

Action for Children's Arts

Response to the Office for National Statistics consultation on measuring national well-being

January 2012



INTRODUCTION

Our response is focused on the under-representation of children in the proposed measures to assess national well-being.

It could be argued that the government need do no more than keep a weather eye on the well-being of the nation's children in order to determine the well-being of the nation as a whole.

To assess the well-being of children is to assess the nation's future.

The UK's poor showing in reports by UNICEF making international comparisons suggests that this is an area to which the government should pay urgent attention.

Not to include childhood in the measures used to assess national well-being suggests that the government is not taking these reports as seriously as it should.

Action for Children's Arts strongly supports Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that 'Every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts'.

The Government and the Office for National Statistics should ensure that these rights are embodied in future plans for assessing national well-being and, as a key aspect of that, the well-being of children.

FORMAL RESPONSE

Section A: Proposed domains

- Individual well-being
- Our relationships
- Health
- What we do
- Where we live
- Personal finance
- Education and skills
- Governance

- The economy
- The natural environment

Do you think the proposed domains present a complete picture of well-being?

No.

We note from the discussion paper that 'ONS have initiated a workstream to look at measures of children's and young people's well-being'. We welcome this initiative and suggest that childhood and the attitudes of adults to children are in themselves important measures of the nation's well-being. Attitudes to children and perceptions of childhood should, in our opinion, be one of the domains used to evaluate the well-being of adults.

Section B: Proposed measures

Domain: Individual well-being

Measure: Life satisfaction

Are there any variants on the measure suggested which would be more appropriate?

Yes.

This measure could usefully include questions relating to the individual's own childhood and to the well-being of children in their household and/or community.

Domain: Our relationships

Measure: Satisfaction with your spouse/partner

Measure: Satisfaction with your social life

Measure: Percentage of people who trust other people in their neighbourhood

Measure: Percentage of people who feel that they belong strongly to the neighbourhood

Are there measures which should be added?

Yes.

Satisfaction with the world in which their children or grand-children are growing up.

Domain: What we do

Measure: Proportion of working age population in employment / unemployment / inactivity

Measure: Proportion of working age population in employment working long hours

Measure: Satisfaction with your job (if employed)

Measure: Satisfaction with the amount of leisure time you have

Measure: Percentage who have undertaken any volunteering in the last year

Are there measures which should be added?

Yes.

Satisfaction with the amount of time you are able to spend with your children.

Domain: Where we live

Measure: Crime rate per capita

Measure: Fear of violent crime

Measure: Measure of access to and quality of the local environment

Measure: Percentage agreeing that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together

Measure: Percentage who are very or fairly satisfied with local area

Are there measures which should be added?

Yes.

Percentage agreeing that their local area is a place where children can grow up safely and happily.

Domain: The natural environment

Measure: Greenhouse gas emissions

Measure: Air pollutants

Measure: The extent of protected areas

Measure: Percentage of electricity generation by renewable means

Are there measures which should be added?

Yes.

Outdoor places where children can play safely.