

# Our Impact 2022-23



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# Chairman's Foreword



“ I am greatly impressed by the work of the Centre, and know that everyone takes great pride in the achievements of the team and their commitment to our purpose and mission. ”

As I enter my third year as Chairman of the What Works Centre for Wellbeing's Board of Directors, I am delighted to contribute the foreword to our Impact Report 2022-23. It offers an opportunity to reflect on what we have achieved in the financial year, and to look ahead to how we can continue to grow the awareness and impact of wellbeing evidence, policy and practice.

This is an important time for the promotion and understanding of wellbeing; the world is rapidly changing and we need to push harder to ensure wellbeing is at the heart of how we shape organisations, working practices and cultures so that people can thrive during this uncertain time. This makes the Centre's work more relevant than ever, as we need good-quality evidence to drive this decision making.

When the Centre was founded nine years ago, its 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 its overall goal.

The Centre's work has helped shape policy, including informing the UK Treasury's Green Book, the National Lottery Community Fund Strategy, and the work of the Office for National Statistics in increasing awareness and understanding of national wellbeing.

Over the past financial year the Centre has continued building its reputation as a leading authority on wellbeing, collaboratively establishing an extensive body of wellbeing evidence, insights and resources that can - and are - being used robustly, consistently and with confidence in the UK and internationally.

In support of its continued mission to find, share and grow wellbeing evidence and convene, guide and mobilise people to use it, the Centre has focused on four key areas in 2022-23: national measures and methods, working age, place and community, and loneliness and connection.

It has undertaken major research and implementation work within these areas to increase understanding of community wellbeing, explore the links between loneliness and wellbeing in young people, support wellbeing in business and the workforce, and champion wellbeing measurement and evaluation as a way to track national progress. These projects and outcomes are outlined in this report.

The high engagement with its digital resources - as detailed in the 'In numbers' and 'Achieving the Louder objective' sections of this report - is a strong indicator of the Centre's reach and impact, and recognition of the importance of wellbeing in business and society.

Whilst we have brought in a wide range of funded projects, it has been another challenging year financially for the Centre against the backdrop of the current economic climate.

**“ Finding and securing longer-term, multi-year funding to sustain the Centre remains the goal. Without it, its future is uncertain. ”**

Part of the challenge is the Centre's success in helping to embed wellbeing as a theme in many aspects of policy, public life, and across businesses, establishing that wellbeing and our work as hugely valuable. Having done so, we face the ongoing challenge that wellbeing tends to fall between funders, departments, and organisations when it comes to providing long-term funding.

We have already made a significant impact on the awareness, understanding, and measurement of wellbeing. This work is vital, and we must keep sight of improving wellbeing as a national - and indeed international - outcome. This is why I hope that the Centre has a future and will continue to further develop our understanding of what works in improving wellbeing.

