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## **The Path to Wellbeing**

Gathering together publics,  
practitioners, policies and  
perspectives

University of Aberdeen

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## Project Overview

This project brought together a multi-disciplinary team of academic researchers with the Public Engagement with Research and Public Affairs units at the University of Aberdeen to create a series of community workshops. The aim was to combine thoughts, views and ideas from **academic research, the public and practitioners** to look at how different models and measurements of wellbeing might be applied to contrasting local communities in Scotland.

To-date wellbeing models have focused mainly on national level comparisons, this project focussed on how these can be applied in local communities and how they can be translated into policies.

Six events took place throughout the project, in various locations in Inverness and Aberdeen, including at Aberdeen Football Club. Each event was designed to address a different theme within wellbeing and to generate discussions amongst different audiences. In addition, a film captured the views of the local population in Cromarty, on the impact digital technology had on their sense of community and wellbeing.

Over 300 members of the public, members of the Scottish parliament, policy stakeholders and key practitioners in the fields of wellbeing interacted over the course of events that took place. A wider audience was generated online through the capturing of discussions in a visually appealing manner and via the use of social media during debates.

The project has resulted in a series of thoughts around wellbeing in Scotland and in the formation of new relationships and collaboration with Aberdeen City Council that will continue to push forward our understanding of what wellbeing is in society.

Sessions were captured using a combination of video, social media and by graphic facilitation. These can all be viewed online at <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/engage/wellbeing>

## Community Event Series

A series of events, including talks and workshops were conducted as part of this project. They brought together a diverse audience and contributors from academic, policy and community stakeholders to look at how different models and measurements of wellbeing might be applied to contrasting local communities in Scotland.

The sessions that took place included:

- An open debate with academic researchers, a representative from the Trussell Trust and Sir Malcolm Bruce MP on '*Health or Wealth*' at the University of Aberdeen May Festival
- A session in Inverness on '*What makes life good? Digital Communications and Community Wellbeing*'
- Two sessions at Aberdeen Football Club focusing on '*Health and Wellbeing*' with participants of the Football Fans In Training programme (FFIT)
- A 'World Café' event with a focus on adolescent wellbeing with community partners at Hazelhead Park Café
- A public talk at Aberdeen City Council chambers with Professor Enrico Giovannini a global leader in the field of measurements of wellbeing in society.

All discussions involved researchers from the University of Aberdeen along with members of the public.

## Health or Wealth – May Festival Debate

The first event in the Wellbeing programme was an open debate about, '*Health or Wealth*' at the University of Aberdeen May Festival in 2014. Over 100 members of the public attended and the full discussion, including audience questions was captured via Twitter and is accessible via the Storify platform <http://www.storify.com/hapski/health-or-wealth>. A snapshot of the tweets captured is included below (Fig. 1)



The panel members were Dr Sandra Carlisle (Rowett Institute of Nutrition and Health, University of Aberdeen), Dr John Bone (University of Aberdeen), Ewan Gurr (Trussell Trust) and Sir Malcolm Bruce MP. The chair of this session was, Eleanor Bradford, BBC Health Correspondent Scotland.

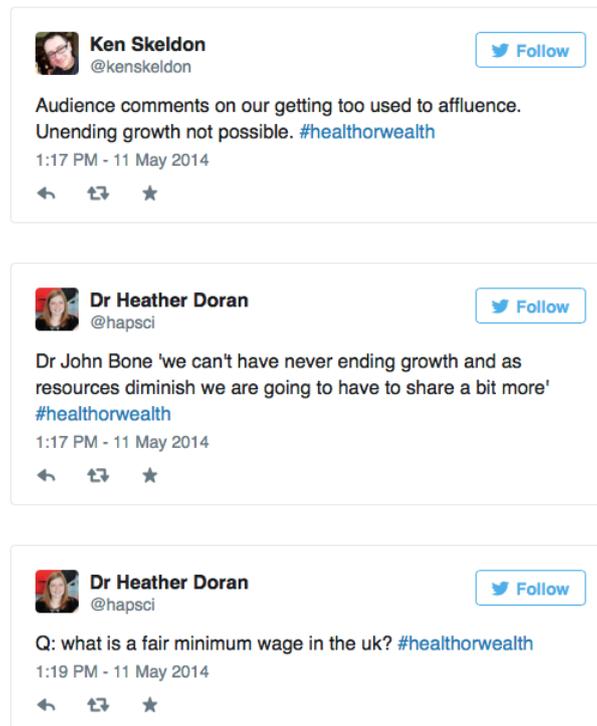


Figure 1. Snapshot of tweets capturing the 'Health or Wealth' debate that took place at the University of Aberdeen May Festival in 2014

## What makes life good? Digital Communications and Community Wellbeing

This session included a number of presentations and film about digital communications in the community and took place at the Centre for Rural Health in Inverness in May 2014.

