Maximising the wellbeing impact of housing

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what works wellbeing

October 2020

Overview

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The UK's National Body for Wellbeing Evidence, Policy & Practice

An independent collaborative organisation set up to develop and share robust, accessible and useful evidence about wellbeing
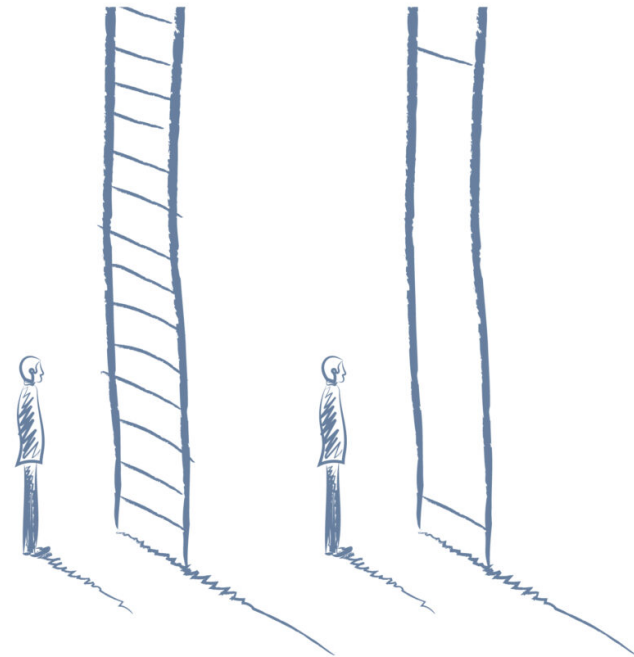
Wellbeing is...

Simply put, it's about 'how we're doing' as individuals, communities and as a nation, and how sustainable that is for the future. It is sometimes referred to as social welfare or social value.

Wellbeing inequality can be understood as the extent to which peoples' experiences of life vary within a population, or between different groups.

Measuring Wellbeing Inequality in Britain (2017), What Works Centre for Wellbeing

whatworkswellbeing.org
@WhatWorksWB

Wellbeing: how are you doing?

1. How are we doing: Measuring wellbeing

Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?

Overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile?

Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?

Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?
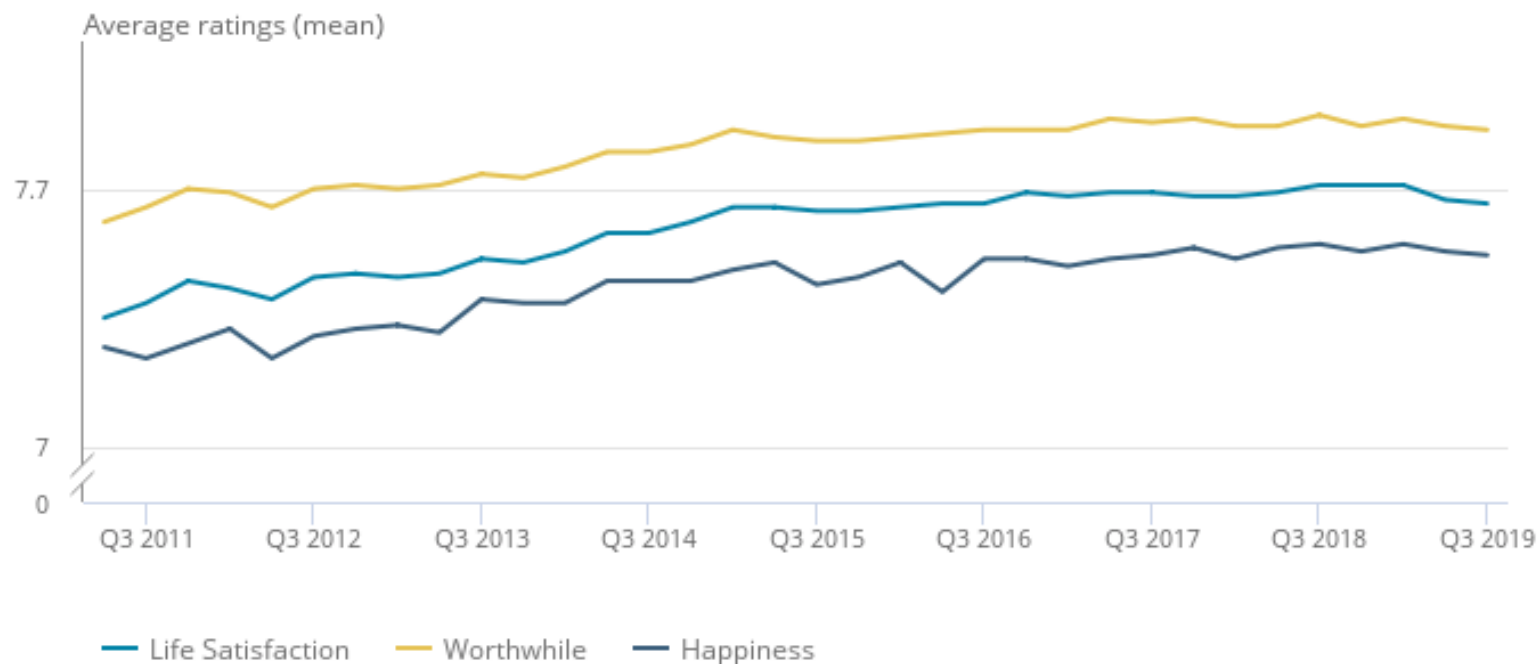
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How are we doing as a nation?