**Peter Cheese CEO, CIPD & Chairman,  
What Works Centre for Wellbeing**

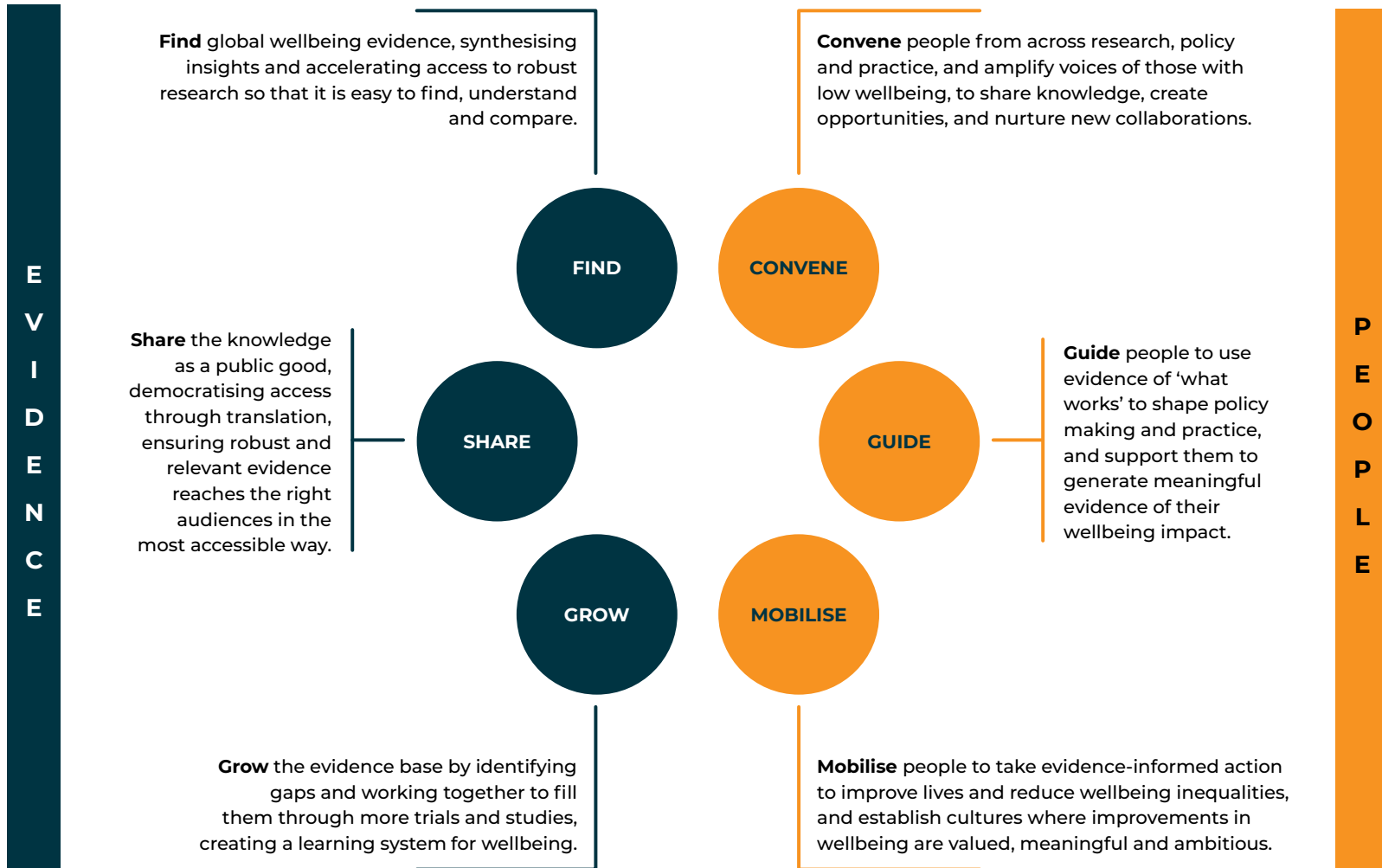


# Introduction

## Who are we?

Established in 2014, the What Works Centre for Wellbeing is an independent collaborating centre with an aim to improve wellbeing and reduce misery in the UK. We believe that this is the ultimate goal of effective policy and community action.

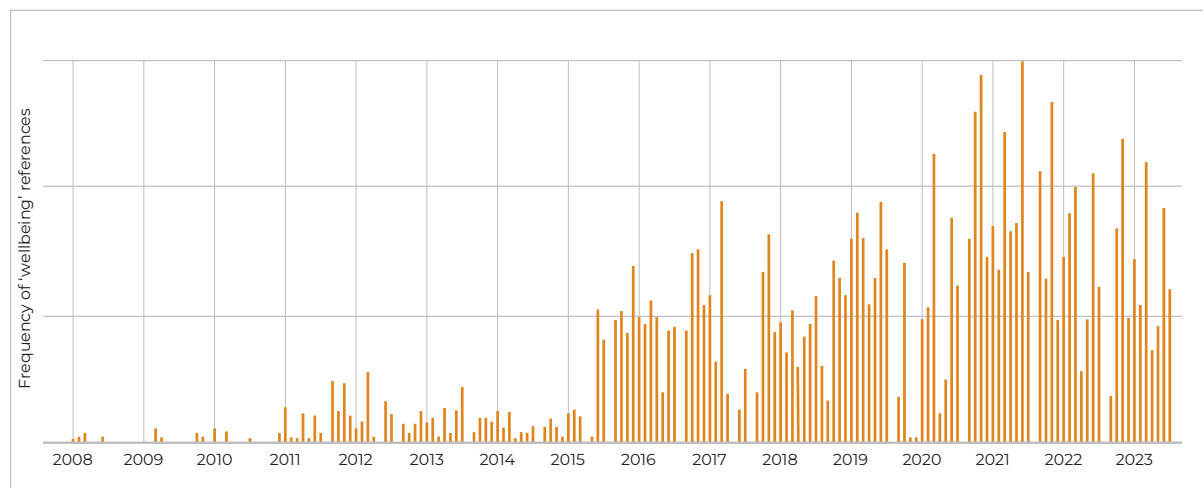
Our role is to...



## To us, success means:

- Wellbeing is recognised as a meaningful and measurable goal for decision makers.
- Knowledge of what works and how to implement it reaches people who can and want to use it.
- More evidence-informed action is taken.
- More trials and studies are done which are shared with us to continue to build the evidence base.

Since the Centre launched its four flagship research programmes in 2015, there has been a noticeable increase in UK parliamentary references to 'wellbeing', indicating we are on our way to achieving our mission.



This report outlines the impact we have had in the financial year 2022-23 across our four priority areas, as we have continued in our mission to find out what works to improve wellbeing and partner to put that evidence into action, creating conditions for us all to thrive.

## 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 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 in Wellbeing Frameworks.

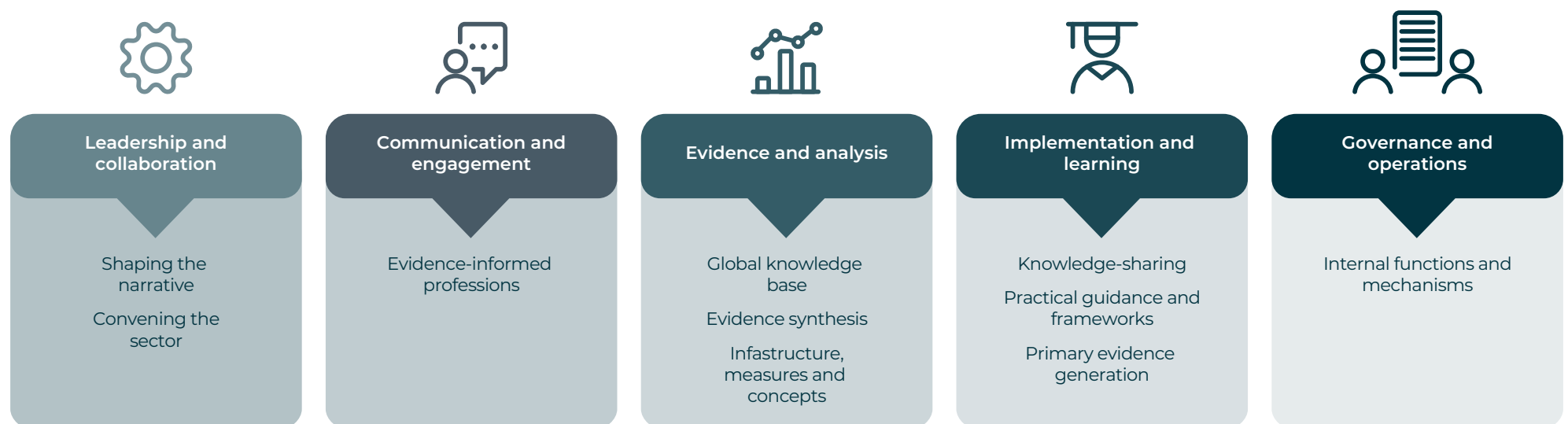
# Our Impact 2022-23

## What did we do?

Between April 2022 and March 2023 we continued to focus on priority areas where we could make the biggest difference:



To support our priorities and achieve our aims we operated a multidisciplinary, cross-sector core team that brought together expertise across five distinct functions:



Overall, we have:

Continued to **establish an extensive body of insights** and resources, bringing together the global knowledge base in an accessible, impactful and relevant way, using existing collective knowledge.

