

# Our strategy

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## What is wellbeing?

Wellbeing is **how we're doing as individuals, communities and as a nation**; and **how sustainable it is for the future**.

Wellbeing encompasses the environmental factors that affect us and how we function in society, and the subjective experiences we have which determine how satisfied we are with our lives, our sense of purpose, our day-to-day emotional experiences and our wider mental wellbeing.

Wellbeing is sometimes referred to as social welfare or social value. It can be thought of as quality of life, and used as a measure of societal progress beyond metrics like GDP alone. Some subjective wellbeing measures, like life satisfaction, are particularly useful in helping prioritise and value different aspects of wellbeing frameworks.

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## Introduction

For almost a decade, the What Works Centre for Wellbeing has built a reputation as the **leading UK authority on wellbeing**.

We are an influential, valuable and highly-respected independent organisation, undertaking major research into key areas of wellbeing, establishing an extensive body of insights and resources, championing wellbeing measurement and evaluation, and convening a network of experts and practitioners. This includes ground-breaking work on Levelling Up and the very positive evaluation of the Centre by the ESRC.

This document outlines the Centre's aims and approaches as we continue to evolve and iterate our priorities and activity in response to the ongoing challenge: a lack of department or foundation for wellbeing. Our strategy reflects what we know works, and the ultimate purpose of a wellbeing approach. It lays out the direction of travel and will be continually reviewed.

