

# Our Bright Future

## Monitoring Well-Being

July 2018

### What is well-being?

The following definition of well-being is provided by the Big Lottery Fund<sup>1</sup>:

Well-being can be understood as **how people feel and how they function**, both on a personal and a social level, and how they evaluate their lives as a whole. To break this down, how people feel refers to **emotions** such as **happiness** or **anxieties**. How people function refers to things such as their sense of **competence** or their **sense of being connected** to those around them. How people evaluate their life as a whole is captured in their **satisfaction with their lives**, or how they rate their lives in comparison with the best possible life.



Mental well-being describes a state of positive state of being, thinking, behaving and feeling whereas mental health is often used to describe a range of states from excellent mental health to severe mental health problems and incorporates emotional, psychological, cognitive and social well-being. The term 'mental health' is sometimes used to mean an absence of a mental disorder.

### Why is it important to monitor well-being?

The benefits of engagement with the natural environment and of volunteering on well-being have been well documented<sup>2,3,4,5</sup>. Given the activities undertaken through Our Bright Future projects, positive well-being is likely to be a key benefit for participants of the Programme. In particular, well-being links to the first Our Bright Future outcome relating to positive impacts for young people: **Participation in the Our Bright Future programme has had positive impacts on young people equipping them with the skills, experience and confidence to lead environmental change**. Many projects are also specifically targeting young people who would benefit from improvements in well-being. Some of these young people are vulnerable or disadvantaged due to unemployment, poverty, anxiety and isolation or physical or learning disabilities.

<sup>1</sup> [https://b.3cdn.net/nefoundation/7a378df45f4fe612cc\\_a3m6i6g49.pdf](https://b.3cdn.net/nefoundation/7a378df45f4fe612cc_a3m6i6g49.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/sites/default/files/2018-05/r1\\_literature\\_review\\_well-being\\_benefits\\_of\\_wild\\_places\\_lres.pdf](https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/sites/default/files/2018-05/r1_literature_review_well-being_benefits_of_wild_places_lres.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/127020>

<sup>4</sup> [http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/careers/files/2016/02/res\\_well\\_being\\_impact\\_volunteering\\_factsheet.pdf](http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/careers/files/2016/02/res_well_being_impact_volunteering_factsheet.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/sites/default/files/2018-05/r3\\_the\\_health\\_and\\_well-being\\_impacts\\_of\\_volunteering\\_with\\_the\\_wildlife\\_trusts\\_-\\_university\\_of\\_essex\\_report\\_3\\_0.pdf](https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/sites/default/files/2018-05/r3_the_health_and_well-being_impacts_of_volunteering_with_the_wildlife_trusts_-_university_of_essex_report_3_0.pdf)

Collecting baseline and follow up data can tell us a lot about what strategies work best and what helps people improve and sustain mental well-being. Recognising changes in well-being resulting from a project can help to demonstrate its impact and potential for longer term benefits for young people. This evidence indicates the value of the project to society and can help to support the case for future funding and investment.

Monitoring well-being in collaboration with participants can also support reflection and help them to recognise their own personal development and benefits they have received from participating.



## How can you monitor well-being?

There are many models designed to monitor and track changes in well-being, each with their own merits and limitations. Our Bright Future as a programme are encouraging the use of the **Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWS)**. The WEMWS is a scale which is often used by scientists and psychologists to measure well-being. We also know that at least five Our Bright Future projects are already using Warwick Edinburgh, or elements of it, in their monitoring of participants.

Its strengths are that it is positively worded, represents positive attributes of well-being and covers both feeling and functioning. Extensive use of the scale has shown it to be easy to complete, and to capture concepts of well-being familiar to general and minority populations.

Examples of two statements included in the scale are shown below.

**Please tick (✓) the box that best describes your experience of each over the last 2 weeks.**

Statements	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time	Score =
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	1	2	3	✓	5	4
I've been feeling useful	1	2	3	4	✓	5

## More about the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale

**WEMWBS** is a 14-item scale scored by summing responses to each statement (e.g. *I've been feeling optimistic about the future*) answered on a **1-5 Likert scale** to provide a single score ranging from 14-70.

**SWEMWBS** is a shortened version of WEMWBS based on a seven item scale for which item scores need transforming (see [guidance](#)). The seven items relate more to functioning than to feeling and therefore offer a slightly different perspective on mental well-being.