Used our expertise in wellbeing and evidence methodologies to **proactively contribute to and grow knowledge** of the fields of wellbeing, evidence, knowledge use and practise.

Brought life to our rigorous evidence by **translating and sharing findings in impact-focused inclusive language and formats**, and sharing evidence with policy makers and practitioners so that it has meaning where it counts.

Enhanced our offer to workplace and VCSE practitioners through **more practical tools, measures, methodologies and resources**, as well as continuous capacity and capability building, training and support.

Convened and **mobilised our strong, active cross-sector network of experts and practitioners** to identify where evidence can have the greatest impact including COVID-19, levelling-up and reducing inequalities, and thinking beyond GDP.

Built **new partnerships and strengthened existing relationships** to learn more where there are evidence gaps, working out what those in policy and practice need to know to seed evidence-informed action to improve wellbeing.

## Who have we worked with?

Our **global network of associates and supporters** is second-to-none in the wellbeing evidence space, and includes top wellbeing evidence and policy research teams, leading practitioners and policymakers, and wellbeing experts.

Our position as **knowledge brokers and conveners** has enabled us to bring together people and organisations from across all sectors, and get valuable wellbeing evidence and resources to those who can put it into action.

From April 2022 to March 2023 we developed and shared knowledge with:

- **Government** - national, local, and the wider public sector including DCMS, DfE, HMT, and local authorities of Portsmouth and Lancashire.
- **Research** - individuals and research organisations across the UK and globally, such as Universities of Birmingham, Durham, Leeds Beckett, Liverpool, Warwick, and UCL.
- **Businesses** - large, small and multinational, and professional bodies such as Sky, PwC, Money and Pension Service, Transpennine Express, and Brown Brothers Harriman.
- **Civil society** - charities, social enterprises and community groups, as well as funders and commissioners, including The Health Foundation, Centre for Thriving Places, Marie Curie, Disability Rights UK, Historic England, Pro Bono Economics, and Spirit of 2012, and we collaborated with new partners for the first time, including New Local and People's Health Trust.

Across the year we continued our work with the [Campaign to End Loneliness](#), which we have formally hosted since 2021. The charity was founded in 2011 as a place for people to come together, collaborate and build the evidence base for loneliness and make the case for action.

By working in partnership, we have contributed to the sustainability and resilience of the field of wellbeing.

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

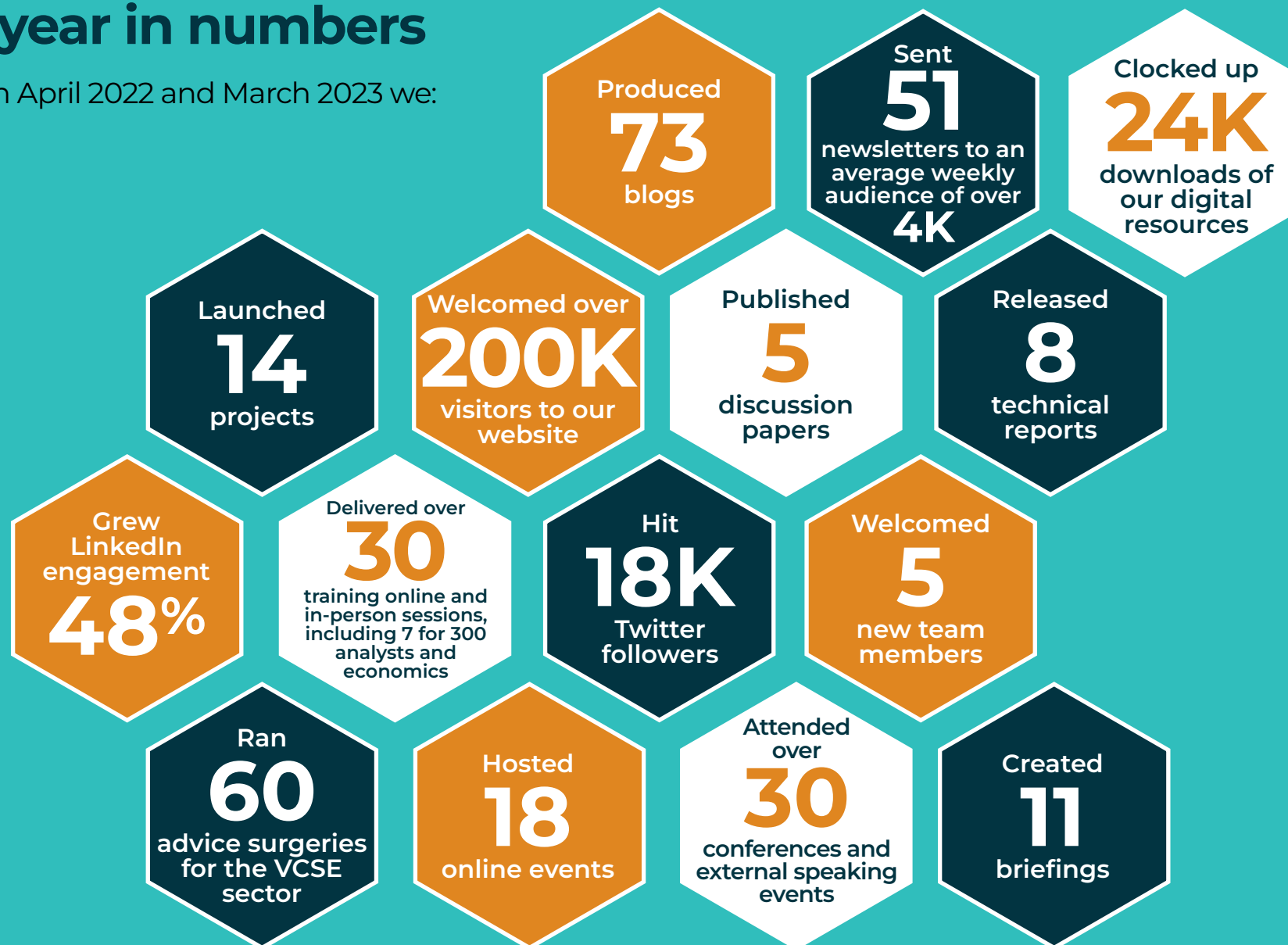
To maximise our impact, our Communications and Implementation teams worked collaboratively to ensure all the resources we published were appropriate for and meaningful to each of our audiences.





