their families and neighbours
- helping to address risk factors before the need for accessing services arises, saving money in the long run
- preventing dependency on services, which has the potential to reduce the amount of money spent on specialist provision over time.<sup>99</sup>

### **Benefits and the Big Society vision**

The benefits mentioned above strongly echo the government's vision for a Big Society, to:

- put neighbourhoods in charge of their own destiny and make people feel they can shape the world around them
- get rid of centralised bureaucracy, give professionals more freedom and open up public services.

## **What needs to change?**

Within the current service-provider model, communities are at times primarily thought of as recipients of services. This often seems to end up creating greater dependency, with increasing amounts of money being spent on specialist service provision. A way to get around this is to harness the rich resources and energy that exist in communities and grow the core economy of family, friends and neighbours to work in partnership with public services and with co-ops, mutuals, charities and social enterprises.

Using its research for the Local Wellbeing Project, the Young Foundation examined the relationship between citizen empowerment and increased wellbeing. It found that the most powerful forms of empowerment are those that aim to maximise the capabilities of local people, rather than simply devolving decisions from one group to another. The Young Foundation's analysis particularly emphasises the value of:

- providing greater opportunities for residents to influence decisions affecting their neighbourhoods
- facilitating regular contact between neighbours
- helping residents gain the confidence they need to exercise control over local circumstances.<sup>100</sup>

99 Boyle and Harris (2010) *op. cit.*

100 Hothi M with Bacon N, Brophy M and Mulgan G (2008) *Neighbourliness + Empowerment = Wellbeing: Is there a formula for happy communities?* (London: The Young Foundation on behalf of the Wellbeing Project).

In many ways this type of approach turns the typical way of allocating council resources on its head. The role of government becomes increasingly about providing the infrastructure support to enable individuals and communities to develop an environment that promotes their wellbeing. To do this effectively councils need to:

- be more outward-looking, to allow people's experience of local life to be a key driver of activity
- remember that their role extends beyond that of service provider. They should be fully committed to engaging with communities, listening to citizens' views about local priorities, and harnessing people's knowledge, skills and enthusiasm to co-create solutions that bring benefits to all
- recognise the value of the core economy – the resources of individuals, families and social networks that sustain society
- see their role as less about fixing problems and more about facilitating solutions
- think less about their local population as passive recipients of services and more about them as agents of change.

All levels of local government can promote wellbeing by fostering an asset-based approach; encouraging social relationships between communities, families and citizens; and enhancing local action.

## Developing asset-based working

Joint strategic needs assessments (JSNAs) are used by local authorities to identify the current and future health and wellbeing needs of communities, and to turn these into priorities for action. JSNAs tend to place responsibility for meeting these needs on the services that the council provides, which may be partly why they have met with limited success in addressing health inequalities. They overlook the assets and support that exists within communities and can enhance the council's offering.

A growing evidence base, summarised in a recent Local Government Improvement and Development (previously the IDeA) report, shows that when councils and practitioners begin with the assets of the community rather than its needs, people's capacity to address their own needs tends to increase.<sup>101</sup> As case study 12 on community guardians in Manchester shows, using local people's talents and enthusiasm to address local issues can have wide-ranging benefits.

Asset mapping is one tool available to councils looking to unlock the energy and skills in their communities. In Gateshead Council's Bensham and Saltwell neighbourhood, work is underway to identify residents' assets in several ways. Neighbourhood organisations are carrying out 'appreciative conversations' with their clients to help reveal the gifts of individuals, and each household has been sent an assets checklist to complete with a view to sharing their assets with their neighbours.

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101 Foot J with Hopkins T (2010) *A Glass Half-full: How an asset approach can improve community health and wellbeing* (London: IDeA).

So far over 120 residents have stepped forward, revealing a wide range of skills and abilities. This could open up exciting opportunities to strengthen social support networks. A charity in the neighbourhood is keen to play a leading role in sustaining the momentum that has developed in the community.

Further work is being developed in the northwest region to create a joint strategic asset assessment (JSAA) framework to complement the JSNA in enabling councils to see the whole picture facing their communities,

and to work in an outcome-focused way. It is hoped that the lessons learned from four pilot sites – Cumbria County Council, Lancashire County Council, Liverpool City Council and Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council – will improve the framework and guidance, and ultimately help councils to build the kind of detailed community profiles that are needed to facilitate community-based solutions.<sup>102</sup>

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102 Stansfield J (2010) *Developing Asset-Based Working and Joint Strategic Asset Assessment (JSAA)*. Northwest Development Project. <http://www.communities.idea.gov.uk/comm/community-search.do?queryText=JSAA&x=25&y=3> (19 May 2010).

### Case study 12: Community guardians in Manchester

Manchester City Council established a community guardians scheme in 2004, originally as part of meeting a Public Service Agreement (PSA) target of 'encouraging public ownership for the local environment'. The scheme encourages local volunteers who sign up as community guardians to take responsibility for the physical environment in their neighbourhood. The scheme is deliberately informal, with volunteers able to participate as much or as little as they like. Activities include reporting graffiti and litter, organising and participating in clean-ups, monitoring dog fouling, watering trees and having regular meetings with the local street environment manager.

The success of the scheme has led to community guardians organising and running their own local events, ensuring that there is a firm foundation for work to be sustained into the longer term. Community guardians have also had significant roles in a number of other prominent schemes in the city. These include 'Mancunian agreements' (which involve local people and agencies agreeing actions to improve a local area) and the Manchester in Bloom competition (which fosters regular contact between residents to work together on a competition entry).

The scheme's success has prompted the development of additional objectives related to the provision of training and development opportunities. The aim is to help community guardians get back into employment or progress their learning.

