



# LEICESTERSHIRE

## JOINT STRATEGIC NEEDS ASSESSMENT

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# Well-being

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

There is a strong argument for gaining a better understanding of the happiness of a population. Jones (2006) states that the “mental and emotional well-being of citizens improves their performance and broadens the intellectual, physical and social resources of a nation.” Generally speaking, being happy enables people to reach their potential and lead full and contented lives.

In the last few years, happiness and well-being have become increasingly important areas of public policy (OECD, 2011b), with increasing interest from central government as well as a number of high profile advocates (Richard Layard, Joseph Stiglitz). This is in part due to the gradual realisation that a purely economic growth-based approach to happiness and well-being - one that equates increases in GDP to increases in quality of life – has fundamental flaws and limited power to increase overall happiness (OECD, 2011b). Although there are some (e.g. Booth et al, 2012) who argue against this view, the current global financial crisis has only served to support the view that economics on its own, is not a driver of well-being.

Layard (2005) notes that income has become a proxy for national happiness when we should rather explore what makes people happy. The data would suggest that increases in income - after a certain point - do not translate into increased happiness (Powdthavee, 2007, Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010) as – at the simplest level - individuals become used to the increase over time. Also, as GDP is a national measure, it assumes that everyone experiences each increase equally and also masks disparities in individual income (one large gain versus lots of losses) (Layard, 2005). In some cases, some of the activities in GDP actually reduce well-being (OECD, 2011b).

The global financial crisis, recession and pressure on public finances has brought this notion into sharp focus and pushed the topic up the political agenda. In addition, government budgets cuts have meant that public services have had to re-examine their services and the benefits they bring, including the amount of social benefit, leading to an increased interest in techniques such as Social Return on Investment (SROI), which attempt to measure benefits beyond economics and into less tangible aspects such as increased quality of life.

Happiness and well-being are inexplicably linked to health, mental health as well as economic factors. This relationship is two-way, with each shaping and influencing the other. Related issues (such as high-risk behaviour and mental health) are covered elsewhere within this report. The work of the public sector as a whole is to reduce unhappiness through effective services and although many services do not make people happy in an explicit way, without them, residents would be unhappier. For example, refuse collection in itself does not make residents happy, but reductions in collection frequency can make residents unhappy.

As a result, how public services influence levels of happiness and unhappiness through the services they offer is a key concern and worthy of further analysis in order to develop a fuller understanding of the issues.

## 1.2 KEY ISSUES

Veenhoven (2009) notes that at its core, happiness consists of two 'components':

- Hedonic level of affect (the degree to which pleasant affect dominates) and
- Contentment (perceived realisation of wants)

These components, Veenhoven argues, represent the “‘affective’ and ‘cognitive’ appraisals of life” that constitute overall happiness. Whilst unhappiness with general circumstances can serve as a motivating factor and great achievements are born out of adversity (Booth et al, 2012), overall, happiness is seen as an inherently good state.

### 1.2.1 DRIVERS OF HAPPINESS

Understanding the various drivers of happiness is an inherently difficult task given the number of possible drivers, their importance in the motivation of the individual and their change over time. There are, however, some high-level drivers that have been proven to be consistent across a range of sources for better understanding of what influences happiness. As a starting point, Aked and Thompson (2011) state that happiness generally comes down to two key elements: feeling good and functioning well. These are then expanded into five key aspects of happiness, providing a framework for promoting well-being which is explored in more detail in section 1.2.6.

Across a variety of literature, there exists commonality on the general drivers of happiness. Layard (2005) and Friedli (2011) offer a range of drivers, including:

- Income
- Safety
- Health
- Employment
- Relationships
- Work
- Community and friends
- Freedom and values

While these are all valid drivers for happiness, each individual will prioritise these drivers in different ways. This makes attempts to measure happiness all the more complex and ultimately dependant on the individual, while Booth et al (2012) point out that attempts to measure happiness are “short-term, transient and shallow.” Despite this, the Office of National Statistics (2011) is currently consulting on a national measure of happiness, to be released in 2012 which covers the following domains:

- Individual well-being
- Our relationships
- Health
- What we do
- Where we live
- Personal finance
- Education and skills
- Governance
- The economy
- The natural environment

These domains cover topics for which existing contextual data at a local level is already available and can be analysed in order to gain insight at a neighbourhood level. These drivers can be mapped and explored in order to understand areas which may experience lower levels of happiness and well-being than others. Many of these domains overlap with domains within the Indices of Deprivation 2010 (ID2010), released periodically by Communities and Local Government. Information on the ID2010 and analysis at neighbourhood level is contained elsewhere within this report. It would suggest that the ID2010 could be used as a neighbourhood level proxy for happiness, with less deprived areas having the potential for greater levels of happiness, or lower levels of unhappiness.