# Our year in numbers

Between April 2022 and March 2023 we:



# Deepdive: National wellbeing measures and methods

Our aim is that wellbeing is measured consistently, comparably and appropriately, and recognised as a meaningful and measurable goal for decision makers at a national level.

Highlights of our work in support of this for 2022-23 are detailed below.

## Finding and synthesising the evidence

We worked with academics, researchers and wellbeing economists to continue to champion wellbeing measurement and evaluation, and build a rich evidence base.

This included the continuation of our **Many Dimensions of Wellbeing** project, funded by the ESRC. Together with the Bennett Institute for Public Policy we explored two streams of work focusing on how wellbeing is experienced by different societal groups. The quantitative strand was the **first in the UK to investigate the relationship between wellbeing and higher education at this scale**. It showed that experience varies across types of place and across the life satisfaction spectrum, demonstrating the need to shift focus away from national averages. Aggregate results can hide nuances that matter for strong, representative policy without telling us what to change. The qualitative strand found **adverse life experiences can change our value judgments around 'living well'** and what means to thrive. Informed by the research, the team co-produced a 'theory of thriving' with the charity Turn2Us and people with lived experience of financial hardship.

Fifteen years on from the development of the **Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS)** scales, they are now used in a range of public health and voluntary sector settings and have been adopted across three UK countries to monitor mental wellbeing at the population level and develop policy. We identified a unique opportunity to assess the impact of different interventions on mental wellbeing by reviewing evaluation literature that uses these scales, **building a shared knowledge base that uses consistent and comparable constructs**.



The rapid review of 209 studies allowed us to develop an approach to meta-analysis to calculate pooled effect sizes by intervention theme or subtheme, resulting in a better understanding of the key components that can inform future research and policy. This included strong evidence for the effectiveness of psychological and arts intervention types, and promising evidence for social intervention types. The Centre-produced briefing, published in May 2022, was the most viewed downloadable resource with 964 views in the financial year, testament to the broad national appeal and relevance.

Beyond evidence reviews, we have also been able to use Twitter (aka X) to **deliver quick responses to new releases and developments** in the wider field, such as our fortnightly tweets signposting and analysing Office for National Statistics releases, distilling and translating evidence meaningfully and clearly.

Our evidence base was **cited in the Department for Health and Social Care's Mental health and wellbeing plan: discussion paper** April 2022, illustrating our use as a resource for government.

## Putting evidence into action

We use our knowledge to offer a number of services, tools and resources for central and local government, as well as other bodies, to help ensure good governance for wellbeing.

A major activity for 2022-23 has been designing and delivering **seven online and in-person training sessions for 300 analysts and economists** on using the HM Treasury's Green Book and supplementary wellbeing guidance to promote robust, consistent and comparable approach across government. To do this, we partnered with Pro Bono Economics and State of Life. Additionally, our Executive Director continued to deliver **policy profession training events**, with over 200 attendees and an overwhelmingly positive response with attendees rating the events a 9/10 on average.

We also worked closely with a cohort of 10 local authorities to **strengthen the wellbeing impact of local government policy making in the UK**. This led to the creation of a [downloadable maturity model](#), as well as tangible outputs from the cohort as they applied wellbeing frameworks and created policies in their contexts. This work has great potential for further development, using the six hallmarks model to support other local areas and test their efficacy further.



**WOW - it was a download of brilliant facts and figures which provide a clear rationale and backbone to the arena of wellbeing.**

- Training participant

Our ongoing work with the healthcare sector led to the launch of the [Mental Health and Wellbeing Joint Strategic Needs Assessment \(JSNA\) profile](#) in Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) Fingertips **public health data tool**, bringing data together and shifting focus from mental ill-health to positive wellbeing. The tool is accompanied by a [topic landing page](#) that signposts to many of the Centre's core resources, extending our reach.

We shared the tool via the Centre blog and through speaking events with core audiences. This is the culmination of almost five years of work and follows recommendations from our 2017 report. Across 2022-23 we expanded our digital offer, investing in **e-learning** and creating an [introduction to wellbeing module](#). Funded by Historic England, this resource is free to access and offers an accessible insight that can be used as a standalone education tool or as part of other training and implementation packages we offer and has already been used by more than 70 staff members. We created a further two modules for Historic England's exclusive use: one focused on their approach to wellbeing, the other on social prescribing, wellbeing and heritage.