Overall the scheme empowers local people, thus boosting self-esteem and wellbeing. By giving community guardians real responsibility, Manchester is empowering local residents to create 'neighbourhoods of choice' – places where they want to live.

For more information contact the Community Guardians Team, Neighbourhood Services Department, Manchester City Council.



## Strengthening community networks

The idea of ‘mass localism’ – the mobilisation of people on a large scale at local level to respond to social and environmental challenges – relies on strong local relationships and effective networks. As NESTA describes in a recent report on this subject, this can ‘build a community’ around an issue or task – working together to install local carbon infrastructure, for example.<sup>103</sup>

The wellbeing evidence emphasises the crucial role played by strong social connections, recently described as ‘the hidden wealth of nations’.<sup>104</sup>

Initiatives from around the country suggest ways in which local government can help foster these crucial connections. For example:

- In the Yorkshire and Humber region, volunteers have been trained and supported to champion health improvement in their own communities, through activities which include supporting self-help groups for fathers, and health walks.<sup>105</sup>
- Haringay Online ([www.haringayonline.com](http://www.haringayonline.com)) is a social networking website set up to strengthen networks in the London Borough of Haringey. The site includes a discussion forum, member-led groups, events and planning updates. It has hosted the largest petition ever signed in the neighbourhood in response to local traffic issues. The strength of the community was demonstrated when members of the social network created by the council collaborated to clear ice from Haringey Passage. The website has “provided a bridge between individuals, groups of individuals and local government officials, making it a true community working together for the benefit of the neighbourhood”.<sup>106</sup>
- The Holy Cross Centre in Camden is host to King’s Cross Timebank, which works to support mental health recovery and promote active participation by homeless people and refugees in the local community. The centre is first and foremost a community resource, also used by students from Camden’s schools and colleges. In one year, 1,643 hours were exchanged between members of the timebank. Because service users are both giving and receiving, they are naturally engaged in building social networks and finding community-led solutions to problems. In this example, less of a separation between those ‘in need’ and the remainder of the population can give rise to solutions that help deal with mental health problems and promote the wellbeing of the general population.<sup>107</sup>

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103 Bunt L and Harris M (2010) *Mass Localism: A way to help small communities solve big social challenges* (London: NESTA).

104 Halpern D (2010) *The Hidden Wealth of Nations* (Cambridge: Polity Press).

105 LG Improvement and Development (2010) *A glass half-full: how an asset approach can improve community health and wellbeing* (London: LG Improvement and Development).

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106 Gibson A (2010) *Local by Social: How local authorities can use social media to achieve more for less* (London: NESTA).

107 The Beacon Scheme, LG Improvement and Development and NESTA (2009) *more than good ideas: the power of innovation in local government* (LG Improvement and Development: London).

## Enhancing local control

There are a number of existing mechanisms that councils can use to genuinely devolve power, choice, control and action to their communities, and these are likely to be added to during the government push towards a Big Society. Understanding how best to use available mechanisms to promote wellbeing will only grow in importance as local authorities receive more power to devolve control at the local level.

Key existing mechanisms include:

### The duty to involve

The duty to involve, in force since 2009, means that local authorities need to consider, as a matter of course, the possibilities for providing information to, consultation with and involvement of representatives of local people. Developing these processes in a way which genuinely asks people to become joint designers and deliverers of council activities is likely to foster wellbeing through promoting feelings of autonomy, competency, connectedness and sense of meaning.

### Decentralisation powers

Using the Local Government and Public Involvement Health Act 2007,<sup>108</sup> councils can shift budgets in upper tier authorities to lower tier authorities including parishes and community groups. It may be the case, for example, that local features like a community centre or park are better managed by community-led budgets. The scope of this type of activity is likely to widen with ideas such as 'devolving budgets to street-level' forming part of the Big Society vision.

### Provide greater opportunities for residents to influence local decisions

Democratic services in South Tyneside used community development practices to raise awareness about ways to be involved in conventional democratic processes. Attendance at the borough's community area forums has increased, as has the proportion of young people registered to vote.<sup>109</sup>

### Increasing the scope of community initiatives to shape projects and funding decisions

In South London, young people help to shape initiatives to improve wellbeing on their estate, highlighted in case study 13. As part of the Wellbeing and Happiness Programme 2009-2012 in Lambeth (see case study 4 in section 2.1 for more information), money has been made available for local community groups and organisations to spend on improving the wellbeing of their local community. They must attend three workshops around the 'Five Ways to Well-being' before they are commissioned.

## Unlocking doors

To promote population wellbeing, local government needs to act in ways that unlock doors to release the energy and ideas of local communities. There is still some way to go before councils up and down the country can be said to have fully realised their capacity to mobilise action in communities. The most potent forms of empowerment are those that aim to maximise the capabilities of local people, rather than simply devolving decisions from local institutions to communities and individuals.

<sup>108</sup> Office of Public Sector Information (2007) *Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007* [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2007/ukpga\\_20070028\\_en\\_1](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2007/ukpga_20070028_en_1)