Figure 1: Life satisfaction and feeling that things done in life are worthwhile have deteriorated in the last year

Average ratings of life satisfaction, feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile and happiness, UK, Quarter 2 (Apr to June) 2011 to Quarter 3 (July to Sept) 2019

Average ratings (mean)

Life Satisfaction — Worthwhile — Happiness

Source: Office for National Statistics - Annual Population Survey

Measures of positive personal wellbeing all showed a decline this week

Great Britain, March to September 2020 with February 2020 reference point (dashed line)

- Question: "Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?", "Overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile?", "Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?", "Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?".

- Each of these questions is answered on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is "not at all" and 10 is "completely".
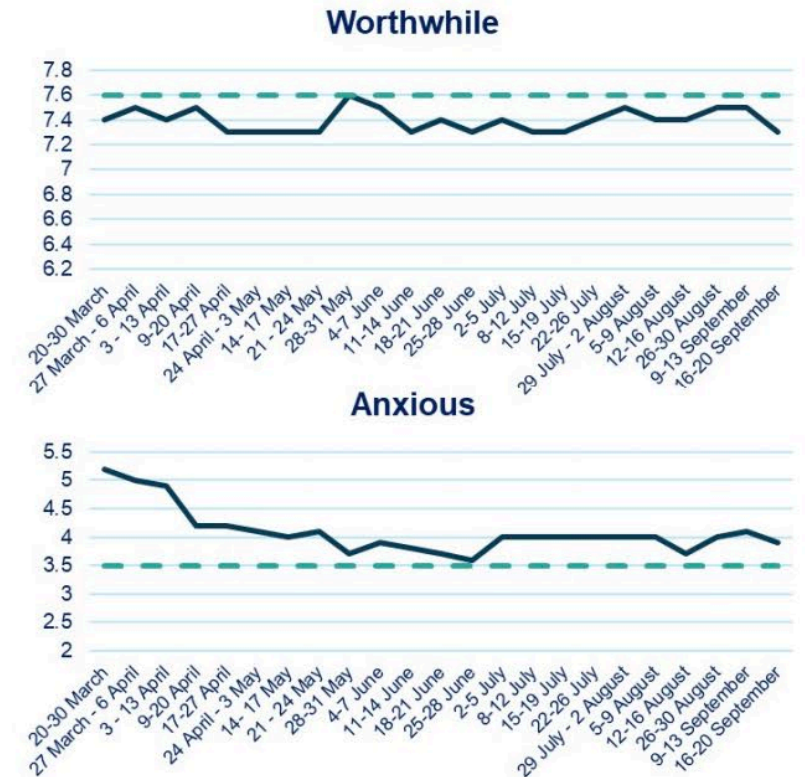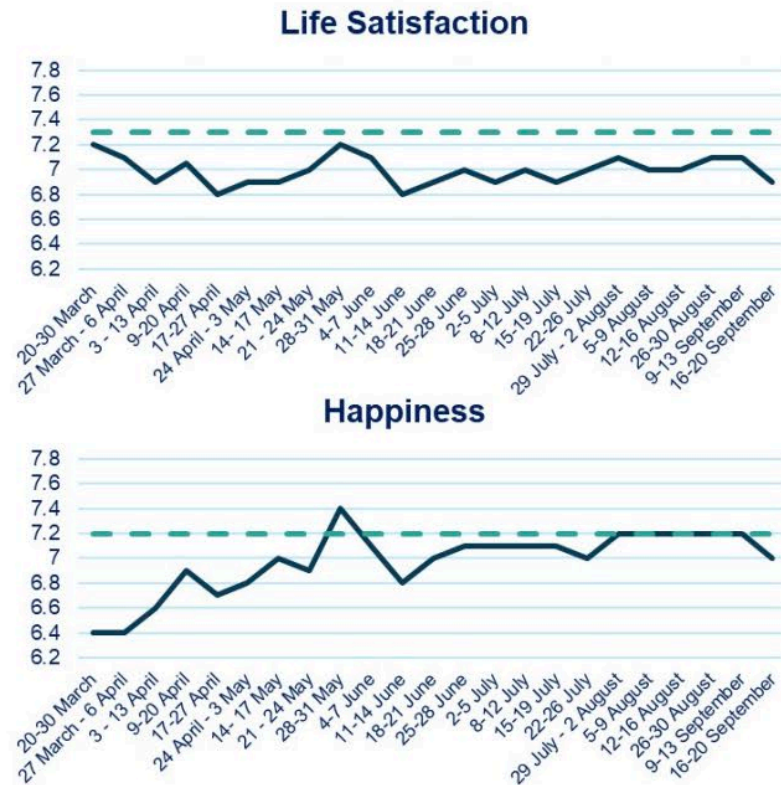
Source: Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain: 25 September 2020