To help improve the pipeline of wellbeing champions, we produced three **lectures for UCL's new Masters in Public Health online course** to introduce wellbeing concepts and measurement and explore wellbeing policy making. The modules have been well received by course leaders and students.



The landing page work was really helpful... To bring IMD-based and ONS wellbeing-based metrics up-to-date really needed doing, but I don't think we would have without your push.

- OHID/DHSC Public Mental Health Lead



The mental health and wellbeing health week was a great success [...] It's a great topic for students to engage with and reflect upon from a personal perspective.

- Course leader

We support **peer-learning** through knowledge-sharing, capturing **real-world examples** of how standardised measures are applied in practice in different contexts, considering which are appropriate, and how practitioners are using them to demonstrate impact. An example is our recent case study from 999 Club, a South East London homelessness prevention and support charity, who explored their experience of assessing the effectiveness of their services using the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS).

## Growing the evidence base

A key Centre priority for 2022-23 was making wellbeing evaluations easier and quicker to undertake, and of higher quality. To accelerate access to wellbeing data we began to increase our in-house analysis capability and now publish stata doc files used for analysing datasets on Github as a public good.

We also launched the Wellbeing Top-Up Fund, supported by the Evaluation Accelerator Fund, which will enable the expansion of 15 existing trials to include measures of subjective wellbeing at a low cost.

## Thought leadership

At the national level, we have engaged political leaders, policy-makers, sector bodies, funders and commissioners who determine the extent to which wellbeing is prioritised and invested across the country as a whole. This included our **expert involvement in the Office for National Statistics framework consultation**, building on our work championing harmonised measures.

At the local level, we **delivered bespoke support to local authorities** including Greater Manchester Integrated Care Support on public mental health implementation. We also presented to over 60 local government attendees at a New Local Innovation Exchange event, acting as the 'vision setter' and discussing the use of wellbeing as a key measure of success.

We share views contributed by high-profile researchers and thinkers on topics that **advance the field of wellbeing**. This year, we published six discussion papers, including four in our ongoing 'Measuring Wellbeing' series. The most popular was *The Shared Ingredients for a Wellbeing Economy*, authored by Centre for Thriving Places (CTP), which had 1848 views and 440 downloads. We also commissioned a discussion paper by cultural thinker and Fellow at the cross-party think tank Demos, Suzanne Alleyne, exploring the science of power in the body, opening up our work to consider agency and control in the context of wellbeing.



We knew we wanted to pivot away from SWEMWBS so we researched what measures and what way of measuring would better line up with our approach. The excellent resource “What matters for our sense of purpose?” from What Works Wellbeing helped guide our thinking and decision to ask how worthwhile people feel the things they do in life are.

- Thomas Neumark,  
CEO of 999 Club



# Deepdive: Place and community

Our aim is that community wellbeing is measured consistently, comparably and appropriately, it is not just the sum of individual wellbeing, and that wellbeing inequalities within and between communities are reduced.

In pursuit of this goal, we have focused on building evidence of wellbeing interventions that are effective in improving community spaces and enabling people to fulfil their potential, and growing understanding of community wellbeing and its key components of place, people and power.

## Finding and synthesising the evidence

With Leeds Beckett University we revisited our 2018 *Places and spaces* review, collating an additional five years of evidence (51 studies) on the **wellbeing impact of changes to community infrastructure**. This updated the evidence base, **significantly strengthening our evidence statements and offering a more detailed and nuanced analysis to explain 'what works'**. The 'refresh' highlighted that there is **scope to do similar** for other Centre evidence reviews, and has set a precedent for how we approach future work to give our archive of content greater relevance. The updated insights have been used by the National Lottery, Heritage Lottery Fund, National Infrastructure Commission and Quality of Life Foundation. There is value in revisiting the evidence base again in three to five years to capture covid-related research, working towards 'living reviews'.

Between April and September 2022, we worked with Centre for Thriving Places to review published and grey literature sources on three **measures of social capital**: neighbourhood belonging, social support networks, and community cohesion. We found strong evidence on the **wellbeing impact of youth skills and physical activity interventions**. Importantly, we found a range of conceptual definitions and measurement for social support and community cohesion, which informed a number of our resulting recommendations including promotion of the social capital harmonised standard. Due to limited timescales and funding this review necessarily focused upon three specific measures. It would be helpful to explore further social capital measures in a similar way, not least those concerned with linking capital - the bonds between people at different levels of hierarchies.



Given the significant policy and academic interest in cultural mega-events as catalysts for generating social value, we conducted **a rapid review of the wellbeing evidence from place-based arts and culture interventions** with the Institute for Cultural Capital (ICC), funded by Spirit of 2012 and University of Warwick/Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). The review found that targeted museum-based interventions with a volunteering or social prescribing component lead to improvements in subjective and mental wellbeing for people with low wellbeing. We also found that increased cultural participation through mega-events leads to some temporary effects on happiness and life satisfaction; and increases for bridging social capital. The review builds the evidence base on community wellbeing and social capital, and promotes the use of harmonised social capital measures to ensure wellbeing evidence is increasingly consistent, robust and useful.

Following our Understanding Thriving Communities analysis for the National Lottery Community Fund our 'Different People, Same Place' project explored, in detail, the **differentiated impact interventions can have on individuals and communities**. The analysis informed the production of a box model of the relationships between individual and community wellbeing for policy makers and practitioners which has already been used in the development of the UK Governments' Levelling Up White Paper.

Our place and community evidence was cited in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's Impact assessment: Rapid evidence review of community initiatives.





## Putting evidence into action

We continued to provide services specifically for third sector organisations, offering bespoke consultancy, knowledge transfer and learning, and measurement and evaluation guidance.