<sup>109</sup> Hothi *et al.* (2008) *op. cit.*

### Case study 13: Engaging young people about mental health and wellbeing

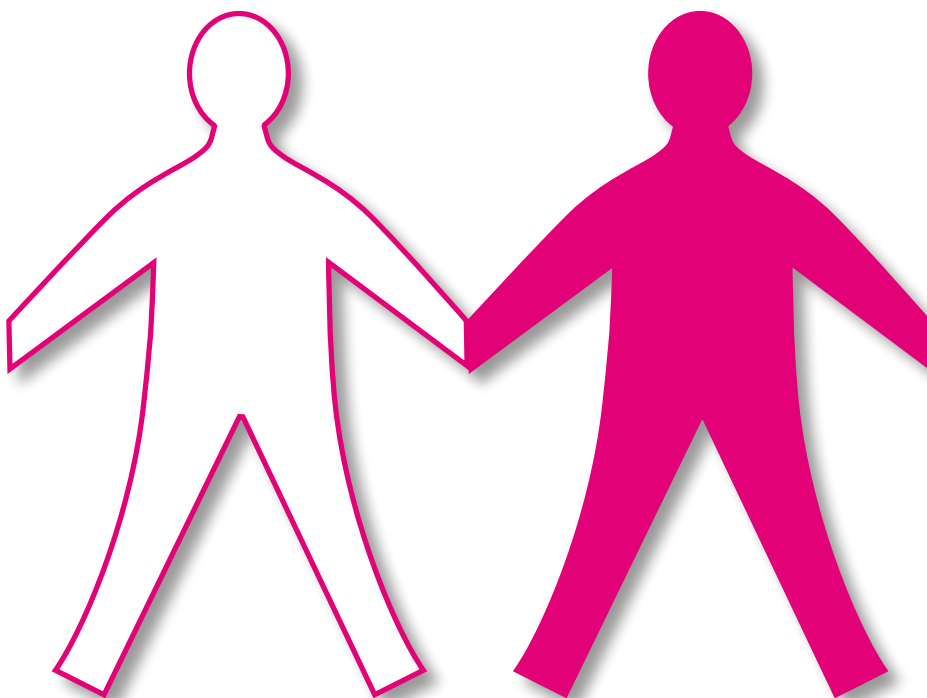
The Honor Oak Estate in Lewisham, South London, is the location of a multi-agency project that is explicitly engaging young residents on the issue of mental health and wellbeing. An initial consultation phase aimed to explore young people's understanding of mental health and wellbeing; identify what factors they felt promoted and limited their wellbeing; and find out what would bring them a greater overall sense of wellbeing. The techniques used during the consultation included one-to-one conversations with young people, a consultation event and a short questionnaire. Some comments from young people involved in a training session held as part of the project included:

"Positive thinking was real good and I'm going to try some of the suggestions"

"Self respect is a good pointer for the future and learning from now how we need to be treated will resonate with us when we get older - showing us signs and patterns to avoid"

The resulting findings and analysis have led to the development of a set of five-year goals for young people and their families on the estate, including improving self-esteem, fostering a sense of community spirit, and developing IT, music and food skills. A stakeholder group made up of residents and agencies working on the estate has been formed to take the work forward. Young people and their families continue to be involved, focusing initially on building their self-esteem and trust.

For more information contact Angelique Thompson, Centre Manager, Honor Oak Youth Centre.



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## 2.4 Organisational activity

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Despite the likely need for job losses and spending reductions in a number of council departments in the short to medium term, local authorities will remain major local employers<sup>110</sup> and buyers. Many council staff and contractors will be local residents. Through the way that HR and procurement policies are implemented, councils can directly promote the material and psycho-social wellbeing of individuals and communities. By becoming ‘wellbeing aware’, councils can improve satisfaction with services and foster trust of local institutions.

This section sets out the following ways that local authorities can use organisational levers to positively influence the lives of council staff, and thereby the lives of citizens:

- supporting psycho-social wellbeing at work
- supporting the economic wellbeing of local communities
- empowering staff to be advocates for wellbeing.

### Supporting psycho-social wellbeing at work

The negative impact of unemployment on mental health and wellbeing has been frequently documented.<sup>111,112</sup> Good-quality employment is important for wellbeing. Work can strengthen social connections and it can provide a sense of meaning, purpose and value, which are important for encouraging feelings of self-worth and satisfaction.

Being in paid work is not always a guarantee of wellbeing, however. A range of factors have a bearing on our wellbeing at work, including levels of pay, working hours and workloads, the levels of support from management, autonomy, creativity, job security, and whether or not the work we do fits with our values. Many of the drivers of a sense of wellbeing at work rest with the actions of HR functions and senior management, although their implementation is often reliant on senior buy-in (see section 2.1). The day-to-day actions of managers and supervisors at all levels are also important to wellbeing.<sup>113</sup>

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110 <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=9656723> (21 May 2010).

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111 Huppert F (2008) *Psychological Wellbeing: Evidence regarding its causes and its consequences* (London: Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project 2008).

112 Clarke AE and Oswald AJ (1994) ‘Unhappiness and unemployment’ *The Economic Journal* 104: 648–659.

113 Dewe P and Kompier M (2008) *Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project. Wellbeing and work: future challenges* (London: Government Office for Science).

Councils that see employee wellbeing as a key part of their local wellbeing agenda benefit economically, as well as improving population wellbeing. Employee wellbeing is one of the most important predictors of effectiveness and productivity at work, as well as loyalty to an organisation.<sup>114</sup> As resources continue to be squeezed and the demand for efficiency increases, promoting the wellbeing of staff will become even more important.

Much of the current focus in workplaces tends to be on health and safety and the implications of stress. While these issues are important to address, they do not by themselves constitute the promotion of wellbeing in the sense of fostering a flourishing workforce. For example, a national survey carried out by nef consulting in 2008 found that an interesting job is more important to employee wellbeing than an absence of stress. The most significant factors in making jobs interesting appear to be having a fair degree of autonomy, getting opportunities to be creative and learning a job that you feel you can do well.<sup>115</sup>

Examples of innovative wellbeing-promoting approaches include:

- NHS Gloucestershire, which is developing a 'wellness' package for its staff. There will be five modules including creative thinking, fitness (diet and exercise), time management, motivation and stress<sup>116</sup>
- Cornwall Council, which has been encouraging local businesses to think about wellbeing in the workplace (see case study 14).