Lead analyst: Ruth Davies

For individuals

- it's about **feeling good** and **functioning well**

- it's about **feeling confident, satisfied, safe** and **supported**

- whether our lives have **meaning** and **purpose**

- it's **different** for different people

What matters in communities?

People

Close relationships and friendships
Strong networks of support to meet different needs
Feelings of trust and belonging

Place

Conditions that enable people to thrive – access to services, assets, facilities
Opportunities to enable people to thrive – jobs, education, leisure
Intangible cultural heritage, shared practices or history
Sense of safety in the community

Power

Voice and representation
A sense of control or influence over things which are important
Inclusive communities where nobody feels excluded
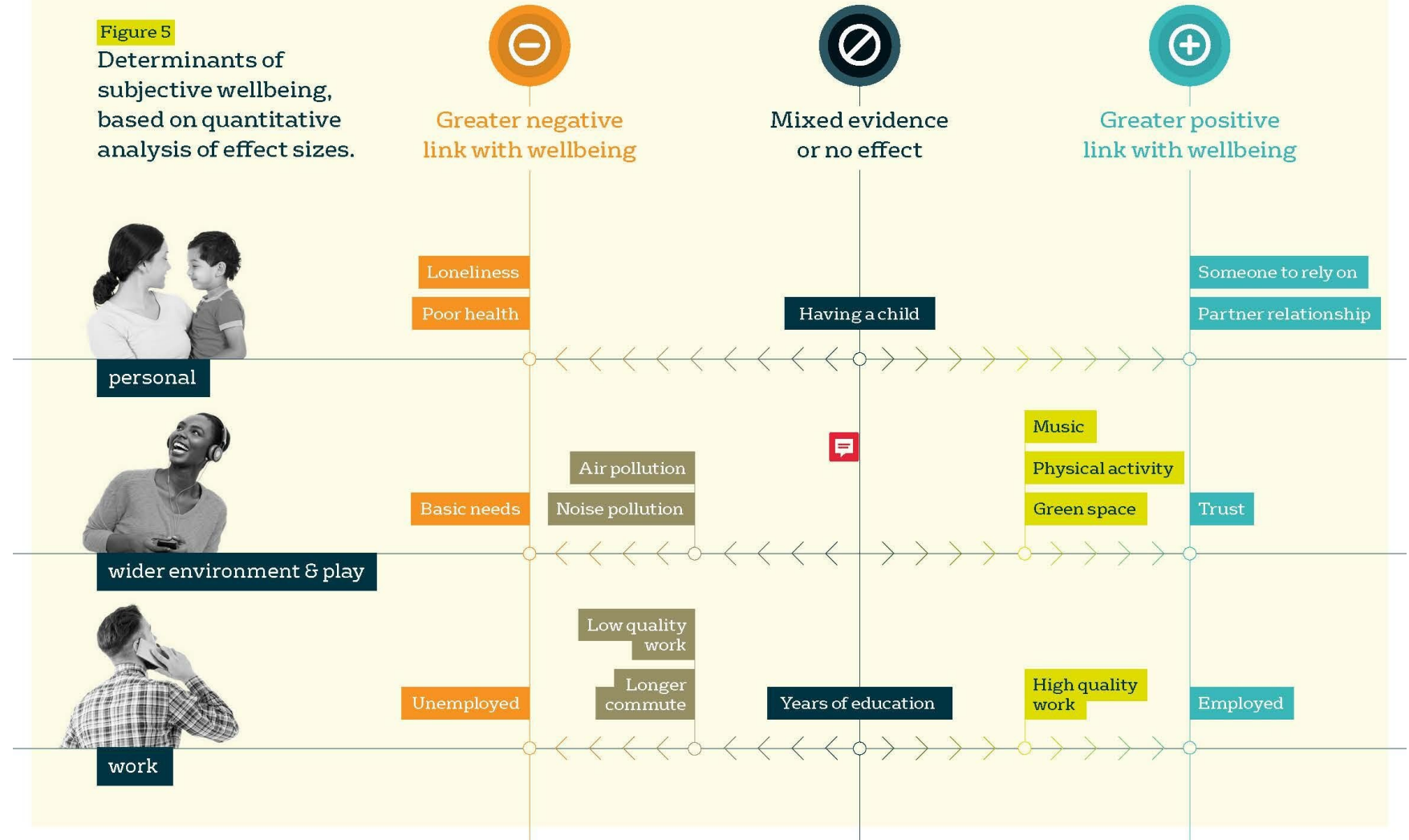
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Housing has impacts on multiple determinants of wellbeing

1 Getting to clarity

31

Figure 5
Determinants of subjective wellbeing, based on quantitative analysis of effect sizes.

Greater negative link with wellbeing

Mixed evidence or no effect

Greater positive link with wellbeing

personal
- Loneliness
- Poor health
- Having a child
- Someone to rely on
- Partner relationship

wider environment & play
- Basic needs
- Air pollution
- Noise pollution
- Music
- Physical activity
- Green space
- Trust

work
- Unemployed
- Low quality work
- Longer commute
- Years of education
- High quality work
- Employed

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Wellbeing... the ultimate goal of housing

Wellbeing is personal, subjective, but importantly universally relevant.

Wellbeing is a relevant, credible and measurable way to connect housing policy goals with outcomes in a way that matters to people's lives.

