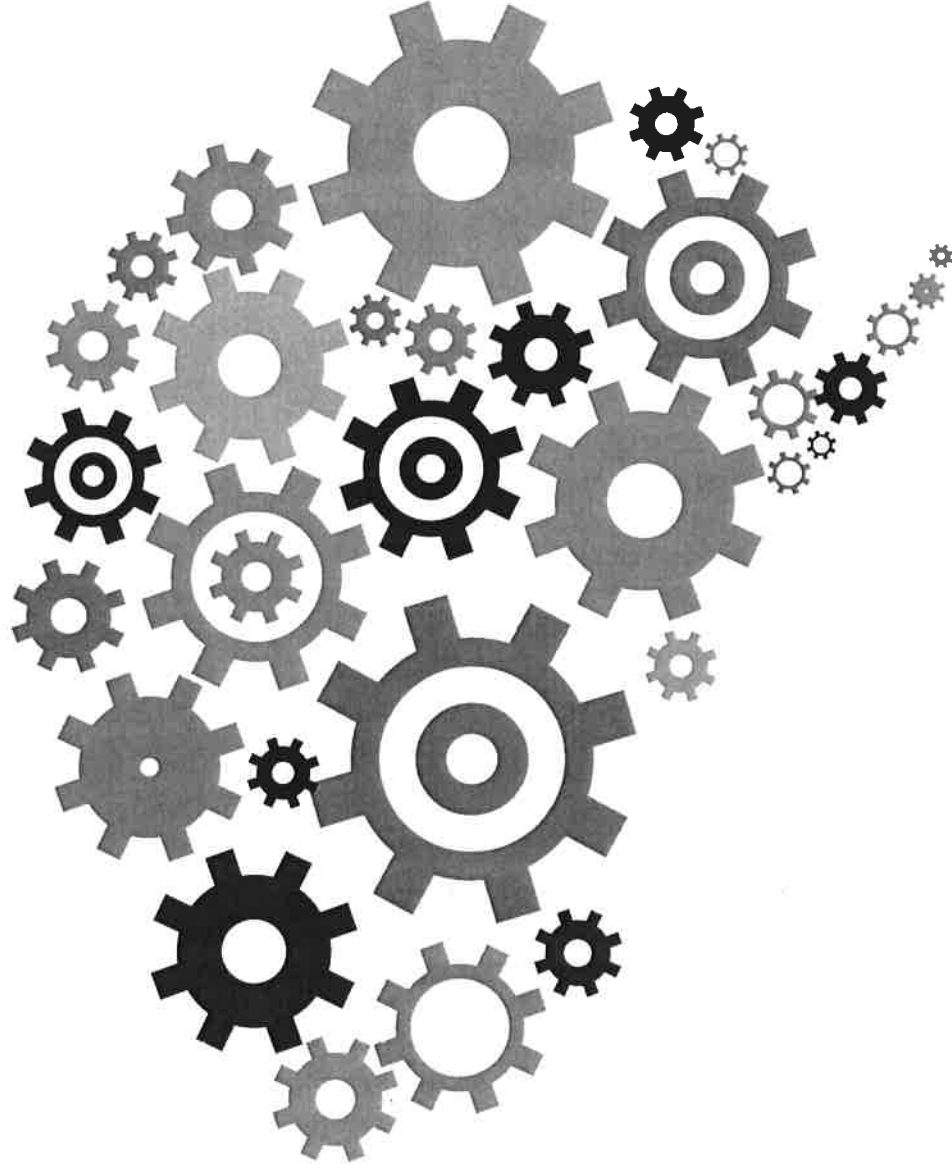


Measuring and monitoring children and young people's mental wellbeing:

A toolkit for schools and colleges



Public Health
England

EBPU

Evidence Based
Practice Unit

A partnership of



Anna Freud
National Centre for
Children and Families

In collaboration with

COMMON ROOM





1. Why measure? Taking a snapshot.

Why?

This approach is used to identify needs or strengths within whole cohorts. It does not seek to identify particular individuals.

This approach serves as a sort of 'temperature check' of wellbeing within the school and college. It can be used to plan prevention work and inform planning decisions at school and college level, across clusters of schools or at a wider geographical level such as a Local Authority.³

What?