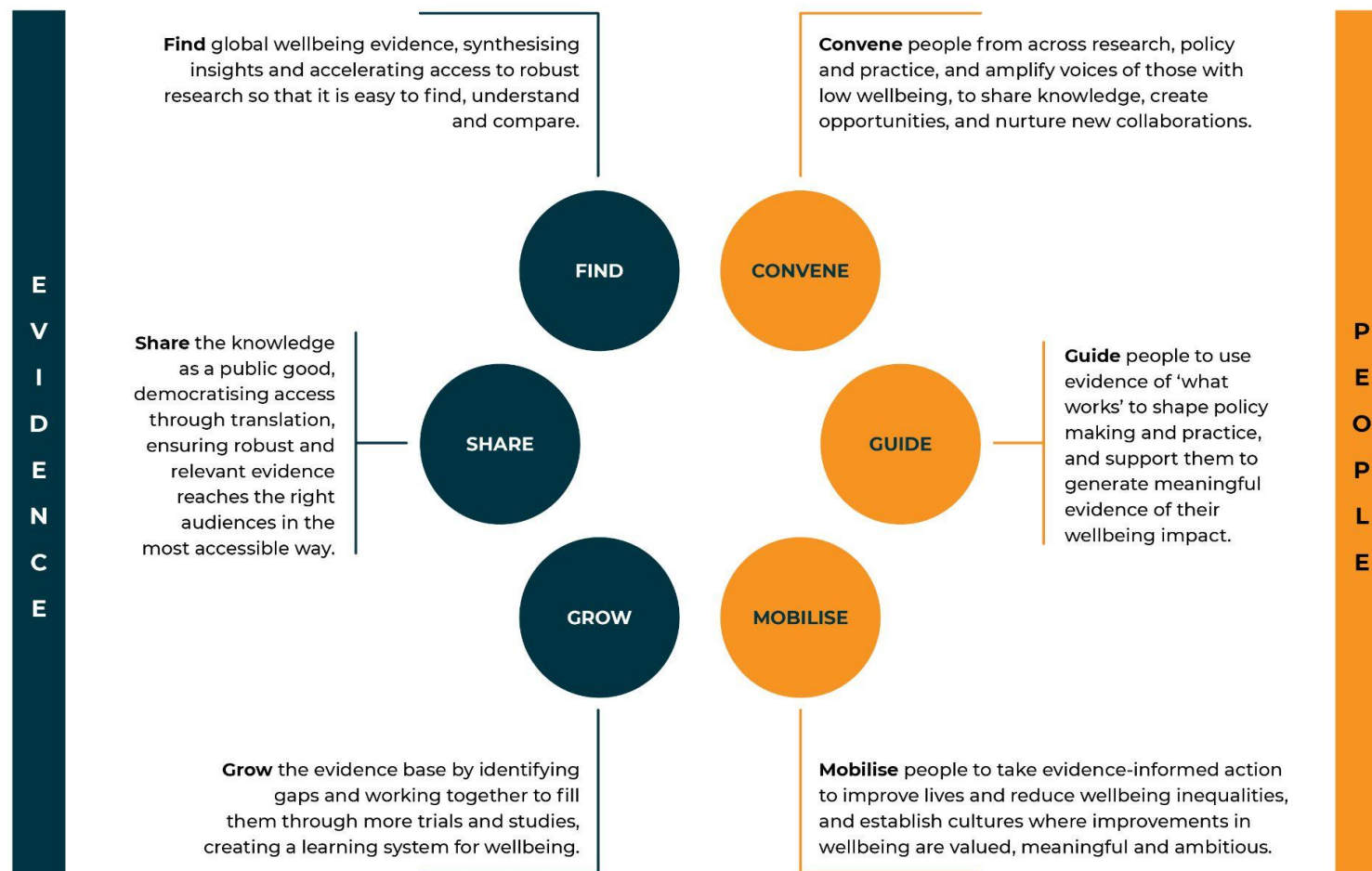
## OUR VISION

By 2033, the What Works Centre for Wellbeing will have significantly contributed to a future where the wellbeing of people and communities in the UK improves year-on-year and wellbeing inequalities are reduced.

## OUR PURPOSE

To find out what works to improve wellbeing and partner to put that evidence into action and create conditions for us all to thrive.

# OUR MISSION



Our mission is informed by the knowledge of what works for research use, and the findings of our public dialogues. It builds evidence of what works into systems, and develops capacity to add to, and act on, new learning.

## OUR FOCUS

We focus on where we can make the biggest difference, based on current knowledge, expertise and networks. Our four focus areas are:

### 1) National wellbeing methods and measures

**We want...** wellbeing to be recognised as a meaningful and measurable goal for decision makers in the UK, used alongside metrics such as GDP and life expectancy to assess national progress.

#### **Our focus is:**

- Increasing understanding of wellbeing data and measures across sectors and disciplines.
- Encouraging methodological development to support the use of wellbeing data and evidence in the field of decision making and wellbeing economics.
- Engaging political and senior leaders, policy-makers, sector bodies, funders and commissioners who can set a vision and strategy which mobilises services and resources around wellbeing, through effective digital communications that distil findings into impactful messages, and by hosting convening events.

**We want...** wellbeing evidence used robustly, consistently and with confidence.

#### **Our focus is:**

- Promoting the appropriate and consistent use of harmonised measures.
- Facilitating greater consistency and comparability of measures and concepts.
- Building on the rich and growing data from the ONS UK Measures of National Wellbeing programme and understanding what all sectors can do to improve it.
- Inspiring others to generate new evidence through partnering on primary research and trials.

## 2) Working age

**We want...** to improve the wellbeing of [working age adults](#) and reduce wellbeing inequalities.

### **Our focus is:**

- Partnering to increase collective understanding of the impact of transitional life events such as divorce, bereavement, unemployment and new parenthood.
- Increasing the quality and availability of causal evidence on effectiveness of workplace interventions through large-scale trials, rather than reliance on case studies.
- Supporting organisations to embed evaluation frameworks and reporting guidelines.
- Developing a more nuanced understanding of student wellbeing and lifelong learning.

**We want...** wellbeing to be at the heart of how we shape jobs, organisations and working practices across all sectors to support future employment, individual wellbeing and the economy.

### **Our focus is:**

- Guiding employers to use wellbeing insights to inform investment in effective systems changes, including whether they meet the cost-effectiveness threshold.
- Developing sector-specific guidance, learning interventions, and practical toolkits
- Delivering accessible training.
- Partnering with organisations to develop and enact wellbeing strategies.
- Encouraging employers to use wellbeing insights to help address concerns around retention, productivity and EDI.
- Creating a convening space for industry leaders and excerpts to discuss key topics.

### 3) Place and community

**We want...** to see the proper measurement of community wellbeing (not simply the sum of individual wellbeing) and for wellbeing inequalities within and between communities to be reduced.

#### **Our focus is:**

- Developing conceptual definitions, frameworks and methodologies for community infrastructure.
- Increasing understanding of community wellbeing to make change happen for people in places.
- Exploring the role of power, agency and control.
- Mobilising voluntary organisations to evaluate impact through a wellbeing lens.
- Collaborating with local-level organisations to develop theories of change and implement wellbeing strategies and recommendations.

### 4) Loneliness and connection

**We want...** to alleviate loneliness and improve social connections across the life course in the UK.

#### **Our focus is:**

- Collaborating with the Campaign to End Loneliness to grow the evidence base on the causes, outcomes and interventions concerning young and middle-aged people
- Translating insights through convening events such as annual conferences and digital networking platforms.
- Convening and guiding decision-makers through the cross-party APPG on Tackling Loneliness and Connected Communities.



## OUR APPROACH

We take a lifecourse approach to wellbeing research and practice.

