

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD AND PARTNERSHIP

25TH SEPTEMBER 2013

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH

MEASURING WELLBEING

SUMMARY

This paper provides an outline to the board of ways by which wellbeing may be measured, and the potential challenges in doing so. It asks the board to consider these tools and how they may best be applied.

RECOMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Board considers the tools available for measuring wellbeing.

BACKGROUND

1. Measuring wellbeing is of increasing profile nationally and the Stockton Health and Wellbeing Board is charged with improving the health and wellbeing of the population through the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, measured through the Strategy delivery plan.

DEFINITION

2. A clear definition of well-being is hard to find, with many studies having focused on particular aspects of well-being, such as physical health, psychological health or social functionality.ⁱ The World Health Organisation perhaps comes close to defining well-being in its definition of mental health as: 'a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.'ⁱⁱ
3. Well-being has also been the source of recent debate in the popular media, with discussion on introducing a General Well-being index (GWB), similar to

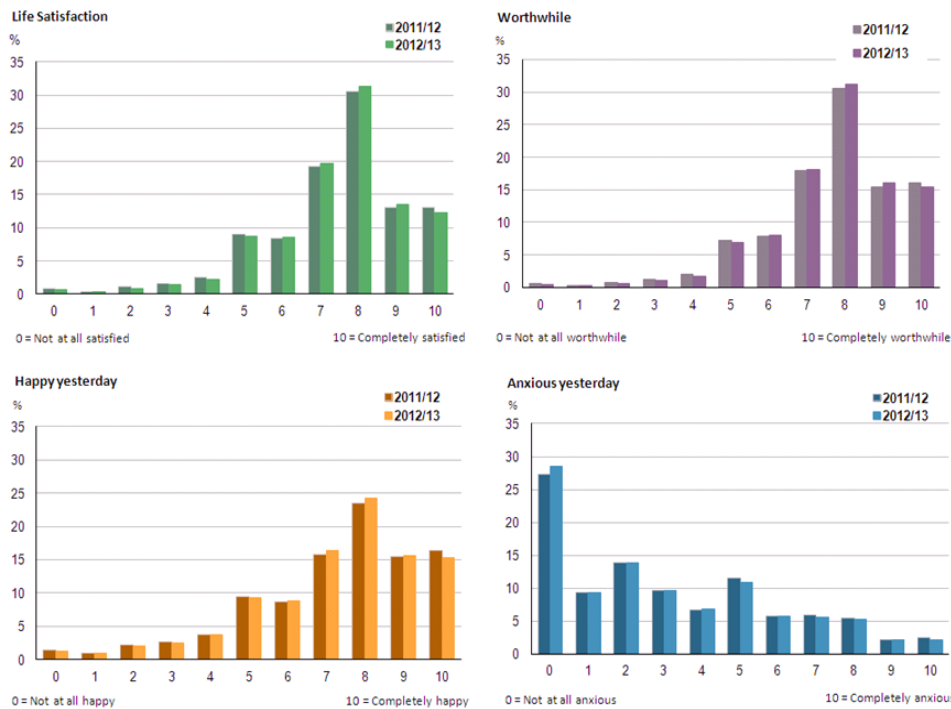
the way in which countries face comparison on the basis of GDP. In this scenario well-being was made synonymous with happiness.

MEASUREMENT

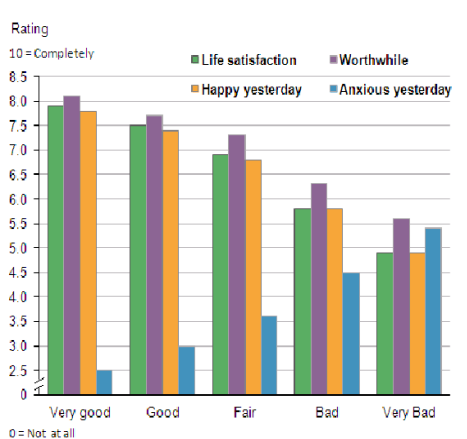
4. Because of difficulties in establishing a start point many of the tools available to measure well-being bring a specific focus, with the majority assessing well-being almost entirely from the perspective of an individual's health. Many are lengthy and go into great depth exploring the impact of chronic disease symptoms upon the day-to-day life of individuals. (Examples are attached: Appendix 1 and Appendix 2)
5. Of particular note, is the recently established Office for National Statistics (ONS) Wellbeing measures. They have produced a simple four question survey, which has been issued since 2011, along with the Annual Population Survey. At present only national data is available, however the ONS plans to publish data from across the UK, including estimates for Local Authority Districts in October 2013.
6. The four questions asked are each scored from 0-10 and are as follows:
 - Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?
 - Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?
 - Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?
 - Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?ⁱⁱⁱ
7. Stockton annual Residents' Survey also focuses on the link between health and wellbeing, including four questions related to self-reported health and impact of disability on daily life, and issued with multiple choice answers:
 - How is your health in general? Would you say it is ...
 - Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?
 - Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts. Please tick the box that best describes your experience of each over the last two weeks.
I've been feeling optimistic about the future
 - Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts. Please tick the box that best describes your experience of each over the last two weeks.
I've been dealing with problems well

DATA FINDINGS

8. Whilst a wide range of factors impact upon our well-being, evidence extrapolated from the ONS data shows that: 'self-reported health had the strongest association with all the measures of personal well-being, the second strongest association was employment status and the third was relationship status.'^{iv}
9. Data from the national survey has been broken down according to a number of parameters. Overall there is a slight improvement in well-being for 2012/13 across all 4 comparators since 2011/12:



10. Whilst the ONS goes into significant detail on the data, with data broken down and comparisons provided for a number of different groups within society, of particular relevance to this board are the health trends in well-being shown in the following chart:



11. As self reported health declines, so does well-being. Anxiety inversely increases.ⁱⁱⁱ

CONSIDERATIONS

12. Reliability of tools such as this is an important consideration. It is important to recognise the subjectivity of the data, and the natural variation inherent in people answering the questions differently depending on e.g. mood and the day's events. On an individual level and with small groups, data of this kind is easily interpreted in different ways. Its use on a large scale helps eliminate much of this error, so caution is needed if the Board considers using a similar tool. Whilst this tool may be of value on a borough wide scale, particularly when compared against the national ONS data, it would be of very limited value when used with small focus groups, or sub-sections of the population.

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ⁱ Dodge R, Daly A O, et al.; The challenge of defining wellbeing *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 2(3), 222-235. doi:10.5502/ijw.v2i3.4 .

ⁱⁱ Mental Health: A State of Well-being; The World Health Organisation; http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/mental_health/en/; viewed 09/09/2013.

ⁱⁱⁱ Personal Well-being in the UK, 2012/13; Statistical Bulletin; Office for National Statistics; 30 July 2013

^{iv} Oguz S, Merad S, et al.; Measuring National Well-being – What matters most to Personal Well-being?; Office for National Statistics; 30/05/2013.