#### Case study 14: Promoting health and wellbeing in workplaces in Cornwall

In 2006, Caradon District Council (now Cornwall Council) invited all organisations in its district to take part in workplace health checks. Following one of these assessments, the employer Ginsters adopted a range of measures to help improve health and wellbeing among its workforce. These included making an on-site gym available 24 hours a day for all staff and their partners; a staff newsletter for employees and their families; safe cycle and walking routes; a volunteer programme; allotments; training to help staff run classes and champion activities; and 'passion evenings' for staff to share their hobbies with colleagues.

By using local providers and existing staff, the project has been able to make its activities affordable for all who want to take part. The initiative has fostered better social connections (particularly among shift-workers). It has also improved the motivation, self-esteem and morale of staff. Ginsters has seen a 14 per cent reduction in health insurance premiums and a 9 per cent reduction in staff turnover over three years.

For more information contact Sue Crutchley, Local Government Improvement and Development Healthy Communities Programme, or see the Boorman Review.<sup>117</sup>

<sup>117</sup> Boorman (2009) *op. cit.*

<sup>114</sup> Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project (2008) *op. cit.*

<sup>115</sup> <http://www.well-beingatwork.net/nation.html> (19 May 2010).

<sup>116</sup> Boorman (2009) *NHS Health and Wellbeing: Final Report* (London: Department of Health).

## Supporting economic wellbeing of local communities

Procurement and recruitment by councils can have a significant impact on local jobs and businesses, especially in times of high unemployment. Both represent important levers for stimulating the flow and circulation of money through the local community.

### Providing local employment opportunities

Councils can enhance the wellbeing of their residents by specifically seeking to employ local people, whenever possible. Recognising the wellbeing risks associated with increasing youth unemployment, Nottingham City Council has secured funding from the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and the Department for Communities and Local Government's Working Neighbourhoods Fund to pay for 30 apprenticeships to learn garden and green space skills.<sup>118</sup> This investment will provide training over two years towards NVQ level 2 in horticulture for young people aged 18-24. It will also contribute to population wellbeing by improving local green spaces.

Councils have a role to play in ensuring that all their employees – including agency and contracted staff – are paid a living wage so that they earn enough to support themselves and their family. They can also encourage local businesses to seek Living Wage Employer accreditation. The campaign by Citizens UK for a living wage has been backed by London's Mayor and it has put an extra £25 million in the pockets of low-paid workers in the UK since 2001. This has had a positive impact on the quality of life of workers, with knock-on benefits for the wider community.<sup>119</sup>

118 Horticulture Week 26 March 2010 <http://www.hortweek.com/channel/ParksAndGardens/article/992532/Nottinghams-parks-energised-team-30-apprentices/> (19 May 2010).

119 <http://www.livingwageemployer.org/about/> (19 May 2010).

### Supporting local businesses

Even when the effects of the coming public spending cuts have been fully implemented in local budgets, the money that councils spend will still represent a large injection of resources into the local economy every year. By thinking carefully about the impact of their procurement policies, councils can make this money stretch further.

With a good mix of large and small tenders, it is possible to achieve economies of scale while also providing opportunities for smaller local businesses to win contracts. Councils can help local enterprises to compete for contracts by running workshops on how to complete tender replies.<sup>120</sup>

As case study 15 shows, councils can play an important role in championing social enterprises. The crucial point is that when councils spend money, they should do so for community benefit. The way they spend can make a real difference to population wellbeing.

120 Rowell A (2010) *op. cit.*

### Case study 15: Supporting the local economy in Sheffield

When Sheffield City Council organised a £1 billion development initiative, it asked its five construction companies to commit to delivering 10 per cent of their work through social enterprises. Interestingly, researchers followed the source of income derived from one contractor to see how it was spent and re-spent in the local area. They found that every £100 spent generated an additional £125 for the local economy. They also found that 20 per cent of the total contract was spent in the immediate area of the construction project, which was one of the most disadvantaged areas of Sheffield.

For more information see [www.pluggingtheleaks.org](http://www.pluggingtheleaks.org)

## Empowering staff to be advocates for wellbeing

The front-line staff employed by local government should be seen as wellbeing advocates – an important channel of communication with local residents and communities. To play this role effectively, however, staff who interact directly with communities – for example community engagement officers, health trainers and park wardens – need training on wellbeing issues and organisational support for autonomous and creative working.



Councils are increasingly investing in initiatives that aim to improve staff understanding of wellbeing and mental health issues; to the benefit not only of the staff themselves but also the wider community that they come into contact with (see case study 16). For example, Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is a technique that aims to provide the non-expert with knowledge of the signs and symptoms of a range of mental health problems and the confidence to intervene when a problem is observed. This can be thought of as parallel to the competency provided in physical first-aid programmes. MHFA is designed to raise awareness of mental health issues, help prevent the deterioration of mental health problems and promote the recovery of good mental health.<sup>121</sup> Awareness training is often aimed at front-line staff who work with members of the public, but can also be delivered to other groups.

<sup>121</sup> [www.mhfaengland.org.uk](http://www.mhfaengland.org.uk) (19 May 2010).

### Case study 16: Mental health and wellbeing training and assessment in Lewisham

Lewisham Council implemented a rolling programme of mental health and wellbeing training for staff in libraries, colleges and customer services roles. This led to the development of personal action plans: each participant listed one thing they could do to improve their own mental health, one idea for improving the mental health of their customers and one thing that the organisation as a whole could do. The points relating to organisational actions were used to identify council-wide trends, and were fed back to the training department.