Wellbeing instruments cover a range of dimensions, and schools/colleges need to be pragmatic in selecting which domains to focus on. Considerations should be given to the need to avoid undue burden on students or staff, and an appraisal of the domains which schools/colleges have the capacity to influence. In selecting the domains of interest it is also crucial to consider what consequential action might be taken as a result. For example: *if we found students reporting low levels of neighbourhood safety we would do x and y.*

It is also important to consider what other information might help with interpretation of the findings. Relevant information would include age, ethnicity, deprivation, special educational needs, health & social care plan status, learning disability, physical disability, longstanding health issues, free school meal status (see what about youth website for examples).

Much of this information will already be held on school or college information management systems. It can be used to identify groups that may need special attention or support, and to monitor potential inequalities or gaps in provision for particular groups.

Who?

Most commonly schools and colleges concentrate on child or young person self-report instruments. Although the burden of trying to extend a survey's reach to staff, parents or peers may be prohibitive, there may be value in considering these distinct viewpoints. Surveys may be conducted across the whole organisation or selected cohorts.

It is key to consider from the outset:

- which students will be involved
- how to get a big enough number to be able to say something from the results
- whether the information will be anonymous or not
- whether consent is needed for the students to take part
- ethical considerations and how the data will be stored
- how to communicate to parents and carers what is planned.

1. Why measure? Taking a snapshot



When?

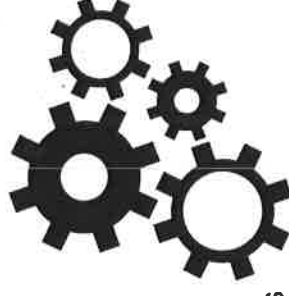
Efforts should be made to avoid particularly stressful times (e.g. exams) as these may have an impact on the wellbeing levels reported. Surveys can be carried out as a one-off or repeated annually or biannually. Repeated measurement can be done longitudinally – i.e., with the same students as they progress through different years of education, or as repeated snapshots of the same cohort (e.g. repeated for each year 7 group). In either instance, surveys should be repeated at the same time of year each time to ensure results are comparable.

How?

It is important to decide how the information will be collected and who will take responsibility for collecting, storing, collating and analysing the data. Practical considerations include whether delivery will be paper-based or electronic, how data will be stored, whether information will be anonymous or identifiable, who will have access to the data, who will 'manage' the data and provide the necessary results, how handling of the data will comply with ethical standards and information governance protocols. These practical considerations will inform how the wellbeing survey is introduced to students, and also what is communicated to parents and carers, particularly in terms of gaining consent. Research guidance regarding consent may provide some tips for the development of consent procedures.

What next?

The information can be tracked over time and/or compared with other schools/colleges. This kind of information may be used in commissioning school based support or further tailoring existing provision, or reporting for Ofsted.



Relevant practice examples

Braithwaite C of E Primary

Cressey College

HeadStart

Schools and Students Health Education Unit (SHEU)

Parliament Hill School

Schools and Students Health Education Unit (SHEU)



Multiple schools in Local Authorities across England

Purpose: Snapshot

1 Brief name

Children and Young People's Health and Wellbeing Surveys

2 Rationale

Lifestyle surveys are used to enable a school to plan effectively, monitor progress, show evidence for accountability and report back to the community of staff, students and parents. Senior staff responsible for decision making about the PSHE provision may have only impressionistic information about the range of behaviours and attitudes of their student body, including their emotional wellbeing, so the survey provides some more objective information for the school and comparisons with local and national results. SHEU has often included the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) (for 13+) and Stirling Children's Wellbeing Scale (SCWBS) (for younger children) in questionnaires, and the wellbeing results can be seen in the context of other lifestyle concerns, such as online safety, and relationships with family and friends.

3 Resources and processes to set up

The majority of SHEU's work is commissioned by local authorities but individual schools can buy into the service too. A local authority survey will take about six

months to plan the scope of the study, agree a set of questions, recruit schools, monitor and chase progress, and receive final reports. A school using an off-the-shelf survey can conduct a survey and receive results much more quickly.

4 People involved

Local authority lead and individual school leads are key. Members of school staff responsible for target year groups may be involved in data collection and all staff will typically be invited to consider the outcomes. A school will often take the results back to the student body for comment.