Highlights include delivering 45-60 minute **advice surgeries to 60 voluntary, community and social enterprise sector organisations**. This formally consolidated initiatives begun in February 2021 that provide guidance to civil society on using wellbeing evidence, theories of change, and problem-solving case-specific challenges. The sessions led to **opportunities for content generation** to support peer-learning through guest blogs and practice examples, growing the Centre's resources, as well wider sharing of existing resources through organisational networks. All respondents to the post-surgery surveys said they were satisfied or highly satisfied with the session and agreed or strongly agreed that the follow guidance and links were helpful and relevant. The initiative has also acted as **a convening platform**, enabling links to be made, for instance bringing [Flourishing Lives](#) into a future Creativity Review.

Other examples of training and speaking events include Policy Profession Learning session on Place and Community, which had 200 participants, and private learning sessions for DCMS Youth and Society Directorate.

## Thought leadership

We worked with Nottingham Trent University for the second year running, providing scenarios for 60 final-year psychology undergraduates' professional practice that focused on topics of loneliness and chatbots, volunteer wellbeing, social capital, and spaces and places. This enables us to **influence the next generation of healthcare practitioners and policymakers**, ensuring they understand and prioritise wellbeing.

We also held **advisory roles** for the volunteer passport app project funded through the Kindocoin fund in Scotland; Natural England Health, Wellbeing Nature and Sustainability Tool; and Homes England Project on older Persons Housing and Wellbeing.



The advice surgery was very useful in looking at what we already do, looking at how to improve it, and coming up with new ideas that we hadn't thought of. Would recommend the Surgery to anyone who has to evaluate their project/activities in a robust manner.

- Participant feedback

# Deepdive: Loneliness and connection

Our overall aim is to take a life course approach to loneliness, continuing to build our collective understanding of who is affected by loneliness and social isolation and how, and how to tackle it.

Major strides have been made in what we know about loneliness and how to tackle it, with a shift from focusing on older age to all age, reflecting the changing evidence base.

In 2022-23 we continued to focus on effectively embedding the Campaign to End Loneliness, which has been hosted by the Centre since 2021, continuing to build our collective understanding of why and how young people are affected by loneliness and social isolation.

## Finding and synthesising the evidence

The Campaign ran two seminars during summer 2022 bringing together designers, policymakers, planners and architects to discuss what we know about **tackling loneliness through the built environment**. The project collated insights from the evidence base and used these to generate practical recommendations for future research and practice, including a framework for how to make neighbourhoods less lonely. This is an example of how we function as a convener between research, policy and practice, ensuring the most robust and relevant evidence reaches the right audiences in the most accessible way.

## Putting evidence into action

Funded by DCMS, the Campaign continued to deliver the **Tackling Loneliness Hub**, a digital platform that acts as a learning and exchange space for loneliness practitioners across the public, private and charity sectors to connect, support and collaborate. Over the 2022-23 financial year, 395 new members joined the Hub, bringing the total number of members to 486 professionals from over 370 organisations.



Feedback from members paints a positive picture of real-world impact, with 86% of members saying the Hub helped to widen their professional network; 80% saying the Hub informed the action their organisation is taking to tackle loneliness; and 90% saying the content shared on the Hub was useful to them. The Hub also delivered nine workshops across 2022-23, with an average satisfaction rate of 99%.



[We] have met  
so many incredible  
organisations [...].  
Excellent way to network.

- Hub member



“[The Hub is] a very  
supportive and positive  
space.

- Hub member



“[The Hub is] one of the  
most active communities  
[...] I have engaged in.

- Hub member

Across the financial year, the Campaign delivered **loneliness awareness training**, including 20 in-person and two online sessions for 400 NHS Property Service receptionists. A six-month post-course follow up showed participants were using the insights to make practical changes in both their professional and personal lives, including directing others to loneliness support and resources. Training with 25 Hampshire recipients of the Tackling Loneliness with Transport Fund had similar success, increasing understanding and actions to tackle loneliness, with 100% of participants recommending the programme.



The facilitator was lovely and  
gave us a chance to chat about  
how things can be put into practice,  
reflect on our situations and discuss  
how [loneliness] affects us both in  
our workplace and personally.

- NHSPS training participant



## Growing the evidence base

We continued strengthening the evidence base, partnering and advising to build insight into specific populations.

Our ongoing **Loneliness and wellbeing in young people** project, in partnership with the Campaign to End Loneliness, University of Manchester and University of Glasgow, resulted in the publication of three academic papers. These examined mental health and loneliness in Scottish schools, the links between loneliness, mental health and wellbeing, and the trajectories of loneliness during Covid-19. The research suggests strong links between loneliness, mental health and wellbeing in young people, and points to how we can adapt our places, spaces and communities to better protect young people from loneliness.

In tandem, the Campaign supported research proposals on **developing new measures of loneliness among young people**. The Campaign's expertise ensured the bids successfully received ESRC funding.

The Campaign worked with Neighbourly Lab and King's College London Centre for Military Health Research, funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, on **qualitative analysis of armed forces projects**. It revealed specific situations or experiences of the AF community could increase loneliness compared with civilian life, such as moving around and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The report, launched in October 2022, also showed there are also strengths that can be drawn from such adverse circumstances, such as a shared community.



## Thought leadership

In February 2023, the Campaign to End Loneliness hosted its **annual online International Conference**, funded by Sky and Togetherly. It focused on tackling loneliness for a new era of connection, showcasing innovative approaches from around the world. Across the day, digital sessions explored workplace loneliness, the cost of loneliness, funding projects, harnessing the power of community networks and infrastructure, and the role of digital technologies. The conference attracted 250 attendees, with delegates from business, academia, politics, and media. The dedicated microsite had 665 unique visitors and 1,705 sessions. To maximise impact and sustain the event's legacy, post-event recordings were made available and continued conversations on digital channels into February and March.