In addition, Lewisham has aimed to integrate mental wellbeing into its cultural services, through Mental Well-being Impact Assessments of libraries, theatres, arts programmes and leisure centres. The results of this were a series of actions through which the council and its partners could evaluate the effectiveness of Lewisham's cultural strategy.

Positive outcomes from this work have included:

- improved stakeholder engagement arrangements through the establishment of a community gardening forum
- the identification of initiatives that significantly improve mental wellbeing, such as a local line-dancing club that brings older people together
- agreement on actions to address specific gaps in provision, for example the expansion of youth arts provision in the south of the borough.

For more information, contact Hilary Renwick, Head of Cultural Services, Lewisham Council.

Councils are rightly concerned about what local residents think of them and the services they provide. This is reflected in surveys measuring satisfaction with council services, and is a crucial part of the dialogue councils seek to create with their citizens.

It is important to ensure that front-line staff are in a position to understand the factors influencing residents' experiences and that they can be responsive when it comes to providing solutions. Councils can help with this by:

- Empowering staff to act on ideas they develop through their contact with members of the public.

- Promoting wider engagement through local area partnerships. For example, a sub-group on each of the 'Five Ways to Well-being' could provide discussion and learning opportunities for staff from a range of policy areas and professional disciplines, especially if opened up to residents and external partners.

Encouraging council staff to find innovative solutions in partnership with local communities is likely to increase satisfaction with services and improve people's trust in local institutions.



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# 2.5 Measuring wellbeing outcomes

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The systematic measurement of wellbeing outcomes is crucial if local authorities are to act on, and see the benefits from, promoting population wellbeing. Given the replacement of the National Indicator Set,<sup>122</sup> there will be considerably less central direction than in recent years about what outcomes local authorities should measure and how they should go about measuring them.

This provides a unique opportunity for councils to design a measurement approach that best fits their remit to improve the lives of local people, works within their local context and provides a comprehensive and multi-dimensional picture of local wellbeing. Measurement is essential to properly assess the impact of activities and their contribution towards meeting wellbeing-related goals. It can also steer local activity in a direction that promotes wellbeing. In this way, measurement becomes an important tactic in ensuring that a commitment to wellbeing promotion becomes embedded throughout local government.

This section explores what performance officers, service managers and project officers need to take on board when measuring wellbeing. It also identifies some of the measurement options available. It is organised into three parts:

- Understanding why you want to measure.
- What measurement options are available?
- What indicators are available?

## Understanding why you want to measure

The type of wellbeing indicators you choose should be influenced by what you want to measure and why. nef worked collaboratively with the three local authorities involved in the Local Wellbeing Project to produce a framework for decision-making.<sup>123</sup> The framework makes a key distinction about levels of measurement; that is, whose wellbeing should be measured.

### Measurement at the universal level

This applies to the population as a whole. It can be used to produce headline indicators as an overall guide to the effectiveness of action to improve local wellbeing. It can also enable comparisons between different population groups. The universal approach has been applied by Caerphilly County Borough Council, which has adopted headline measures of both objective and subjective wellbeing alongside a measure of resource consumption, as part of its sustainable development strategy, Living Better, Using Less. The council has set targets for 2030 based on these indicators.<sup>124</sup>

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122 The replacement of the National Indicator Set was announced on 13 October 2010. See <http://www.communities.gov.uk/statements/corporate/localgovaccountability>

123 Steuer N, Marks N and Thompson S (2007) *Measuring Well-being at the Local Level: A report for the Audit Commission* (London: nef).

124 [www.caerphilly.gov.uk/sustainable/english/home.html](http://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/sustainable/english/home.html) (19 May 2010).

## Measurement at the targeted level

This allows a detailed exploration of the wellbeing of people who are using specific services or are involved with particular initiatives. This will often involve measuring wellbeing at different points in time, in order to track changes before and after an intervention. Hampshire County Council is using a targeted approach to assess the wellbeing of older people, with a view to reducing isolation and promoting independent living.

The framework also highlights that in some cases measurements might best be carried out within particular geographical areas rather than across the whole of a borough, district or county. This will apply where there are particular concerns about the wellbeing in an area or there is interest in measuring the impact of services with a particular geographical focus.

## What measurement options are available?

There is an established body of indicators that can be used to take forward the measurement of wellbeing at these different levels. Each has strengths and weaknesses, and the following examples show some of the ways in which local authorities have introduced wellbeing measurement to date:

- **Single measure of overall wellbeing**  
This asks residents to report on their life satisfaction, using questions such as “All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole nowadays?”  
This question is used in a number of international and national surveys, which means there is a large amount of comparison data available for different populations over time, and it was included in the Department for Communities and

Local Government (CLG) question bank.<sup>125</sup>

- **Using existing scales for measuring subjective wellbeing**<sup>126</sup>  
Some scales expand measurement of satisfaction with life into a number of measures. In some cases it is extended to a domain approach, where satisfaction with aspects of life such as health, relationships and community is explored. Other scales allow specific aspects of wellbeing, such as self-esteem or engagement in activities, to be measured in depth. The North West Mental Wellbeing Survey (see case study 17) provides an example of drawing on an established scale (the WEMWBS scale<sup>127</sup>) at the regional level, pooling the resources of a number of neighbouring local authorities and PCTs.
- **Developing a multi-dimensional framework for measuring wellbeing**  
Understanding wellbeing as a dynamic interaction between many factors means that local authorities will often want to choose an approach that captures a number of different elements. An example framework for this sort of approach at population level, which offers a number of opportunities for application at the local level, is the National Accounts of Well-being framework proposed by nef.<sup>128</sup>
- **Measuring wellbeing within specific life domains**  
This allows an exploration of experiences as they relate to particular aspects or dimensions of people’s lives. Nottingham City Council took this approach in

125 Department for Communities and Local Government (2008) *Place Survey 2008-09: Manual* (London: CLG).

126 Steuer *et al.* (2007) *op. cit.*

127 Tennant R, Hiller L, Fishwick R, Platt S, Joseph S, Weich S, Parkinson J, Secker J and Stewart-Brown S (2007) ‘The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS): development and UK validation’ *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes* 5. <http://www.healthscotland.com/scotlands-health/population/Measuring-positive-mental-health.aspx> (19 May 2010).