5 Method of delivery (including frequency)

The surveys can be completed online or as paper booklets. Schools plan and provide support for completion of the questionnaires, which should be conducted with privacy. Frequency is usually every other year to show change, but it can be one-off to take a 'snapshot' of a school community.

6 Use of resulting information

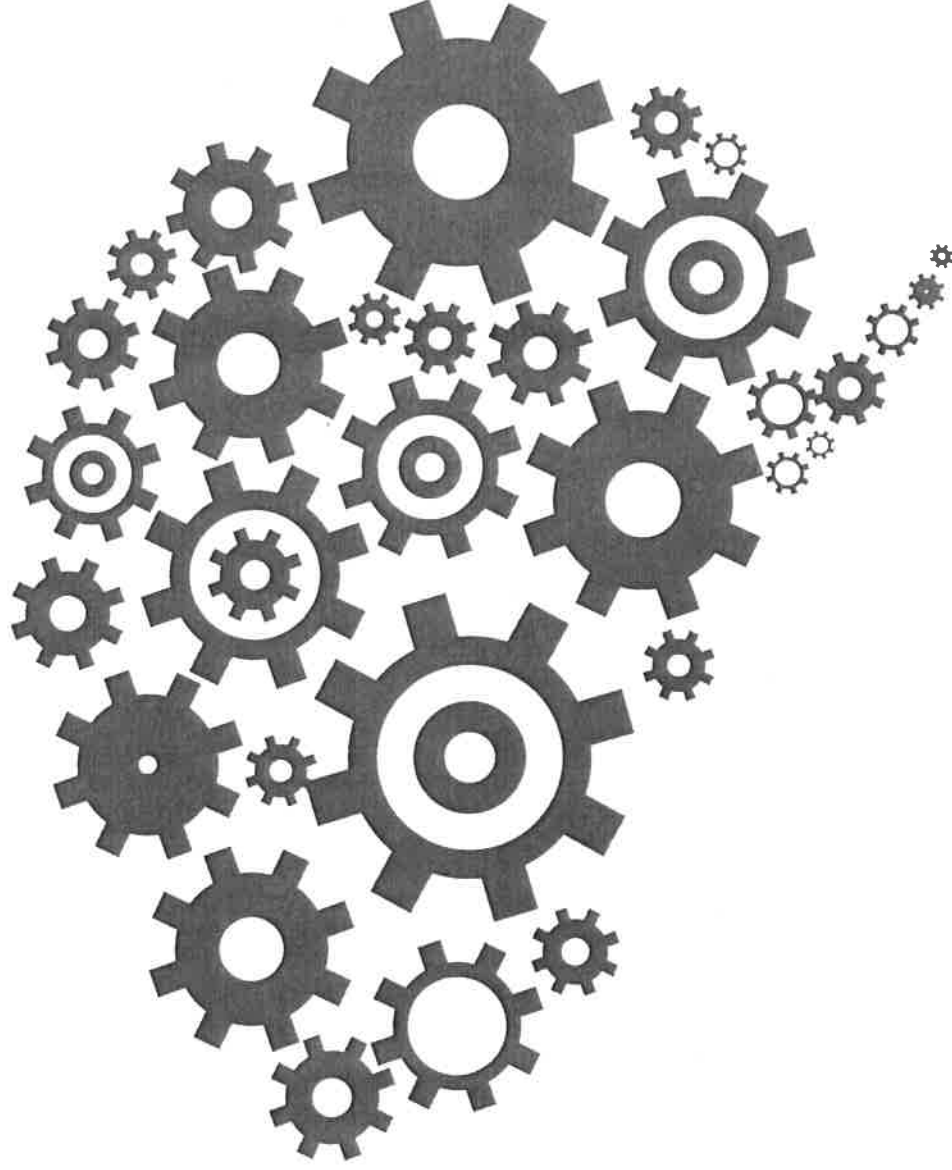
Different schools across an authority will be looking at and responding to their own sets of results and comparisons, and will plan different responses, often in collaboration with local authority advisors (see Wakefield Example). As the scores work as a 'temperature

check', they are compared against national or local averages and, if not significantly different, might not be the focus of any intervention, although there will usually be something in a survey to respond to. At local authority level, the aggregate results can be used to show, for example, that the wellbeing scores of LGBT students are worse than those of their peers, or that the resilience scores of ethnic minority students are not significantly different from those of their peers.