The OECD (2011b) notes that defining well-being is challenging because it requires looking at many aspects of people's lives, as well as understanding their relative importance. For this reason, there is no one single definition of well-being. In terms of measurement, whilst data is available for Leicestershire, on most of the criteria mentioned above, these indicators have not been brought together in any specific, coordinated way in order to develop a picture of happiness and well-being at a local or neighbourhood level. At the same time, while it may be relatively straightforward to define 'what' is important in terms of happiness, it is considerably more difficult to understand 'why' they are important (Veenhoven, 2009). These issues should be an area of future work and one that could help to support the happiness and well-being agenda going forward.

### **1.2.2 MEASURING HAPPINESS**

Given the difficulties in understanding the drivers of happiness, it would seem that trying to measure levels of happiness would be even more complicated. However, there have been a number of attempts at measuring happiness from various sources. At an individual level, happiness can also be measured medically, through brain activity and through proxy measures such as the release of endorphins (Layard, 2005), but in order to accurately measure happiness across a population at any given point, we need to ask people directly. Any attempt to measure well-being must address the differences in subjective (external) and objective (internal) well-being. Veenhoven (2009) offers a comprehensive list of the different measures of happiness across a range of studies.

At a national level, Bhutan has used a Gross National Happiness (GNH) measure since 1972 which attempts to define and measure quality of life in a more holistic way, built around four pillars: economic self-reliance, a pristine environment, the promotion of culture, and good governance in the form of a democracy (Jones, 2006). Recently, France has undertaken a critically acclaimed review which explores the role of economic growth as a justification for activity and as a proxy measure for happiness and well-being (Stiglitz et al, 2009).

In the UK, the New Economics Foundation (nef) has developed the Happy Planet Index, which explores how "nations convert the planet's natural resources into long and happy lives for their citizens" (nef, 2011). Attempts to better understand happiness within the UK were explored by the previous Labour Government and have been continued by the current Coalition Government. As mentioned above, the Office of National Statistics' National Well-being Project are exploring ways to measure happiness which "will seek to establish the key areas that matter most to people's well-being" (BBC, 2010). The BBC note that "potential indicators include how people view their own health, levels of education, inequalities in

income and the environment.” Questions on well-being have been added to the ONS Household Survey 2011, with the first official ‘Happiness Index’ for the UK published in the summer of 2012.

Initial results from the ONS Household Survey, taken between April and August 2011 reported that 78 percent of people reported their satisfaction with their life as 7 or more out of 10, where 10 was completely happy and zero was not at all happy (BBC, 2011). The questions asked included:

- Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?
- Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?
- Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?
- Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?

The 2011 Survey of Public Attitudes and Behaviours Towards the Environment (Defra, 2011) found that “the average rating for ‘life satisfaction’ in England has increased slightly over the past four years, but the increase is not statistically significant. In March 2011 it was 7.7 on a 0 to 10 scale, compared with 7.3 in 2007, 7.5 in 2008, 7.4 in 2009 and 7.5 in 2010.” Local Government Improvement and development (LGID) note that public services can measure well-being by bringing together information on material and psycho-social well-being (life experiences). LGID also ask whether well-being needs to be measured everywhere, or just in those areas where we know work is needed, which could tie in with work with troubled families as well as the ID2010 mentioned above.

The measure must also take into account the various different facets of happiness, as Stiglitz et al (2009) note, a system of measurement “must encompass a range of different measures.” Pople and Solomon (2011) stress that “research has shown that it is possible to collect meaningful and reliable data on subjective as well as objective well-being.”