128 Michaelson *et al.* (2009) *op. cit.*

measuring the wellbeing of local children and young people within domains relating to family, friends, living environment, school and self.<sup>129</sup>

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129 Marks N, Shah H and Westall A (2004) *The power and potential of well-being indicators: Measuring young people's well-being in Nottingham* (London: nef)

### Case Study 17: North West Mental Wellbeing Survey 2009

In 2009, PCTs and local authorities in the northwest region collaborated to jointly fund a survey of mental wellbeing. The survey aimed to provide a new baseline at both local and regional level to support outcome-based commissioning and the evaluation of interventions and MWIAs. The study also aimed to support more comprehensive JSNAs through the identification of population groups with lower and higher levels of wellbeing. The availability of positive outcome data is seen as a significant element in the shift towards investment in prevention and health improvement that has since been achieved. The project has also helped to ensure better targeting of interventions to reduce inequalities and improve mental health and wellbeing. The survey was based on 44 questions that sought to measure a 'wide range of determinants of mental wellbeing such as feelings, relationships, health, life events, lifestyle and place'. The survey also incorporated the seven-item short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS). This scale was developed as a tool to measure the positive aspects of mental health, in contrast to many previous survey measures that tended to focus on the presence or absence of mental illness or distress. The survey used face-to-face interviewing with 18,500 residents of the region, including some from every PCT area. In some areas additional interviews were commissioned to obtain information that was robust at a more local level.<sup>130</sup>

Craig McKeith is Health Development Manager at Cheshire East Council, one of the local authorities that jointly commissioned the survey. He reports that the survey has provided baseline data in advance of the council's planned mental wellbeing promotion activity. Key findings from the survey that are helping to shape the council's work include evidence of the links between unemployment and poor wellbeing and between good mental health and exercise. Craig said: "It is very valuable to have good localised data which indicates where there might be problems and points in the direction of interventions." The council hopes to participate in repeats of the survey in order to "make causal links to work in the future and be able to map changes".

For more information contact Jude Stansfield, Public Mental Health and Well-being Lead, NHS Northwest.

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130 Deacon L, Carlin H, Spalding J, Giles S, Stansfield J, Hughes S, Perkins C and Bellis MA (2010) *North West Mental Wellbeing Survey 2009: Summary* (Liverpool: North West Public Health Observatory).

## What indicators are available?

Measuring wellbeing outcomes does not always have to mean collecting new information. Existing data can be brought together from:

- JSNAs
- existing surveys of local residents
- other data-gathering exercises linked to locally agreed indicators.

It is likely that these data sources will be particularly useful for capturing the socio-economic conditions affecting people's wellbeing. These include housing conditions, employment status, income and benefits at the individual level, plus issues such as the local labour market and traffic safety at the area level. Looking at how outcomes are distributed across the local population should be a central component, so that inequalities between different groups can be tracked over time.



To measure wellbeing effectively, councils should also introduce measures that look at the psycho-social aspect of wellbeing – often referred to as subjective wellbeing indicators. These measure people's life experiences and their feelings about themselves and their interactions with the world. Some of this information will be available through familiar data sources. For example, councils have reported on National Indicators which have included measures of subjective aspects of wellbeing including:

- NI 119 was based on the proportion of people reporting that their health is good or very good; a measure which, although apparently based on objective health, has been shown to be strongly linked to people's subjective experience of life, rather than their physical health.
- NI 2 looked at the proportion of people reporting that they belong strongly to their neighbourhood. This measures an aspect of social relationships that is vital to overall wellbeing.

Notwithstanding the changes to the National Indicator Set, it is still likely to be extremely useful to collect these sorts of measures locally, considering which of the indicator types discussed above will best meet the council's measurement goals.

However, new indicators of the various types discussed under measurement options above may also need to be woven into mechanisms such as the JSNA and residents' surveys to capture the psycho-social dimensions of wellbeing fully. The MWIA toolkit can also help local authorities measure wellbeing as highlighted in the 'MWIA as a tool for supporting the measurement of wellbeing' box.

## MWIA as a tool for supporting the measurement of wellbeing

The MWIA toolkit (referred to in more detail in Section 2.2) guides users of the toolkit through a process to identify whether:

- indicators already in use are relevant to people’s psychological and social wellbeing. An example of matching components of wellbeing to the existing indicators is highlighted below

<b>MWIA protective factor: enhancing control</b>	<b>Existing indicators</b>
<b>A sense of control</b> , for example setting and pursuit of goals, ability to shape own circumstances	<b>young people’s participation in positive activities</b> (PSA 14)  <b>percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality</b> (PSA 21)

- more specialised measures need to be developed. A flowchart to enable users of the toolkit to devise new ones is available in the toolkit. An example for creating a localised indicator is shown below.

<b>MWIA protective factor: increasing resilience and community assets</b>	<b>Specialised indicator</b>	<b>How they will collect the information</b>
<b>Decisions and choices</b> , for example the ability to understand, think clearly and function socially	Participants in intervention list the decisions that they are struggling with in their lives	List at beginning, review at the end

For more information, visit [www.hiagateway.org.uk](http://www.hiagateway.org.uk).