How can housing maximise wellbeing and reduce misery?

Wellbeing evidence at the heart of policy

Deborah Hardoon with
Nancy Hey & Silvia Brunetti
February 2020

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2 Wellbeing & Housing

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Work from ONS: People with low wellbeing

Housing features in the top three profiles of people most at risk of having poorest wellbeing – lowest life satisfaction

- unemployed or inactive renters with self-reported health problems or disability
- employed renters with self-reported health problems or disability
- retired homeowners with self-reported health problems or disability

Source: ONS Understanding wellbeing inequalities: Who has the poorest personal wellbeing?

https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/articles/understandingwellbeinginequalitieswhohasthepoorestpersonalwellbeing/2018-07-11

Analysis of the English Housing survey, 2016

Identifying the personal characteristics and housing factors associated with wellbeing: low life satisfaction and high anxiety

- The top housing factor associated with both life satisfaction and anxiety was **being in arrears** with rent or mortgage payments
- Life satisfaction appeared to be influenced by other housing factors, however anxiety did not
- For life satisfaction, the second most important property-related predictor was the **type of tenure**, with social renters having higher levels of life satisfaction – higher than owner occupiers
- **Type of dwelling** was the next most important property-related predictor of life satisfaction. Compared to living in terraced houses, living in flats or semi-detached houses decreased life satisfaction.