7 Other comments

SHEU has been providing a lifestyle survey service to schools and local authorities for nearly 40 years and holds very large databanks of young people's lifestyle responses. Local and national trends can be seen and provide a context for an individual school's results. "The (SHEU survey) helped us to prioritise where we needed to be in terms of PSHE education. We delivered assemblies based on the evidence as well as curriculum development, and dealt with whole school issues – particularly in regard to pastoral care. (...) To summarise, the (SHEU survey) allows the PSHE department to assess the impact of teaching and learning and modify future lessons accordingly. It allows our school to look at whole-school issues such as the extent to which the pastoral care system is meeting the needs of our pupils. It helps us to do need analysis of our pupils. It helps to provide important evidence for [outside agencies]." - Secondary School Head

Introducing wellbeing instruments to students



Introducing wellbeing instruments to students



This guide has been co-written with young people to provide practical advice and guidance on how to introduce wellbeing measures to students in schools and colleges. Throughout there are also direct quotes from young people.

Whether you are using wellbeing measures for a **snapshot, identification or evaluation**, in addition to the information you gain, the use of wellbeing measures can have important secondary benefits for students and can:

- send an important message that wellbeing is being taken seriously;
- open up conversations about wellbeing;
- give students the language to talk about wellbeing;
- enable students to have a broader understanding wellbeing.

It is important to introduce the measures to students properly so that they understand why they are being asked to complete it and feel comfortable to answer the questions openly and honestly.

“ We need to know what it's for, who will see it, and what difference it will make. ”

This guide covers what needs to be considered in advance when you are planning to use wellbeing measures and what students want to know when they are being asked to complete wellbeing measures.

Planning to use wellbeing measures - things to consider in advance

When you are planning to use emotional wellbeing measures, students tell us it is important to consider the following:

- **The emotional experience of completing wellbeing measures:**

It is often thought that wellbeing measures that contain positively worded items have less emotional impact on students. Whilst this may make the experience of completing the measure easier for students who are not experiencing difficulties, this may not be the case for students who are experiencing difficulties. Answering positively worded items negatively can be distressing or upsetting. For example, answering 'no' to questions such as 'I have an adult who cares for me', 'I feel loved' or 'I feel safe' can be difficult for students. Sometimes negatively framed question can let a young person know they are not the only person with difficult feelings.

Introducing wellbeing instruments to students



- **Where will the measures be completed?**

It is important to consider where students will be sitting when they are completing the measures to ensure this will allow them to complete the measures privately. For example, if students are sitting next to each other in a classroom, they may worry that others will see their answers and this will affect how honestly they complete the measure. Students also tell us that it is important to make sure that they are not positioned in ways that make it seem like an exam or a test.

“ You don’t want to set everyone out in the hall like an exam. Young people need to know this isn’t a test, that this is just a way of checking in about how people are feeling so the school can plan the right types of help. ”

- **Students who need support to complete the measure.**

It is important to think about students who need support from an adult to complete the measure, to enable them to answer openly and honestly. It is important to consider whether the student can choose who supports them. Guidance for support staff to ensure they understand confidentiality, know how to encourage the student to be honest and not say things to please you. Let them know it’s ok to be honest.

- **Develop a script for introducing the measures and information for students.**

Students tell us that introducing the measures well is vital to make sure they understand what they are being asked to do, why they are being asked to do it, and to make them feel able to complete the measure honestly. Staff will have varying levels of understanding about wellbeing, so consider developing a script or set of slides to ensure this is consistent. It may also be useful to give this to students in an information sheet, so that they can ask questions or know who to contact if they need support after completing the measure.



Introducing wellbeing instruments to students

- **What is wellbeing?**

There are various definitions of wellbeing and deciding which one to use will depend on the age and level of understanding of students.

“ Positive wellbeing means children and young people feeling happy, feeling that their life is going well, and feeling able to get on with their daily lives. ” (Young advisors)

Whichever definition you choose, students tell us that it is important:

- To understand that emotional wellbeing is on a spectrum and isn't something that we do or don't have. Just like our physical health, this can go up and down at different times in our lives. It is normal to struggle, to feel unhappy, or to find things difficult at times.
- To learn how to look after their emotional wellbeing and to learn coping strategies for dealing with emotional difficulties, in the same way they learn to look after their physical health.

