Opportunity and choice provide the keys to our wellbeing

Opportunity is a vital factor in our wellbeing, new research has shown. In a series of ‘public dialogues’ held by a partnership between The What Works Centre for Wellbeing and Sciencewise, participants discussing work, learning, community, sport and culture suggested that having choices and feeling valued are the things that make us feel most fulfilled.

A participant from Cardiff told the Centre: “The opportunity to advance is not just financial, but about the sense of hope for your future. It’s about personal growth.”

Lord Gus O’Donnell, former Cabinet Secretary and the patron of the What Works Centre for Wellbeing, said, “the public dialogues brought together more than 100 members of the public across six regions, investigating the factors that improve our quality of life, and what prevents people from accessing them. In addition to our basic wellbeing needs - feeling safe, having sufficient money, good health, good quality affordable food, and feeling loved - it emerged that having the opportunity to advance at work, or participate in community, sport and cultural activities is important to us, whether we choose to do so or not. Feeling appreciated, having a sense of purpose and belonging are also central to our overall of wellbeing.”

Events covered the topics of Work and Learning (held in Cardiff and Falkirk), Culture and Sport (held in London and South Tyneside) and Community Wellbeing (held in Bristol and Belfast). Established in 2014 by Lord O’Donnell, the Centre which is a world-leading initiative, creating a bridge between knowledge and action, and demonstrating what we can all do as individuals, communities, businesses and governments to improve people’s lives in the UK.

Dr Paul Litchfield, the Centre’s Chair said, “The public dialogues are a critical part of setting the wellbeing agenda. They help to keep us grounded and focussed on what really matters to people across the United Kingdom.”

The Cabinet Office provided additional support for the project, which informs the future work of the What Works Centre for Wellbeing. Facilitators Hopkins Van Mil were commissioned to run the dialogues and to analyse the findings.

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Notes to Editors

Documents published today

Summary document

Public Dialogues
http://whatworkswellbeing.org/evidence-program/public-dialogues/
The Wellbeing Public Dialogues
The Wellbeing Public Dialogues were commissioned by the What Works Centre for Wellbeing with support from Sciencewise, Public Health England and the Cabinet Office. Facilitators Hopkins Van Mil were commissioned to run the dialogues and to analyse the findings.

108 members of the public participated in the discussions held in Bristol, Belfast, London, South Tyneside, Falkirk and Cardiff. Public dialogues around three evidence areas:
- Community wellbeing
- Sport, culture and wellbeing
- Work, learning and wellbeing

The overarching objectives for the three series of dialogues were, to understand public views on:
- How people define wellbeing in the context of their own lives
- Perceptions of whether and how individual and government actions can affect people’s wellbeing
- Direct and indirect use of the Centre by the public
- The format, style of message, channels and messenger that they would be most and least receptive to.

In addition each series of dialogues had its own objective tailored to the evidence area concerned.

The What Works Centre for Wellbeing
The What Works Centre for Wellbeing is an independent Community Interest Company and a world-leading initiative, creating a bridge between knowledge and action. By translating academic evaluation of wellbeing measures into easy-to-use information about effectiveness, cost and applicability, the Centre uses evidence to show what we can all do as individuals, communities, businesses and governments to improve people’s lives in Britain.

The Centre builds on the ONS Measuring National Wellbeing Programme and the Commission on Wellbeing and Policy. The Centre joins a network of independent What Works Centres that are responsible for distilling and sharing the evidence to support decision making.

The OECD, WHO, the UN and the European Commission are all significantly engaged in wellbeing. A central focus of this international interest is on how societies, governments, communities and populations measure their progress, economic and social recognising the limits of GDP as an indicator of economic performance and social progress.

The Centre is a collaboration and has initial funding of over £3.5million over three years, in-kind resourcing and the support of the following founding partners:
- Economic and Social Research Council
- Department for Business Innovation and Skills
- Department for Communities and Local Government
- Department for Health
- Big Lottery Fund
- DCMS | Arts Council England | Sport England | English Heritage | Heritage Lottery Fund
- Public Health England
- Cabinet Office
The Centre’s Chair is Dr Paul Litchfield, Chief Medical Officer and Director of Wellbeing, Inclusion, Safety & Health for BT Group. Lord O’Donnell, former Cabinet Secretary, is our Patron.

http://whatworkswellbeing.org/about/our-team/

Sciencewise

The Sciencewise programme is funded by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). Sciencewise aims to improve policy-making involving science and emerging technology across government by increasing the effectiveness with which public dialogue is used, and encouraging its wider use where appropriate to ensure public views are considered as part of the evidence base.

Hopkins Van Mil: Creating Connections Ltd is about engagement to gain insight. As expert dialogue facilitators the team creates safe, neutral and productive spaces in which to access people’s views on the content that matters to them. HVM bridges the gap between policy and decision-making and the views of communities and members of the public for whom policies and decisions are made.

The What Works Network

The What Works Initiative is based on the principle that good decision-making should be informed by the best available evidence on what works and what does not. It aims to improve public services for people and communities by ensuring that resources are focused on those things which will have the greatest positive impact.

What Works Centres are fundamentally different from standard research centres. They aim to directly support policy makers, commissioners and local practitioners by providing reliable, accessible products which communicate the likely impact of real policy initiatives, and building professional capacity to use evidence effectively.

Contact

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