Therefore, any attempt to comprehensively measure happiness must take into account different drivers, measure both subjective and objective happiness as well as cover a range of different dimensions to happiness (such as social, economic, environmental).

### **1.2.3 HAPPINESS AND SOCIAL CAPITAL**

Social capital can be described as the collective value of a person’s social networks, which are a key aspect of mental well-being and of stronger, healthier, connected communities (HM Government, 2010) and there are strong links between increased social capital and increased happiness and well-being. Trust – a key component of social capital - in particular is a major determinant of happiness in society (Action for Happiness, 2011). The roots of happiness and well-being are subjective and personal, and while this analysis will not necessarily tell us if our communities are happy, it will help us to identify those areas which may experience conditions which could foster happiness as well as those that could experience problems. As a result, interventions can be targeted accordingly.

Powdthavee (2007) notes that aspects of social capital (trust, reciprocity etc) “contribute greatly to individual well-being.” Since the last JSNA, the Leicestershire Stronger Communities Board produced an update to the social capital survey. The results can be found here:

## **Social Capital Survey 2010**

Available from:

[http://www.lsr-online.org/reports/social\\_capital\\_survey\\_report\\_2010](http://www.lsr-online.org/reports/social_capital_survey_report_2010)

Furthermore, LGID (2010) note that rather than purely focusing on the health and well-being needs of communities (i.e. what needs 'fixing'), local public services should explore the resources available across communities through the implementation of Joint Strategic Asset Assessments. These would take an increasingly positive view of what strengths exist in local communities, viewing them as agents of change rather than passive recipients of services. Aspects of social capital can be viewed as important resources for positive action within communities and tie in with the Government's Big Society initiative, as people's lives are most acutely influenced at the local level. There is enormous potential, therefore, for local government to influence the well-being of its local population through aspects of community.

### **1.2.4 HAPPINESS, EMPLOYMENT AND MENTAL HEALTH**

One of the key aspects of happiness is the close link between happiness and mental health. The Impact of the Economy and Mental Health chapters of this report explore issues surrounding mental health, but mental health and well-being are seen as intrinsic to each other (HM Government, 2010, Layard, 2005). Not only is well-being about the absence of mental health issues, it is also about the presence of positive mental health.

A better understanding and reporting of happiness and well-being may help services provide effective interventions for mental health. Various sources (for example, Valois et al, 2004, in Pople and Solomon, 2011) stress that the evidence shows "that low subjective well-being may be a precursor to other issues and problems in people's lives such as poor mental health." If this is indeed the case, the ability to measure levels of happiness and well-being would prove invaluable in terms of guarding against and providing services for mental health issues.

As discussed in the Impact of the Economy chapter, employment is seen as a key driver for happiness, as it not only provides income, but a sense of purpose and self-respect as well as social connections through co-workers. The psychological effects of unemployment are well documented, as is the link between unemployment and negative effects on mental health such as increased alcohol consumption and mental illness.

Employment isn't necessarily a route out of unhappiness and there needs to be an acknowledgement that employment itself can be a source of unhappiness through increased stress. Action for Happiness (2011) promotes the notion of happy workplaces, which are more productive and successful through a variety of measures. Some of these suggestions (increased trust, a sense of community) share commonalities with notions of social capital, included above.

### **1.2.5 HOW HAPPY ARE THE PEOPLE OF LEICESTERSHIRE?**

Whilst no explicit work has been done to measure the levels of happiness across Leicestershire, there are sources of proxy information which we can use to gain a better

understanding of levels and dimensions of happiness within the county. The release of the ONS national measure of well-being in 2012 may well provide local level data which can be used to inform commissioning.

At a very high level, the New Economics Foundation (nef) report 'Five Ways to Well-being' states that 14 percent of the population (reference) has a high level of well-being, with a further 14 percent having very low well-being, not including individuals with a diagnosed mental disorder. Using data from PANSI<sup>1</sup>, there are over 101,000 people aged 18-64 in Leicestershire with some kind of mental health issues. This would suggest that of the remaining population, over 42,000 people in Leicestershire aged 18-64 have a very high level of well-being, with the same number having a very low level of well-being.