Read more: Blog on our website https://whatworkswellbeing.org/blog/housing-and-wellbeing-special-focus/

2017 Scoping Review

A rapid scoping review of reviews on the evidence on housing and its relationship to wellbeing

- Physical infrastructure of housing
- Economic housing situation
- Home ownership
- Housing and the neighbourhood
- Urban regeneration
- Housing and vulnerable groups
- Housing design

RAPID SCOPING REVIEW   JANUARY 2017

A rapid scoping review of
reviews on the evidence on
housing and its relationship to
wellbeing

housing
and
wellbeing

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Places and Spaces

In our [systematic review](#) of spaces and places found promising evidence that a range of approaches to community infrastructure can be used to boost social relations and wellbeing in a community.

How do we maximise community infrastructure in neighbourhoods?

Community Infrastructure:

- Public spaces and bumping places where people meet – streets, squares, parks, play areas, village halls and community centres
- Places where people meeting formally, in addition to their primary role – cafes, pubs, libraries, schools and churches
- Services that can facilitate access to places to meet, urban design, landscape architecture, public art, transport, health organisations, subsidised housing sites and bus routes.

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The importance of decision making

Neighbourhood design activity can build social capital and social relations, enhance community spirit, build a sense of identity and enhance civic participation.

What doesn't work to improve wellbeing in neighbourhood design?

The two studies in the review that showed no impact on social relations were both 'top down' urban renewal projects.

Evidence suggest it is important for community members to have an opportunity to be involved in organisation and planning of changes to places and spaces.

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Environment

How can we maximise the wellbeing benefits of green and blue space?

Wellbeing impacts of flooding are long lasting and often felt most acutely by those with lowest wellbeing.

Focus on: green and blue space

Green and blue space is any natural green space - parks, woodland, gardens - or blue space, such as rivers, canals, or the coast.

- Green and blue space interventions that provide the opportunity to participate in activities or meetings can improve social interactions.

- Green and blue space interventions may increase community cohesion by encouraging mixing of different cultural and socioeconomic groups.

- Improvements to green & blue space may lead to increased social networks, social interactions and bonding and bridging social capital.

- Green space changes can improve family wellbeing by providing something for families to do together .

- Improvements to green and blue space are associated with increased civic activity.

- Improvements to green and blue space may results in positive behavioural change, encouraging physical activity and healthy eating.

- Changes to green and blue space may have a positive effect on community members' skills and knowledge.

