

# Understanding and modelling the relationship between individual and place-based community wellbeing

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Jointly funded by Centre for Ageing Better, Spirit of 2012

Led by What Works Centre for Wellbeing

# Background and aims

- Understanding of **what is meant by community wellbeing**, including that it is sometimes seen as more than the sum of individual wellbeing, **and how to achieve it**, is still mixed and confusing for many
- The project aims to **create evidence and a model to** inform future interventions and initiatives, supporting decision makers in understanding the relationships **between individual and community wellbeing**, including individual and group differences

# Project Timeline Different people, same place



Key activities included developing search terms, contacting and meeting authors, extracting study details, quality assessment, writing up the results, and the draft model

**Rapid evidence review and consultation group**

**December 2020 – February 2021**

Virtual project consultation group meeting held 9 February 2021



Key activities included writing the analysis plan (public and expert versions); ethical approval for local area data; locating, downloading, and merging data; and conducting analyses and robustness tests

**Quantitative model mapping and testing**

**March 2021 – June 2021**



Key activities included ethical approval, topic guide development, emailing participants to invite them to participate, conducting interviews, data security and privacy, thematic analysis

**Qualitative exploration of model + barriers, enablers, tradeoffs**

**July 2021 - November 2021**

Virtual project consultation group meeting held 21 July 2021

# Phase 1 – *rapid evidence review* and model

- Participation in community initiatives may be associated with better subjective wellbeing (individual and community), but participation is frequently unequal, and this may widen inequalities
- Key ‘links’ between objective community and subjective individual wellbeing were feelings of belonging, sense of cohesion, perceptions of social support and collective control, and social networks
- ‘Communities’ are seen as malleable, multiple, and influenced by ‘wellbeing spillovers’ and ‘tipping points’

# Phase 1 – rapid evidence review *and model*

- Model developed from literature and project consultation group
- Already many existing models – we do not aim to reinvent those previously, rather to add to a set of possible choices for practitioners (examples in project webpages)
- A need was identified to add a model focussed on *levels* and informing *effectiveness evaluations*, which we addressed



COMMUNITY WELLBEING



INDIVIDUAL WELLBEING





# COMMUNITY WELLBEING



Objective factors



Subjective 'links' (mechanisms)



Subjective wellbeing



Objective factors



Subjective 'links' (mechanisms)



Subjective wellbeing



# INDIVIDUAL WELLBEING





# COMMUNITY WELLBEING



## Objective factors



### FLUID

Perceived as relatively modifiable aspects of community environment.

E.g. access to benches, crime rates, community centres, green space, housing.

### FIXED

Perceived as relatively non-modifiable aspects of community environment.

E.g. geographic location and larger political or economic factors, meaning attached to a place.

## Subjective 'links' (mechanisms)



## Subjective wellbeing



## Objective factors



### FLUID

Perceived as relatively modifiable aspects of individuals.

E.g. quality and quantity of relationships and behaviours such as volunteering and exercise.

### FIXED

Perceived as relatively non-modifiable aspects of individuals.

E.g. stable demographic traits, childhood experiences, some aspects of health or disability.\*

## Subjective 'links' (mechanisms)

## Subjective wellbeing

\* Although we recognise that impacts of health and disability are a product of our context and environments.



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## Subjective 'links' (mechanisms)



## Subjective wellbeing



Evaluations, thoughts **about area**.

E.g. does it seem like a good place to live?

Feelings, experiences **in an area**.

E.g. day to day feelings when located in or thinking about an area.

Inequality of individual subjective wellbeing in an area and perceptions of community inequalities.

## Objective factors



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## Subjective 'links' (mechanisms)

## Subjective wellbeing



Evaluations, thoughts about **life overall**.

E.g. 'I think my life is going well'.

Feelings, experiences **over lifetimes**.

E.g. how happy people feel right now and if they feel the activities they do in life are meaningful.

\* Although we recognise that impacts of health and disability are a product of our context and environments.



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# COMMUNITY WELLBEING



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**Subjective 'links' (mechanisms)**




Perceptions of aspects of the **community**.  
E.g. perceived safety, social trust, stories about the community, social norms, satisfaction with local amenities.

**Subjective wellbeing**




Evaluations, thoughts **about area**.  
E.g. does it seem like a good place to live?  
Feelings, experiences **in an area**.  
E.g. day to day feelings when located in or thinking about an area.  
Inequality of individual subjective wellbeing in an area and perceptions of community inequalities.

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**Subjective 'links' (mechanisms)**



Perceptions the individual has of **themselves**.  
Examples include how they see the quality of their relationships with others, perceived functioning, confidence, self-esteem and preferences.

**Subjective wellbeing**



Evaluations, thoughts about **life overall**.  
E.g. 'I think my life is going well'.  
Feelings, experiences **over lifetimes**.  
E.g. how happy people feel right now and if they feel the activities they do in life are meaningful.