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# Part 3: Moving forward

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Local government is already engaging with the evidence base on wellbeing. The numerous case studies in this report show this. But there is much more to be done. The Big Society agenda provides an important opportunity for local government to take action on wellbeing. It recognises that when people are treated as if they are capable and feel they have control over what happens to them and can take action on their own behalf, their physical health and wellbeing improves. It recognises that when individuals and groups get together and work together, support networks grow stronger and people become more resilient.

But it is also the case that levels of wellbeing among individuals and communities will determine the extent to which they can participate in the Big Society in the first place. And the factors that drive wellbeing are unequally distributed among local populations.

The challenge for local government will be to provide practical support and access to local resources in ways that support material and psycho-social wellbeing, so that people with different levels of capacity can have an equal chance of affecting change in their local area. This will require that local government adopts a genuinely new way of doing things. This report has shown what can be done at a local level to improve the wellbeing of individuals and communities. It has highlighted the best practice of 'early adopters' across the country. It has indicated

the scale of the difference that could be made if every local authority were to embed wellbeing into every activity and at every level, from the strategic to the practical.

The final part of this report is designed to support councils keen to initiate or build on work that aims to promote wellbeing. It is organised into three sections:

## **Priority action areas**

This sets out a number of suggestions for local government to consider across five key functions of local government: strategic leadership, services and commissioning, strengthening communities, organisational activity, and measuring wellbeing outcomes.

## **Developing your capacity**

This makes suggestions about how to build resources, capability and confidence within councils to strengthen local government's impact on population wellbeing.

## **Finding out more**

This provides links to a number of resources and toolkits that can assist local government in developing its role.

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# 3.1 Priority action areas

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This report has outlined a number of ways to put action on wellbeing at the population level at the heart of local government business. Based on our research and the experience of ‘early adopters’, we are able to make a number of suggestions that, if implemented, should help councils to have a positive impact on the wellbeing of their local population.

## **Strategic leadership**

To make action on wellbeing central to the day-to-day business of a council, leaders can:

- see it as their responsibility to set an overarching vision for local wellbeing within environmental limits, and to implement mechanisms that provide strategic oversight of the wellbeing agenda
- develop an overarching wellbeing framework to guide council activity, with someone from the senior level of local government assuming responsibility
- allocate financial resources to strategies and programmes that work to promote wellbeing and prevent mental ill health
- advocate for the use of the wellbeing power and forthcoming power of general competence and communicate their benefits to council staff at all levels, including those in strategic roles and people working on the front line of service provision.

## **Services and commissioning**

Commissioners and service providers can act to:

- use the commissioning process to encourage providers to identify and deliver against wellbeing outcomes – both material and psycho-social – as well as service-specific goals
- use the established evidence base to build wellbeing into the way services are designed
- take a co-production approach wherever possible, so that services are designed and delivered in partnership between users and professionals
- include direct wellbeing promotion activities in the range of local government provision.

## **Strengthening communities**

Officers employed throughout local government can maximise the capabilities of local people and empower them to help create their own wellbeing by:

- developing asset-based approaches that draw on the existing capabilities and assets of residents to promote wellbeing at the local level
- fostering the crucial social connections between people that are needed to build the strong networks required for the Big Society, where people feel competent and powerful enough to help develop workable solutions to seemingly intractable problems

- devolving genuine power and control to communities. It is important to identify opportunities to decentralise, and to involve residents in democratic processes and decisions.

### **Organisational level**

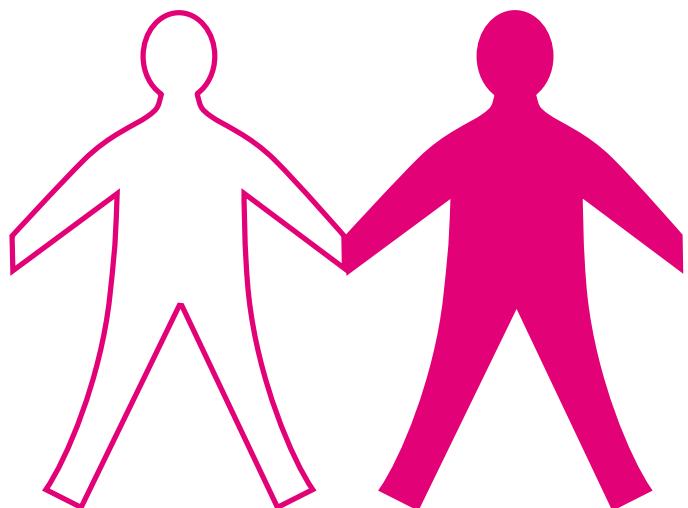
HR and procurement directors can make use of organisational levers to:

- actively support the psycho-social wellbeing of council staff and help local businesses to do the same with their employees
- use procurement and recruitment policies to have a direct impact on the strength of the local economy and the economic wellbeing of residents
- foster a working culture that supports staff to understand and respond to factors affecting the wellbeing of local residents and communities.

### **Measuring outcomes**

Performance officers, service managers and project officers can:

- bring together existing data on levels of material wellbeing, including variations in its distribution throughout the local population
- measure psycho-social wellbeing through subjective measures that capture people's experience of their lives.





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## 3.2 Developing your capacity

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In order to effectively implement the suggestions made in the previous section, councils will need to build capacity in many of the areas outlined in this report. Based on our research, we suggest a number of ways to build capability and confidence in local government, in order to have a positive impact on people's wellbeing.

To enable elected members and local-authority chief executives to assume the leadership role argued for here, investment is needed to help provide:

- training for elected members and chief executives on how councils can act to promote wellbeing at the population level
- an 'influence manual' that provides elected members, council officers, partners and community groups with the key arguments and levers to elevate wellbeing to the strategic level of local government.