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Defining loneliness

A subjective, unwelcome feeling of lack or loss of companionship.
It happens when we have a mismatch between the quantity and quality of social relationships that we have, and those that we want.
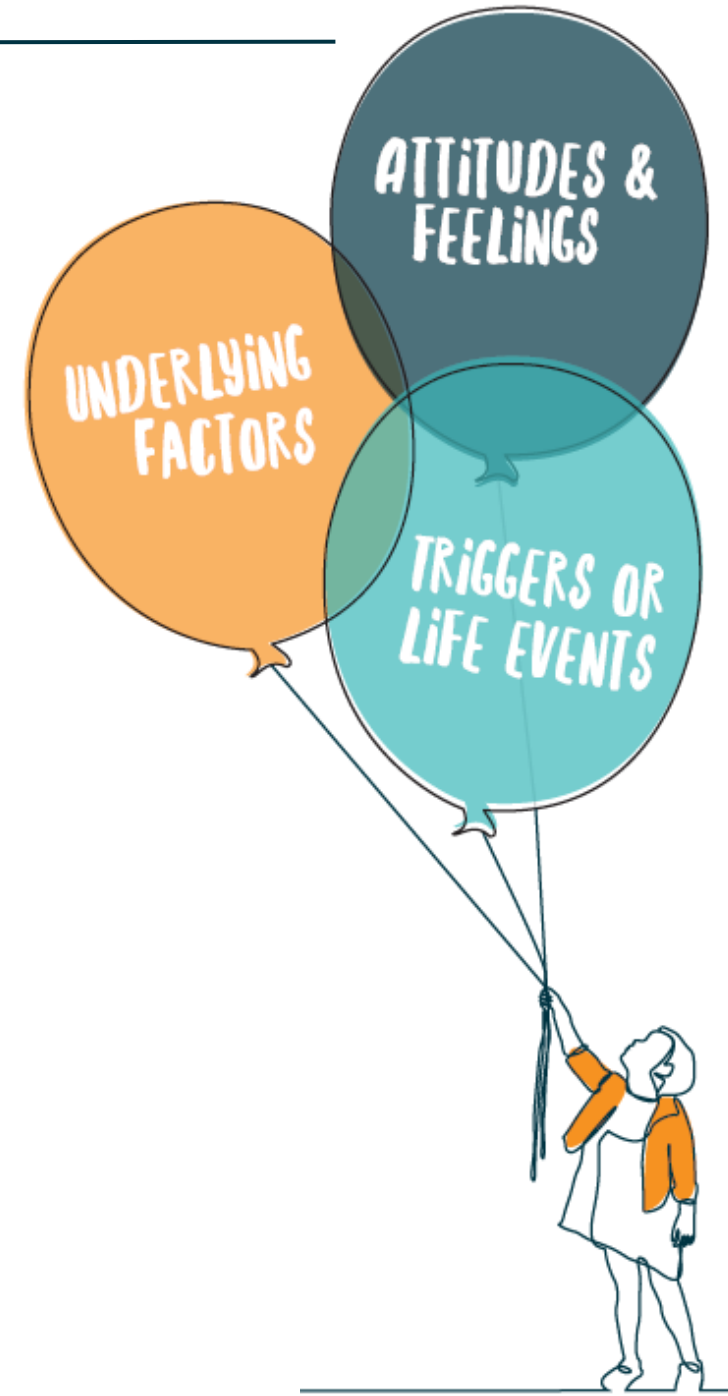
What do we know so far?

Our review of reviews showed:

- **Conceptual inconsistency** in research: 'loneliness' often used it interchangeably with 'social isolation'
- Evidence base is skewed towards interventions aimed at older people. We **need more research on younger ages**

Key mechanisms likely to be involved in projects that help reduce loneliness:

- Building **meaningful connections** between people
- **Reducing the stigma** around loneliness
- **Tailoring approaches** to individuals or groups

The impact of COVID-19 on wellbeing and housing

The [Resolution Foundation](#) Lockdown Living: housing quality across the generations

- Young people more likely to live in cramped homes than older people during lockdown, and are three times as likely to live in damp home environments (but with ethnicity and income inequalities within that)

- Younger generations have less access to a private outdoor space, and live in less attractive neighbourhoods, than older generations.

- One-in-five children growing up in a low-income household lives in overcrowded conditions

- Two-in-five children in BAME households have no garden access, and one-in-four live in overcrowded homes. A similar pattern is present for low-income households.

Housing conditions have had a stronger independent effect on wellbeing during the pandemic than prior. Even after controlling for key characteristics such as pay and relationship status, the wellbeing gap between renters and owners has widened over the lockdown period.