# INDIVIDUAL WELLBEING



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# Phase 2 – quantitative analyses of cross-sectional data

Around 25,000 people from Understanding Society survey from waves 6, 7 & 9 (2014-19) when key questions were available (mostly wave 6)

Also imported (at local authority level):

- Community Life Survey (neighbourhood walkability)
- 2011 Census (ethnicity)
- House of Commons Library Election Data (voting)
- ONS/HMRC data (local authority income)
- ONS/administrative data (population turnover or ‘transience’)



# COMMUNITY WELLBEING



## Subjective wellbeing



**Civic pride (evaluations)** – overall, do you like living in this neighbourhood?

**Relative civic pride (evaluations)** – overall does not like living in neighbourhood but many others do like living in neighbourhood



## Subjective wellbeing



**Mental wellbeing** – SWEMWBS, feeling and functioning

**Experienced wellbeing** - enjoyment, unhappy/depressed items from General Health Questionnaire



# INDIVIDUAL WELLBEING





# COMMUNITY WELLBEING



## Objective factors



### FLUID

% talks to neighbours, votes, volunteers, unemployed; index of ethnic dissimilarity; average income and number of walkable amenities

### FIXED

Local authority boundary  
Rural / urban area



## Objective factors



### FLUID

Individual talks to neighbours, votes, volunteers, is unemployed; ethnicity; individual income and mobility difficulties

### FIXED

Sex  
Age



# INDIVIDUAL WELLBEING



## Subjective wellbeing



**Civic pride (evaluations)** – overall, do you like living in this neighbourhood?

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# COMMUNITY WELLBEING



## Objective factors



### FLUID

% talks to neighbours, votes, volunteers, unemployed; index of ethnic dissimilarity; average income and number of walkable amenities

### FIXED

Local authority boundary

Rural / urban area

## Subjective 'links' (mechanisms)



% perceiving they belong to local area, friendships in local area are meaningful, service accessibility

## Subjective wellbeing



**Civic pride (evaluations)** – overall, do you like living in this neighbourhood?

**Relative civic pride (evaluations)** – overall does not like living in neighbourhood but many others do like living in neighbourhood



## Objective factors



### FLUID

Individual talks to neighbours, votes, volunteers, is unemployed; ethnicity; individual income and mobility difficulties

### FIXED

Sex

Age

## Subjective 'links' (mechanisms)



If managing well financially, perceptions of financial future, loneliness

## Subjective wellbeing



**Mental wellbeing** – SWEMWBS, feeling and functioning

**Experienced wellbeing** - enjoyment, unhappy/depressed items from General Health Questionnaire



# INDIVIDUAL WELLBEING



# Phase 2- quantitative analyses of cross-sectional data

- Mixed effects logistic regression models with random effects to allow for clustering at local authority level
- Outcome is subjective wellbeing, predictors were everything else including objective factors and subjective mechanisms or 'links'
- Only reviewing selection of results – see blog, briefing, technical report



# Key associations

- **Area-level volunteering rates and unemployment rates** were associated with both community and individual subjective wellbeing
- **Higher voting rates** were associated with better individual subjective wellbeing
- **Higher area-level average income** was associated with better individual subjective wellbeing
- **People living in urban areas had worse absolute and relative community subjective wellbeing** than those living in rural areas, particularly where voting rates were low
- **Higher numbers of walkable assets were associated with lower individual and community wellbeing** but not after adjusting for perceptions of safety, suggesting this was an omitted variable

# Different people, same place

For example:

- Less sociable individuals had worse mental wellbeing in sociable areas than in unsociable areas.
- In more sociable areas, people aged 50+ had better community subjective wellbeing than aged under 50.
- While higher area-level income was associated with proportionally better mental wellbeing, this relationship was weaker for households with larger incomes.

# Key mechanisms or 'links'

- Sense of belonging to their local area, and that they did not feel lonely, more important than perceiving their local friendships mattered or perceiving they were able to access local services
- However, it is not possible to say that belonging and loneliness were more important than friendship or services - it could be that local friendships and services drive a sense of belonging or loneliness, which longitudinal or interventional data would be needed to explore and test

# Phase 3 – qualitative interviews

- 24 interviews conducted with individuals who worked in local government, the third sector, politics, and academia to consider barriers, enablers, and trade-offs, and to feedback on the model and visualisation
- Main themes: (in)adequate power sharing, counterfactual ‘what ifs’ in monitoring and evaluation, vertical and horizontal funding gaps, and leadership and culture
- Boxes model was polarising – but perceived to have value, e.g. co-production tool

# Some limitations

- Phase 1 – rapid rather than fully systematic due to timescales, can't identify all mechanisms or groups
- Phase 2 – there could be interactions between community-level predictors, which we did not test quantitatively and future research could explore
- Phase 3 – no participants in community initiatives, only leadership from third sector, politics, academia, etc.

# Conclusions and next steps

- Important to consider how different individuals and groups may be affected differently by the same initiative or intervention – map onto model, think about what works (but lack of local data...)
- Even though there are many mechanisms between individual and community wellbeing, qualitatively, the most important one was power-sharing- but important to do considerately
- Future research may use the developed model (or others) to design future community initiatives and during co-production, or to guide commissioning and service planning

# Please tell us

- If you are using this work please tell us – you can email me (L.Kudrna@bham.ac.uk) or [evaluation@whatworkswellbeing.org](mailto:evaluation@whatworkswellbeing.org)
- Reflect on the jamboard – how, if at all, has this changed your understanding of community and individual wellbeing? Will you do anything differently?