We are:

1. Independent
2. Evidence-informed
3. Collaborative
4. Practical
5. Iterative
6. Open

We will apply these values in action through operating a multidisciplinary, cross-sector core team that brings together expertise across five distinct functions:

1. Leadership and collaboration
2. Evidence and analysis
3. Implementation and learning
4. Communications and engagement
5. Governance and operations

Additionally, to support our priorities, we will continue to work efficiently and flexibly, engaging highly-skilled freelancers and contractors as part of our wider pool of professionals and associates on project basis.

## OUR AUDIENCES

We develop and share knowledge with:

- **Government and public services** - national and local leaders, departments, and wider public sector bodies, commissioners and funders.
- **Research** - individuals and research organisations across the UK and globally.
- **Business** - large, small and multinational, and professional bodies.
- **Civil society** - charities, social enterprises and community groups, as well as funders and commissioners.

We will continue to primarily work with organisations in the UK to help ensure good governance for wellbeing. As we bring together the global knowledge base, we will also continue to cultivate a global audience and partnerships.

To reach our audiences, we will continue to use a digital-first approach to engagement. We will use our established digital channels including [X \(Twitter\)](#), [LinkedIn](#) and our [website](#) to share insights, build learning communities and deepen our connections.

## OUR COLLABORATORS

Improving wellbeing is not one organisation's job. Leadership and collaboration are crucial to achieving our mission now and in the future.

Our network includes top wellbeing evidence and research teams, leading practitioners and policymakers, and global wellbeing experts, ensuring deep sector knowledge. This positions the Centre to bring together the wellbeing evidence community, and get valuable evidence and resources to experts who can put it into action.

In 2021 we welcomed the Campaign to End Loneliness, which was founded in 2011 as a place for people to come together, collaborate and build evidence base for loneliness and make the case for action.

View our current and former [funders and partners](#).

We will continue to work in partnership with key individuals and organisations across sectors, as well as the Campaign to End Loneliness other organisations from the [What Works Network](#) and [The Evidence Quarter](#), strengthening existing relationships and cultivating new connections to expand our reach, access expertise, and maximise impact and achieve shared aims.

## OUR GOVERNANCE

We are a registered Community Interest Company, and part of the [What Works Network](#) and [The Evidence Quarter](#), a cohort of collaborating independent organisations that improves the way the UK Government and other organisations create, share and use high-quality evidence for decision-making and effectiveness.

To enable greater diversity and aid delivery we are a remote-first, flexible organisation with colleagues across the UK.

Our audiences are intentionally built into our governance and the way we work, to ensure our work is:

- Robust and credible.
- Relevant and useful.
- Communicated well and accessible.

## BOARD

The Centre is led by a board of voluntary Directors. The board is the ultimate decision maker, as outlined in the Articles of Association. The Board is responsible for working closely with the Executive Director and the senior management team to develop and agree a strategy for the organisation, and ensure that:

1. any activities and executive decisions are made in the best interest of the organisation, its stakeholders and the wider public;
2. any activities and executive decisions contribute to achieving the organisational purpose and aims;
3. that these are delivered effectively and sustainably.

## ADVISORY PANEL

Our Advisory Panel aids quality assurance for the outputs we produce. It is made up of voluntary members who represent our key sectors and audiences, including evidence and/ or wellbeing experts, researchers and academics, members of the original commissioning group, practitioners and decision-makers.

The main purpose is to ensure the high quality, transparency, relevance and accessibility of all the Centre's products and research strategies. This group also serves to mitigate risks and manage disagreements or disputes around methodology, measures or theoretical approaches used during the evidence synthesis and translation.

## OUR SUSTAINABILITY

To be a financially sustainable organisation, we need to grow secure, long-term funding and diversify our funding sources. As a registered Community Interest Company, we are a non-profit organisation that relies on funding grants and donations to continue our work.

We have revitalised our strategy and are cultivating a wide range of proposals and bids for the Centre as a whole, as well as in our four focus areas.

We are partnering with Government Departments for September 2023 to June 2024 for our core National Wellbeing work. It will include implementation of the Community work programme outputs delivered in this grant through a smaller partnership with DCMS.