The 2009 Joint Leicestershire County Council and NHS Satisfaction Survey asked a specific question about overall life satisfaction. The results of this question can be analysed in relation to other questions to try to gain an insight into the drivers of happiness. Analysis suggests that there is a strong correlation with self reported health and life satisfaction. Respondents who rated their health between 0-40 on a scale of 0-100 (where 0 is the worst possible health and 100 is the best possible health) were much more likely to be less satisfied with their lives. Those respondents who responded over 80 were much more likely to be satisfied with their lives and much less likely to be dissatisfied.

Gender was found to have a relationship with life satisfaction, with men less likely and women more likely to be satisfied with their lives. In terms of age, respondents between 41 and 50 were more likely to be dissatisfied with their lives, with the over 60s more likely to be satisfied.

Respondents who were 'unemployed but looking for work' or 'permanently sick or disabled' were more likely to be much more unsatisfied with their lives, while retired respondents were more likely to be satisfied. Specifically, those respondents with a long standing disability were more likely to be unsatisfied with their life, especially if the disability limited their activities.

In terms of ethnicity, there was no significant correlation aside from the Asian or Asian British group, who were much more likely to be unsatisfied with their life. Surprisingly, given the links between spiritual health and happiness (reference?), the results for religion found no significant correlation. There was however, a correlation between satisfaction with opportunities to participate and life satisfaction, supporting the importance of social capital in well-being. Respondents who were more satisfied with opportunities to participate were less likely to be unsatisfied with life, with respondents who were less satisfied with opportunities to participate more likely to be unsatisfied with their life.

### **1.2.6 FIVE WAYS TO WELL-BEING**

The nef report 'Five Ways to Well-being', echoes many of the sentiments of Action for Happiness. The report consists of "a set of evidence-based public mental health messages aimed at improving the mental health and well-being of the whole population" (Aked and Thompson, 2011). The work was commissioned as part of the Foresight Project on Mental

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.pansi.org.uk>

Capital and Well-being. At the core of the work is the concept of “five key messages, described in a simple, memorable and appealing format”:

- Connect
- Be active
- Take notice
- Keep learning
- Give

The Five Ways to Well-being approach is being explored by the Adults and Communities department at Leicestershire County Council as a framework for understanding and embedding happiness and well-being in service delivery. In addition to the five key points, the department has added ‘Healthy Lifestyle’, covering aspects such as diet and reducing risky behaviour such as smoking and taking non-prescription drugs. Of particular note, ‘Give’ relates directly to the delivery of the Government’s Big Society initiative and issues around social capital, which are referenced above.

Adults and Communities provides or supports many cultural and learning opportunities across Leicestershire communities, including for children, young people, adults and families. This supports residents’ efforts to stay fit and healthy, to maintain a positive sense of well-being and supports people to contribute to their local community.

Adult Social Care Services provide and commission various services such as

- Advice, information and signposting through various sources (such as the Customer Service Centre);
- Equipment and adaptations;
- The First Contact Scheme (when representatives from any of the agencies involved in the scheme, such as a volunteer, police officer, victim support staff, council worker or fire fighter is in contact with a vulnerable adult they can offer to complete one simple checklist to find out if that person has any other particular needs);
- Careonline (a partnership project which provides a single source of information for older and disabled people and their carers relating to social care, health, housing, leisure, and a wealth of other services);
- Lunch clubs;
- Handyperson services; and
- Hydration and nutritional promotion.

Cultural services also make a significant contribution to improving people’s well-being and the well-being of their communities. They play a key role in the personalisation of social care, offering good information so people can support themselves and providing services that help people stay healthy and independent:

1. The Libraries Service provides a range of services including reading services that are available to everyone, providing information, providing learning opportunities and promoting social cohesion.
2. The Heritage and Arts Service provides both statutory and discretionary services to over 1.5 million people each year which include both Leicestershire residents and visitors to the county. Using the county’s heritage assets and collections, the service provides

learning, recreational and community activities which help to promote sense of place as well as supporting community well-being.

3. The Leicestershire Adult Learning Service promotes learning in Leicestershire, with the aim of enhancing employability, strengthening communities and supporting families, and developing individuals

Engagement with the new public health arrangements is expected to promote holistic strategies for prevention and early intervention, supporting the well-being of the Leicestershire community.