- To not make assumptions about emotional wellbeing based on student's life circumstances.

There are some students who may have difficult life circumstances who cope very well and those who may appear to be in better circumstances but who experience emotional difficulties.

Introducing measures: what students want to know

Students tell us that it is important that wellbeing measures are introduced clearly so that they understand what the measure is for, why they are being asked to complete it, why this is important, and what difference it will make.

How you introduce a measure to students will clearly vary depending on which of the reasons the measures are being used, which measures are being used, and the age and ability of the students. However, whichever approach or measure you are using, students tell us that there are several key steps to introducing the measures well.

Key Questions and Information



Question	Information
Why?	<p>Students want to understand why they are being asked to complete the wellbeing measure and what difference it will make. It is helpful to contextualise why you are using the wellbeing measures and how this fits with their everyday life at school/college.</p> <p>Key points to cover include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is emotional wellbeing• Why you are asking them to complete the wellbeing measure and for what purpose e.g. snapshot, identification, or evaluation• Why it is important to understand wellbeing in this context• What difference you hope this will make

“Young people might be worried that it’s a test, let them know there are no right or wrong answers, that it’s just another way of checking what’s helping and what we need to change, to make sure they’re getting the best possible help.”

How?	<p>Students want to understand what the wellbeing measure is like and how to complete it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Let students know this is not a test and that there are no right or wrong answers – it is about understanding how young people feel.• Show students example questions and the different answers that they can choose.• ‘Are you trying to trick me?’ Many of the items in wellbeing measures sound very similar and this can cause some students to worry that the questions are trying to catch them out. <p>Explain that some of the questions may sound very similar but this is not a trick. The questions are asking similar things in different ways, as this is the best way of understanding how someone is feeling.</p>
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Key Questions and Information

Question

Information

Who?

Students want to know who is being asked to complete the measure, who will see the information, and how the results will be used. For example, will you be able to identify which child is which? If yes, what will the follow up be? Why do you need to identify them, or why have you decided not to? It is important to make this clear – if students think the information is anonymous when it isn't, they may feel betrayed if someone then speaks to them about it. Similarly, students may believe that they are disclosing to you, when in fact, you will not be able to identify them.

- Explain who is being asked to complete the wellbeing measure. For example, is this the whole organisation or year group, students who you think may be experiencing difficulties, or students who have been receiving support or involved in a particular intervention.
- Explain whether or not students will be identifiable and what the consequences are. For example:
 - If students will be identifiable and you will be giving feedback or talking to students who have indicated they may be experiencing difficulties, be clear about how and when this will happen. Be clear that this will be done privately, as they may be concerned that other students may find out.
 - If you have chosen not to make the completed measures identifiable, clearly explain this and make it clear that you will not be able to identify students who may disclose they are experiencing difficulties. Be clear about who students can talk to if they want to talk to someone, as well show they can do so.
 - Regardless of whether you decide to make the measure identifiable or anonymous, it is important to let students know whom they can talk to if they need to and how they can do so. Remember, even if you are using measures to identify which students need support, the measures may not identify them all - some students may not feel able to be honest about their feelings on a survey, but would prefer to talk to someone instead.

Key Questions and Information



Question Information

When and where?

Where possible, explain that you will be asking students to complete the measures in advance (e.g. a week before), so that they have time to ask questions beforehand. Explain:

- When they will be asked to complete it
- How long it will take
- Where they will be asked to complete the measure e.g. all at once in the classroom, in small groups in a different room etc.

What next?

Students want to know how the information will be used, and if and how they will get feedback. Explain:

- Whether or not they will get individual feedback or learn about the overall results.
- If students are identified as needing support, how will this happen and how will this be done privately.
- Be clear about how timescales and how long it will be before they get feedback.
- Give examples of how you will use the information e.g. to plan new approaches to supporting wellbeing across the school/college.

“ We would need to know what happens afterwards and if we’ll get help. We would want to know how this will happen and if it will be done discreetly. We probably wouldn’t want other young people in school to know so wouldn’t want someone coming to get us out of class! ”

