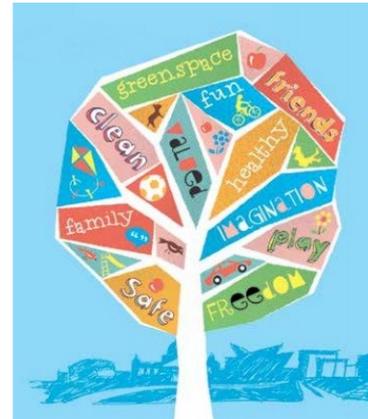


## NILGA IN PARTNERSHIP WITH BELFAST HEALTHY CITIES

This local government bulletin, developed in association with Belfast Healthy Cities, is the first in a series looking at the concept of wellbeing and how it is relevant to local government.

The series of bulletins are aimed at supporting members and councils in their wellbeing agenda, exploring how wellbeing is relevant to their Council and constituency.

A clear and shared understanding is essential in order to identify opportunities and allow scrutiny of plans and proposals.



## WELLBEING IN THE NI GOVERNANCE CONTEXT

Improving wellbeing is a core element in strategic regional policy. The concept is included in:

- The Programme for Government: Improving wellbeing is the headline outcome which all other outcomes should contribute to. The PfG includes a monitoring framework with 42 indicators that will be used to measure progress.
- The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014: Improving social, economic, and environmental wellbeing is the core aim of community planning.
- The health sector: Improving wellbeing is a core function of the Public Health Agency

## WHY WELLBEING?

Wellbeing provides an outcome based concept that focuses on how people and communities are doing. It provides a framework to consider the added value of services, by focussing on how services make people's lives better and the district more prosperous and liveable. Wellbeing emphasises assets that already exist in the district and moves away from viewing community priorities simply as needs or problems.

Wellbeing has come to prominence as an alternative to traditional measures of how a society is doing, in particular Gross Domestic Product (GDP). A key critique of GDP is that it does not differentiate between goods and services that contribute to wellbeing and those that do not, such as services dealing with pollution, accidents or crime. It also does not take into account non market activity that affects people's lives, such as voluntary care work, social cohesion or the effects of easy access to nature.

The concept of wellbeing aims to broaden the focus from this narrow, economically driven understanding to focus attention on how policy and service provision contribute to people's lives and enable people to enjoy the best quality of life they can attain.

## **Belfast Healthy Cities**

***Our vision is to be a leader in creating a healthy, equitable and sustainable city.***

### **WHAT IS WELLBEING?**

Wellbeing is viewed in two broad ways. They originate from different philosophical approaches and therefore introduce different emphases.

**Objective Wellbeing:** Views wellbeing as an outcome of living conditions and a measure of overall progress in society. Key concepts include quality of life, material conditions and sustainability. Objective wellbeing can be measured using indicators on physical and social living conditions, such as life expectancy, income, housing conditions, access to services and the gap between the most and least deprived. This understanding, which has been influenced by economic theory and philosophy, focuses on what support people and communities need to be able to fulfil their potential. The Programme for Government takes this approach.

**Subjective Wellbeing:** Focuses on how satisfied individuals are, measuring through survey questions such as 'How satisfied are you with life nowadays?', which is a measure routinely used and reported annually across the UK. This approach, which draws on thinking around happiness and positivity, looks at what people can do in their own lives and how services can support individuals. A critique of this view is that it does not usually consider people's circumstances and may introduce bias, for example in cases where people have limited expectations.

### **WHAT IS A HEALTHY PLACE?**

A healthy place is one focussing on better living conditions for people. A healthy place is not one that has achieved a particular health status. It is conscious of health and striving to improve it. Thus any place can be a healthy place, regardless of its current health status. The requirements are: a commitment to health and a process and structure to achieve it.

A healthy place is one that continually creates and improves its physical and social environments and expands the community resources that enable people to mutually support each other in performing all the functions of life and developing to their maximum potential.



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