These included:

- *"Social cohesion and communications technology in Cromarty: an ideal community?"* led by Professor Claire Wallace, University of Aberdeen
- *"The Comainn Eachdraidh and CURIOS: how can local history and digital archives improve community life?"* – led by Dr David Beel, University of Aberdeen and Donny Morrison
- Hebridean Connections: *"Using technology to improve emergency care provision in remote areas"*. Led by Professor Phil Wilson, Centre for Rural Health, Inverness .

As part of this event Professor Claire Wallace created and presented a film about social cohesion and communication technology in Cromarty that can be viewed on YouTube via the online project page <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/engage/wellbeing>

## Wellbeing and Football Fans in Training at Aberdeen Football Club

Dr Sandra Carlisle from the Rowett Institute of Nutrition and Health at the University of Aberdeen led an interactive session with members of the Football Fans In Training (FFIT) at Aberdeen Football Club at one of their general meetings in July 2014.

The sessions were captured by graphic facilitator Eleanor Beer and the graphics produced are included here (Fig. 2 and Fig. 3).



Figure 2 Visual representation of the discussion carried out at the Aberdeen Football Fans in Training event. June 2014 (session 1)



Figure 3. Visual representation map of the discussion carried on at Aberdeen Football Fans in Training event. June 2014 (session 2)

## How do we improve the wellbeing of young people in Scotland?

This session was structured as a 'World Café' style event where participants conducted discussions led by different themes, with a focus on adolescent wellbeing. This event took place at Hazelhead Park in August 2014.

Participants from Aberdeen City Council, Shmu FM (a community media organisation that supports volunteers and skills development in adolescents out of work and educations) and researchers from the University of Aberdeen led round table discussions about the role of the economy, volunteering, greenspace and the environment have on wellbeing. Professor Claire Wallace, Dr John Bone, Dr Sandra Carlisle and PhD student Megan Watson from the University of Aberdeen contributed and led discussions at this session. This session again was captured by graphic facilitator Eleanor Beer and is included below (Fig. 4).



Figure 4 Visual representation of discussions that occurred between researchers from the University of Aberdeen, SHMU volunteer groups and members of the public at Hazelhead Park (August 2014)

## **Wellbeing in comparative perspective**

On 12<sup>th</sup> January 2015 Professor Enrico Giovannini came to Aberdeen to present ideas for measuring wellbeing in Italy. Organised together with the Aberdeen City Council, he presented to a packed audience in the Aberdeen City Town Hall. On 13<sup>th</sup> January he travelled on to Edinburgh to meet representatives from the Scottish Government and give a seminar at the Scottish Parliament in the context of the Scotland Performs initiative.

## Outcomes from the Project

### Wellbeing and its influences

We appreciate there is a significant challenge of combining subjective and objective indicators to understand wellbeing fully. Through this project we have noted that:

- Neighbourhoods shape lives through the community structure and the immediate environment (including the availability of green space and options to participate in a community through activities such as volunteering). Communities are built by creating a sense of involvement and ownership. Therefore, participants have a sense of investment in their communities.
- There is a need to explore the role that new technology including social media can play in promoting community cohesion and wellbeing.
- That health initiatives can have very positive impacts on the wellbeing of participants but these are often short lived

### Measurements of Wellbeing

There is a need for subjective measures (satisfaction with life/ neighbourhood/ services) and objective measures (number of unemployed, crime rate). One model doesn't fit all.

In Aberdeen we are developing an index for the Decent Society based upon our model of Social Quality (Professor Claire Wallace). It includes both subjective and objective measures of: socio-economic security, social cohesion, social inclusion and social empowerment. It is aimed to be relevant for social policy and enable us to see how societies compare.

### Key recommendations

Outcomes from this project that may be of interest to policy teams reviewing Wellbeing in Scotland include the following points which we have observed within the Pathways to Wellbeing project:

- The need to consult and work with others to create a sense of ownership – don't just give people what we think they want. This approach creates active roles and helps promote the sense of community.
- Approach new initiatives with evidenced based decision making rather than short term unsustainable fixes.
- Long term solutions to take account of fundamental conditions that contribute to wellbeing.
- More power/independence to local councils – initiatives and resources are personalised to local communities rather than national. One size doesn't fit all.

### Follow up activities

As a consequence of the visit of Enrico Giovannini we have been negotiating with Aberdeen City Council to look at wellbeing in regeneration areas of the city. On April 21<sup>st</sup> 2015 Claire Wallace and

Katie Vincent visited the Northfields, Middlefields and Mastrick projects in this context and in May they will investigate whether this can be linked with the Aberdeen Gigacity initiative.

They have written a paper about Community Wellbeing that will be presented at the University of Arizona at the international Conference of the International Society for Quality of Life Studies and will form part of the Community Wellbeing Handbook to be published by Springer. The paper is based upon Digital Technology and Wellbeing in rural areas.