## OUR IMPACT

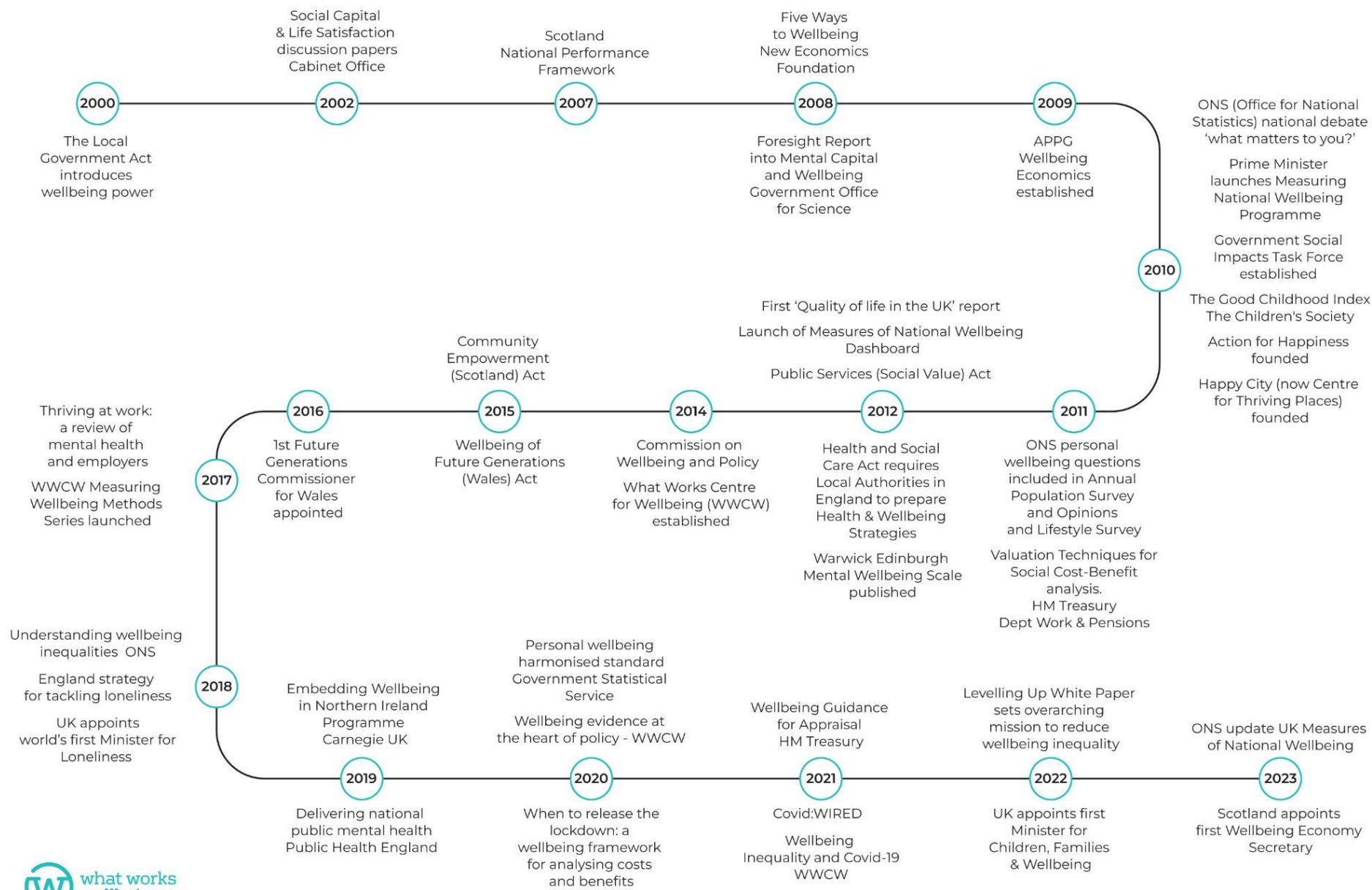
To understand how effective we are in achieving our mission, we will continue to build our evaluation policy to measure the impact of our work and publish the insights in our annual report.

## OUR STORY SO FAR

We were established in 2014 in response to the Commission on Wellbeing and Policy in 2014.

Our purpose was to build on the rich and growing data from the UK National Wellbeing Measurement Programme by making insights accessible to all as a public good, ensuring an understanding of what works and enabling confident action to be taken.

This continues to be our overall goal. We updated that Commission report in 2020, publishing the [Wellbeing evidence at the heart of policy](#) report.



## A word from our Executive Director

“Over the past nine years, and in open and transparent conversation with the wider sector, the Centre has established wellbeing evidence that can be used robustly, consistently and with confidence in the UK and globally. We now have a much better idea about what works, where the gaps in the knowledge are, and how to work collaboratively to fill them.

“As we look ahead to this next phase of activity, our strategy reiterates a clear and a compelling vision. We have laid out our direction of travel and begun to map our course where we will continue to bridge evidence with the realities of policy and practice.

“We invite you to engage with us across our four focus areas to help us achieve our aims and maximise our impact, informing and challenging how we shape our next decade. While the landscape will likely shift, our purpose remains the same.

“We look forward to working with you to build a future where the wellbeing of people and communities in the UK improves year-on-year and wellbeing inequalities are reduced.”

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Discover how you can [work with us](#) and [stay up to date](#).