### 1.2.7 THE ROLE OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Happiness is a key part of life and a major concern for public services and a happy society is something we should all strive for. Being happy and content with one's life - whatever the goal - is primarily a concern of the individual, but there is much public services can do to provide a solid base for individual happiness to flourish; minimising unhappiness, leaving individuals free to follow their own path to a happier life by "facilitating the pursuit of happiness" (Booth et al, 2012). As a result, Booth et al argue for institutions "that protect individual and economic freedoms." Joint Strategic Needs Assessments are important in understanding what those roadblocks to unhappiness might be in order to help commissioners identify strategies to increase happiness at both an individual and community level.

Layard (2005) draws the following twelve conclusions - or truths - about happiness, which are of importance to commissioners when delivering services to either reduce unhappiness, promote happiness, or both:

1. Happiness is an objective dimension of all our experiences;
2. We are programmed to seek happiness;
3. It is self-evident that the best society is the happiest;
4. Our society is not likely to become happier unless people agree that this is what we want to happen;
5. Humans are deeply social beings;
6. As social beings, we want to trust each other;
7. People are also deeply attached to the status quo;
8. Human beings are also status conscious;
9. Human beings are also very adaptable;
10. In any case, extra income increases happiness less and less as people get richer;
11. In fact, happiness depends on your inner life as much as your outer circumstances; and
12. Public policy can more easily remove misery than augment happiness.

The OECD (2011b) stresses that attempts to measure well-being will help to develop policies and processes that support these goals. There are areas where policy can have a greater impact than others (for example, employment and housing). Local public services are well placed to try and make sense of this through the range of services they deliver across areas such as health, education and the natural environment, but also through their ability to shape:

- Strategic leadership;

- Services and commissioning;
- Strengthening communities;
- Organisational level activity; and
- Measuring well-being outcomes.

LGID (2010)

Furthermore, HM Government (2010) highlights the importance of local public services in terms of providing sustainable interventions that promote health, promoting social capital and connecting communities and increasing social interactions. Jones (2006) suggests shifting the focus of public policy in five key areas to increase the happiness and well-being of American citizens through socioeconomic development rather than economic growth:

- The standard of living to quality of life;
- Material possessions to well-being (physical, mental, and material);
- Unsustainable economic development to sustainable environmental development;
- Consumerism to investment; and
- Economic-driven education to socioeconomic-driven education.

LGIB (2010) note that a focus on well-being can:

- Limit the long-term impacts of the recession on communities;
- Help achieve positive outcomes efficiently;
- Reduce discrimination and stigma for those experiencing poor well-being and mental health; and
- Encourage positive behaviour change.

Finally, there is also the strong economic argument for promoting happiness and well-being. The Government (2010) note that “there are substantial cost savings to be made by promoting mental health and well-being” through reduced reliance on public services and increased productivity. With the higher prominence of happiness within Government policy, the questioning of GDP as a proxy and new measures of happiness being released, there has never been a better time to try and understand what makes our communities both happy, and unhappy. As Layard (2005) notes, “happiness begins where unhappiness ends.”

### 1.3 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter represents only a very brief summary of some of the key issues around happiness. Hopefully it will act as a catalyst for further discussion and work around the subject in order to embed an increased understanding of happiness across public services in Leicestershire.

The health implications for a greater emphasis on happiness are widespread. Evidence suggests that happiness and health are closely related, with happier people having stronger immune systems, being less likely to contract influenza and recover more quickly from surgery. Body chemistry also improves in happier people (Layard, 2005). Research has found that happy people have better health habits, lower blood pressure, stronger immune systems and higher endurance levels (Jones, 2006). There is also a strong link between aspects of mental health and happiness.

In terms of a greater understanding of happiness, LGID (2010) note that measuring well-being does not necessarily involve the collection of *new* data. At a neighbourhood level we can map individual drivers (with the possible exception of relationships and feelings) based on available data in order to identify areas of high or low prevalence. As a result, understanding the socioeconomic patterns across the county as well as the potential impact of these variations can help to guide commissioners to those areas that experience poor health outcomes, enabling more effective targeting of resources. Housing is also a key driver for happiness and housing issues are discussed in more detail in the corresponding section of this report.

### 1.13 KEY CONTACTS

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