The Campaign launched its [Conversations to Connect](#) **podcast** in October 2022, which gained 1,400 listeners in 46 countries around the world including UK, US, Canada, Australia, Germany, Spain and France in six months.

**Speaking engagements** for 2022-23 included contributions to the Housing LIN Annual Conference and UCL Loneliness in Mental Health Final Symposium, as well as sessions with National Association of Local Councils, Academy of Social Justice, and Universities UK and a launch event for the All-Party Parliamentary Group workplace loneliness report.

The Campaign's **media profile continued to build** throughout, 2022-23, with mentions in Tracey Crouch's [Daily Mail sportsmail opinion article](#), the Mail on Sunday and the Express (link between Dementia and Loneliness), and loneliness statistics used by Sky News, the Independent and on yahoo.co.uk, which has a reach of 1 million. The Campaign's Programme Director, Robin Hewings, was also interviewed by several outlets including ITV, *Voice of Islam* radio, and Word on Health - syndicated to 20 regional radio stations around the UK.

The Campaign to End Loneliness undertook a content audit and website update and restructure to improve user experience. The average session duration on the website increased by 5.3% from the end of February 2023 following amendments to the buttons and 'read more' links.

# Deepdive: Working age

We believe that investing in workplace wellbeing is core to building resilience, and progressing and thriving as a nation.

To support this during 2022-23, we focused on increasing the robustness, consistency and relevance of what's known about drivers of workplace wellbeing, and getting that used in practice.

## Finding and synthesising the evidence

We conducted a literature review to understand **how board-level wellbeing champions and wellbeing assurance roles are being delivered in practice**, and their impact on staff wellbeing. We used this to generate recommendations for research, policy and practice, and develop a theory of change.

## Putting evidence into action

We have provided increased support, guidance, and tools, focusing on the development, implementation and evaluation of effective wellbeing strategies.

For example, using insights from our literature review on the impact of non-executive director Wellbeing Lead roles, we developed **online guidance** which builds on the existing evidence of what works to improve wellbeing in the workplace.

Our top-performing LinkedIn post by number of total impressions shared the Wellbeing Non-Executive Director Theory of Change (3,612 impressions, 13.4% engagement rate). The top-performing post by engagement rate similarly shared practical, employer guidance, looking at the cost-effectiveness of workplace wellbeing activity (16.4% ER). This illustrates the **appetite for practical tools and advice**, and that LinkedIn is an effective mechanism for sharing these types of assets with their intended professional audience.



We have also worked with a wide range of individuals and organisations including Met Police, Cumbria Council for Voluntary Service, Sproutl and DEFRA to support evaluations, develop theories of change, improve staff wellbeing surveys and analysis, and implement recommendations. We have achieved this by producing tailored resources and practical toolkits, as well as **delivering accessible training workshops**, translating the evidence into action.

## Growing the evidence base

We have concentrated on **building our in-house analysis capacity** this financial year to gain deeper insights into working age and workplace wellbeing. This includes continuing our analysis of the Civil Service People Survey data, as well as UK labour market data 2012-22. The resulting blog - "Which jobs make us happy?" - has been viewed 2,466 times since publication in February 2023. This broad appeal can be explained due to the content straddling two focus areas (national wellbeing measures and methods; working age and business) and several audience groups.

We used case studies of organisations in the financial and retail sectors to examine the **relationship between the working environment and culture, and staff productivity**. These provide a starting point for further evaluation, with more causal and sector-specific evidence needed.

We worked with Marie Curie to identify where research and practice need to go next in **supporting the wellbeing of people in the workforce who have a terminal diagnosis**. We conducted a rapid scoping review of research, a survey of HR decision makers and ran a call for case studies, practice examples and policies. The online launch event engaged almost 100 attendees. The research has already led to changes in the charity's own policies, as well as legislative change at a national policy level. We will be building on the insights with a second, implementation phase of this project in collaboration with Marie Curie in 2023-24.



**A really detailed,  
helpful resource.**

- Sarah Richardson,  
Department for  
Education





## Thought leadership

Our **Business Leaders' Council** brings together stakeholders from the business sector who are demonstrating an ongoing commitment to wellbeing within their own workplace, in their supply chains, of their consumers and within society. This financial year, we delivered three dedicated events, promoted through the dedicated Business Drumbeat mailing list, which has over 1,000 subscribers. Topics included: the relationship between wellbeing (life satisfaction) and productivity; how employers and policymakers can support people to find and stay in work and get people back into work; and the relationship between job quality and wellbeing by role type. The events attracted over 100 attendees, and produced green digital content that has been shared as videos on our website as an additional resource. The forum convenes a diverse range of perspectives and offers a way to translate research, lead conversations and network with key stakeholders in the sector. Panellists this year included representatives from Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), the National Forum for Health and Wellbeing, Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, ONS, Youth Futures Foundation, Centre for Ageing Better and local authorities.

We have been able to leverage colleagues' professional profiles as **expert spokespeople** to increase the Centre's brand visibility and build its reputation at a national level. Engagements include being on the keynote panel at the Future of Work and Wellbeing Conference.





# Achieving our 'Louder' objective



One of our strategic aims for 2022-23 has been 'Louder', with markers of success identified as an increase in reach and more people finding and engaging with our resources. This supports our goal of accelerating and democratising access to wellbeing knowledge.

To continue to raise the Centre's brand profile and strengthen the Centre's voice we employed a **digital-first approach** using social media platforms and our weekly newsletter to drive users to our wealth of website resources.

Blogs, both newly generated and archival, made up 24% of our total website views April 2022 to March 2023. Growing our content-planning capacity enabled us to be more responsive to wider sector developments and time-sensitive events, and increase the volume of publications.