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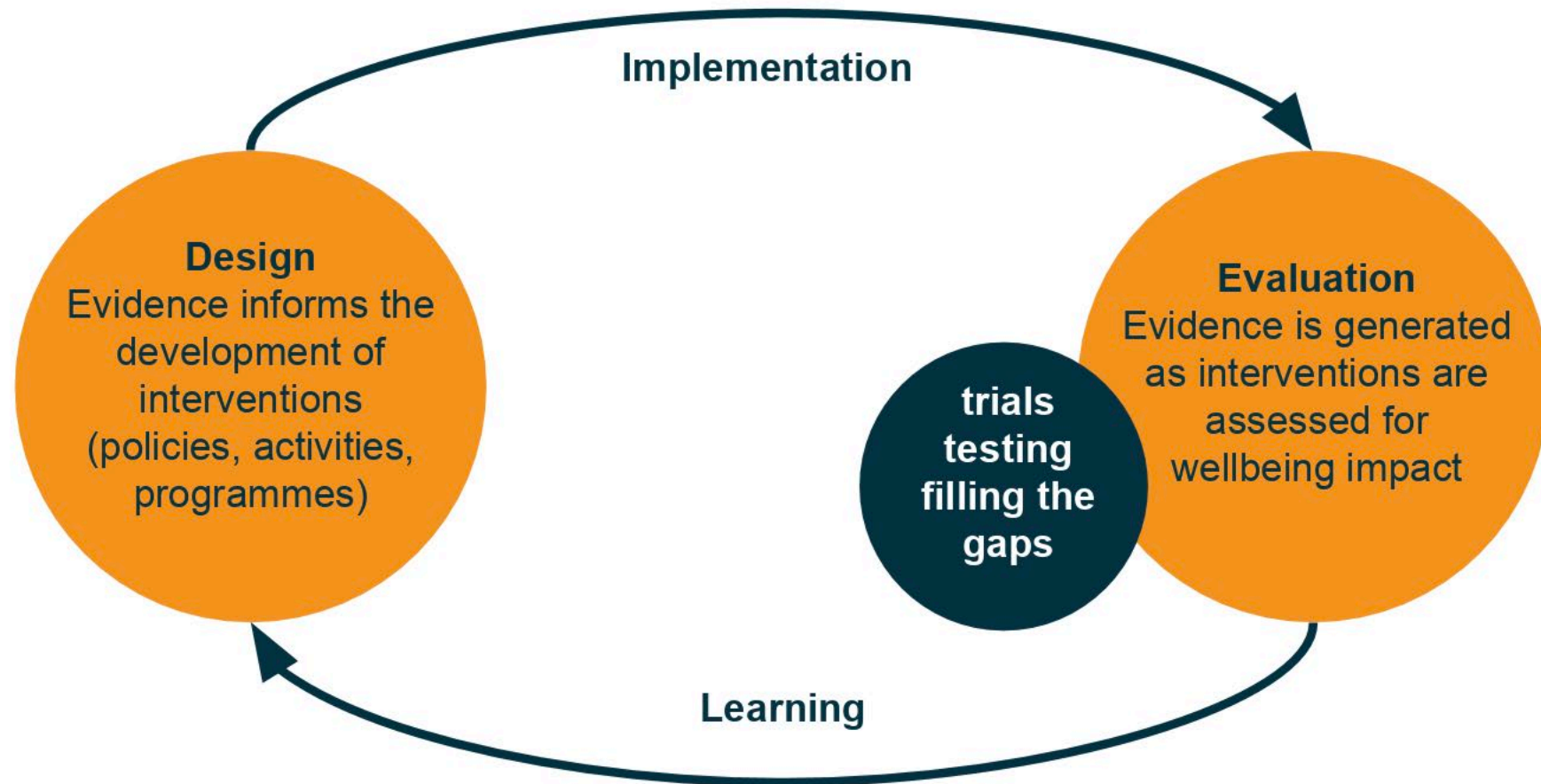# Maximising wellbeing impact of planning white paper

If you are preparing a response – a few points to consider

- Make wellbeing the ultimate goal of National Planning Policy
- The new single, statutory sustainable development test must have a wellbeing component, and a commitment to address health and wellbeing inequalities, prioritising activity that will maximise the wellbeing of those in misery
- Ensuring permitted developments maximise wellbeing through design, affordability and provisions for community infrastructure
- Champion the wellbeing benefits of safe, accessible, inclusive green and blue space.

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Work with us to help build the wellbeing evidence base

Wellbeing evidence cycle

Implementation

Design
Evidence informs the development of interventions (policies, activities, programmes)

trials testing filling the gaps

Evaluation
Evidence is generated as interventions are assessed for wellbeing impact

Learning

Thank you!

Visit our website www.whatworkswellbeing.org and subscribe to our weekly evidence alert and 'Wellbeing impacts of COVID-19' e-mail series

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