### Who is it designed for?

The developers of the WEMWBS emphasise it has only been validated by those **aged 13-74** and do not recommend its use with children aged under 13 because it has not been validated with this group. They do however recommend another scale for children aged 8-13. This is [the Stirling Children's Well-Being Scale](#).

### When should it be used?

Ideally the scale is administered **on a number of occasions** e.g. pre-participation, during participation, after participation and/or following-up some time after the end of participation. The period of time that you would be asking participants to think about when they are answering the statements is the previous two weeks, up to the completion of the scale.

### How should it be administered?

The scale was designed to be administered as a **self-complete survey** and not in interview situations where an interviewer reads out the items to respondents and completes their responses for them. However, we acknowledge that this might be necessary for some young people due to literacy and/or learning difficulties.

### What else should be asked alongside the scale?

You are likely to already be collecting **socio-demographic data** from participants and it would be useful for you to gather this alongside the scale in order to allow for comparisons e.g. between age, gender and various other demographic groups. It will also be important to note where a participant has not provided a response to a statement.

We would also suggest **asking an open question(s) alongside the scale** in order to support understanding. This might help to establish attribution i.e. to establish to what extent any changes in response have been the result of Our Bright Future project activities or other external factors. It may also help to understand the specific reasons for different response changes.

### What will the data show?

A total should be generated for each person, providing a single score ranging from 14-70. The WEMWBS was originally **designed and validated for use with populations** and therefore this should be averaged for a group of people. According to a [user](#)

[guide](#) published in 2008, the average population mean score is around 51, varying according to the population group studied.

The important aspect for you to assess is the **change between the scores of the same group of people at two points in time** as this might indicate your project has made a difference (you would need to consider whether this change could be attributed to other factors as well as your project). Results should be presented as a mean score for the population of interest, with either a standard deviation or 95% confidence interval (see: 'Find Confidence Interval' on <https://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm>). Further statistical tests are also encouraged to assess how likely the differences are to have arisen by chance. Results are more likely to be significant if the groups being compared are large, and less likely if the groups are small. See the official user guide for further details on assessing group change.

The WEMWBS has however been used **on an individual level** within some studies, and it is suggested that a change of about three or more points can be considered significant. If an individual's score increased by three or more points, WEMWBS would be demonstrating that mental well-being meaningfully improved over the time period whereas a decrease of three to eight points would demonstrate that a meaningful decline in mental well-being. The developers suggest changes in an individual's score should be interpreted with caution.



### What are the limitations of WEMWBS?

The WEMWBS has been extensively used and validated by the developers however it is important to note its limitations. The tool does not allow for attribution to a particular intervention and, when used as a standalone tool, there is no evidence gathered to offer understanding of the results. This means there is no way to interpret changes in score unless you have undertaken further investigation.

The results for any particular day may also be influenced by how an individual is feeling at any one point in time e.g. they may have had a bad morning or a particularly good breakfast and this could influence how they report against each statement.

Important limitations recognised in literature relate to susceptibility to social desirability bias, item redundancy, and scale length (20 statements and 20 adjectives).

## Use of the WEMWBS

### Consent to participate

Participants should be made aware of the content and purpose of the questions they will be asked before they consent to participating in any monitoring. You should reassure them that all responses will remain confidential and anonymous when reported. If, at any point, you are asked to share your data with the Programme, we would ask you to anonymise it. You should also explain to participants that the questions relate to their thoughts and feelings in the past two weeks and that you ideally wish to follow up with them in the future.

### Seeking permission

The WEMWBS is free to use but is copyrighted to NHS Health Scotland and the Universities of Warwick and Edinburgh. Permission can be sought by registering to use the copyrighted scale online using the [registration form](#) on the University of Warwick WEMWBS webpage.

If the scale is reproduced, it must include the copyright statement which appears below it and no changes to its wording, response categories or layout must be made.

### Copyright statement

Any report regarding use of WEMWBS also needs to include the following text:

*'The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale was funded by the Scottish Executive National Programme for improving mental health and well-being, commissioned by NHS Health Scotland, developed by the University of Warwick and the University of Edinburgh, and is jointly owned by NHS Health Scotland, the University of Warwick and the University of Edinburgh.'*

### Further reading

The following sources were used to develop this guide, please access them for further information, particularly on analysing and reporting your data, including how to deal with missing data.

<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/med/research/platform/wemwbs>

[https://www.corc.uk.net/media/1244/wemwbs\\_practitioneruserguide.pdf](https://www.corc.uk.net/media/1244/wemwbs_practitioneruserguide.pdf)