Since redesigning the newsletter structure in December 2022, we have continued to refine our content strategy to ensure that it is a primary dissemination tool. Curating regular communications that incorporate insights from across the organisation and the wider sector has resulted in a **higher open rate** (up 17.5%) and **click through rate** (up 17%) compared to last financial year. **Our subscriber list has grown by almost 10%** through targeted signposting and organic re-sharing, indicating we're getting relevant and engaging content to interested people.

We have employed **Search Engine Optimisation tactics** and improved accessibility by recreating reports and briefings as webpages, as well as publishing downloadable PDFs. New and archive products have been downloaded 23,226 times between April 2022 and March 2023.

We had a total of 214,784 people using our main website, of which 107,960 were UK-based. The **number of web users has increased 20%** from the previous financial year, and 34% from Q1 to Q4 2022/23. In addition, nearly 50,000 people used our measures microsite, racking up **over 100k page views of our guidance aimed at the VCSE sector**.

The upward trends are particularly impressive because these improvements were achieved through direct e-marketing and organic search alone, rather than paid advertising.

We used knowledge of where our audiences are to connect with them on Twitter and LinkedIn, utilising tagging and hashtags to tap into wider conversations and expand reach through leveraging our collaborators' networks.

Our followers on Twitter - primarily researchers, economists and policymakers - continued to steadily grow, increasing from 17,545 in April 2022 to 17,994 in March 2023. Impressions peaked at 88.5k in January 2023. The average **engagement rate** for the period was 2.1%, **up 51%** from 2021-22. We have reduced the volume of posts, to focus on quality of content.

LinkedIn is a rapidly growing platform for the Centre, offering a way to share insights with professional and business audiences in a learning-focused way. Our **total audience has more than doubled** from 2760 in 2021/2022 to 4317 in 2022/23 (62% increase).

Importantly, the net growth has increased 104.8%. This increase in being driven by the 70% **increase in total impressions**, showing that our content is reaching more people. Further success is an almost 50% increase in engagements (such as commenting and sharing), and 44% increase in link clicks compared with last financial year. This is evidence that the channel is a useful driver to our website. These stats indicate our content and engagement strategy for the platform is working - namely that we're producing the type of posts and **building our community through conversation and knowledge sharing**. It also reflects an industry uptrend in utilising the platform.

These statistics very clearly demonstrate the Centre's impact as an evidence intermediary - working between evidence producers and decision makers.

# Our People

Our diverse, international team is crucial to the organisation's success. The experience and effectiveness of colleagues has enabled us to consistently deliver a high level of impact, working creatively within the constraints of limited resources. This is supported with a remote-first, flexible policy.

This financial year, the Centre welcomed five new staff across three functions to support the delivery of our goals. We also brought in additional freelance and contracted expertise where necessary - in the form of analysts and designers - to augment and compliment our in-house capacity and provide specific skills.

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 strategic direction for the organisation, and ensure that any activities and executive decisions:

- are made in the best interest of the organisation, its stakeholders and the wider public;
- contribute to achieving the organisational purpose and aims;
- are delivered effectively and sustainably.

The Centre also has an advisory panel that, along with a wider consultation group for each project, ensures quality assurance and suitability of the products and research outputs that are being produced. The advisory panel is composed of voluntary members who represent the key sectors and audiences the Centre engages with. The main purpose of this panel is to ensure high quality, transparency, relevance and accessibility of all the Centre's products and research strategies.



# What's next?

Our planned programme of activity for **April 2023 to March 2024** builds on our previous work to refine concepts, identify gaps in the evidence base, and develop tools to improve the measurement and evaluation of interventions and the implementation of insights in practice.

Specific activity includes:

## 1) National measures and methods

- Exploratory analysis of the ONS Health Index.
- Exploring time-use data and what it tells us about wellbeing.
- Conducting a review of the life satisfaction literature.
- Sharing practice examples from charities including Power2 and Tearfund of using wellbeing measures in real-life contexts.
- Hosting hybrid event The future of hope: in conversation with Carol Graham.
- Delivering training on the HMT Green Book Supplementary guidance on Wellbeing and Wellbeing and Policy.

## 2) Working age

- Analysing Civil Service People Survey data.
- Analysing student wellbeing data in collaboration with TASO and Kings College London.
- Exploring wellbeing-informed workspace design.
- Producing new guidance for improving staff wellbeing in schools and colleges in England, supported by the Department for Education.
- Running workshops with a cohort of businesses to support the development of work and terminal illness policies.



### 3) Places and community

- Leading a rapid review exploring the impact of community agency and control on community wellbeing.
- Researching what community wellbeing means to the staff and students of Northumbria University.
- Informing Nottingham Trent University and Pro Bono Economics' VCSE Barometer Survey (Wave 4) which focuses upon wellbeing.

### 4) Loneliness and connection

- Producing an evidence summary for loneliness and wellbeing in young people, collating key findings and recommended actions for those working with young people.
- Conducting a secondary data analysis initiative (SDAI), using data from five British longitudinal cohort studies, to examine whether levels of social connectedness and loneliness, and their relationship to subjective wellbeing, change over people's lives and between generations.
- Reviewing the evidence on the effectiveness of loneliness alleviation and mapping current practices in the field, together with the Campaign to End Loneliness, and funded by DCMS Tackling Loneliness Team.
- Renewing the Tackling Loneliness Hub for 2023-24, led by Campaign to End Loneliness.
- Hosting the 2024 International Loneliness Conference, delivered by the Campaign to End Loneliness.

We invite you to engage with us across our four focus areas to help us achieve our aims and maximise our impact. Together, we can help build a future where the wellbeing of people and communities in the UK improves year-on-year and wellbeing inequalities are reduced.

Nancy Hey - Executive Director, What Works Wellbeing



Read our [Strategy](#)

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