To support service design and commissioning for wellbeing, more investment in information and evidence is needed. This should include support for the development of the evidence base in relation to:

- policies and interventions that enhance wellbeing
- examples of best practice from local government to complement those in this report
- analyses of cost effectiveness and longer-term saving models from investing in, and commissioning for, wellbeing.

At the community level and organisational level, staff training has a key role to play. Councils will need to:

- provide training for their staff on the factors that promote wellbeing, including staff responsible for community engagement
- train staff responsible for developing strategies and initiatives in community engagement techniques
- provide specialist training for HR managers on employee wellbeing.

To facilitate the measurement of wellbeing outcomes, those employed as council performance and information analysts should be encouraged to get up-to-date advice on the use of subjective measures and information on existing wellbeing indicators.

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## 3.3 Finding out more

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This report is supported by a number of expert contributions. These are available online at: [www.idea.gov.uk/wellbeing](http://www.idea.gov.uk/wellbeing)  
They include:

- The origins of local government and public health by Dr John Ashton, Joint Director of Public Health for NHS Cumbria.
- How local government can promote wellbeing through physical activity by Andrew McCulloch, CEO of the Mental Health Foundation.
- Mental health, inequalities and local government by Dr Lynne Friedli.
- Mental Well-Being Impact Assessment: a way for people to contribute to decision-making by Anthea Cooke and Lynn Snowden, Directors of Inukshuk Consultancy.
- Reflections on 21st Century wellbeing by Marcia Brophy, Wellbeing and Resilience Programme Leader at the Young Foundation.
- A focus on wellbeing in Manchester by Sir Richard Leese, Leader of Manchester City Council.
- Mental health promotion in the current economic climate by Michael Parsonage, ex-Treasury economist and Senior Policy Adviser at the Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health.

The Local Government Improvement and Development website [www.local.gov.uk/improvement](http://www.local.gov.uk/improvement) has a healthy communities web resource, and this includes a wealth of information on health improvement at local government level and tackling health inequalities.

Information on Mental Wellbeing Impact Assessment is available at: [www.hiagateway.org.uk](http://www.hiagateway.org.uk)

Local Government Improvement and Development's (previously IDeA) report on local government's role in addressing the social determinants of health is at: [www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=17415112](http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=17415112)

The National Mental Health Development Unit is currently developing a practical guide to commissioning for mental health and wellbeing across the NHS, social care and public health. This is in development and further information on its production and publication will be made on the NHMDU website ([www.nmhd.org.uk](http://www.nmhd.org.uk)), where you can also sign up to receive NMHDU email bulletins.

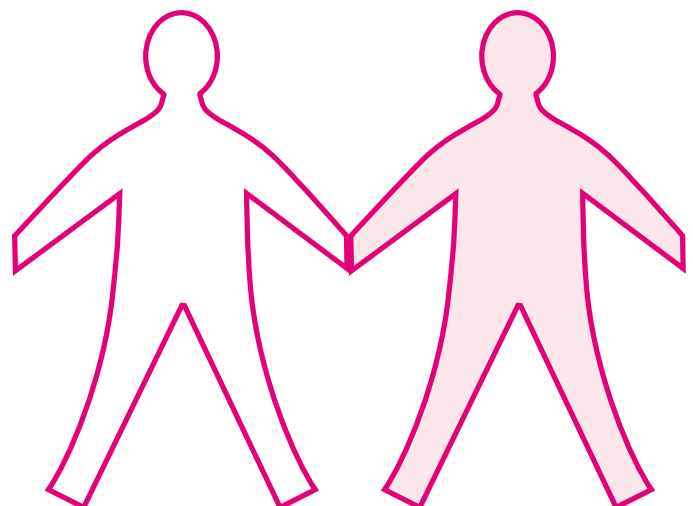
In addition, NMHDU has been working with the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) on a toolkit aimed at supporting the NHS, local authorities and their partners on population mental health and wellbeing. Plans are underway for UCLAN to publish this work shortly. Information on this work will also be made available on the NMHDU website.

Information on the Young Foundation's Local Wellbeing Project is at: [www.youngfoundation.org/our-work/networks-and-collaboratives/the-local-wellbeing-project/local-wellbeing-project](http://www.youngfoundation.org/our-work/networks-and-collaboratives/the-local-wellbeing-project/local-wellbeing-project)

Information on the Mental Health Foundation's research into the drivers of positive mental health and the risk factors for mental ill health (including practical research projects to improve wellbeing) is at: <http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/>

Work by nef on measuring local wellbeing, National Accounts of Well-being and the *Five Ways to Well-being* are available at: <http://neweconomics.org/programmes/wellbeing>

Information on the Big Society agenda can be found at: [www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/407789/building-big-society.pdf](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/407789/building-big-society.pdf)



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# Appendix: The Five Ways to Well-being

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In 2009 the UK government's futures think-tank, Foresight, conducted a large-scale review into the current state of knowledge on 'mental capital'. The project commissioned the centre for wellbeing at nef to develop 'five ways to wellbeing'<sup>131</sup> using the information gathered for the review: a set of evidence-based actions to improve personal wellbeing.

**Connect...** With the people around you. With family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. At home, work, school or in your local community. Think of these as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.

**Be active...** Go for a walk or run. Step outside. Cycle. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity you enjoy and that suits your level of mobility and fitness.

**Take notice...** Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment, whether you are walking to work, eating lunch or talking to friends. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

**Keep learning...** Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Sign up for that course. Take on a different responsibility at work. Fix a bike. Learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food. Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun.

**Give...** Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.

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131 [www.neweconomics.org/projects/five-ways-well-being](http://www.neweconomics.org/projects/five-ways-well-being)  
(14 Sep 2010).



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