



Taking the temperature of local communities

The Wellbeing and Resilience
Measure (WARM)

Nina Mguni & Nicola Bacon



Local Wellbeing Project

About the Young Foundation

The Young Foundation brings together insight, innovation and entrepreneurship to meet social needs. We have a 55 year track record of success with ventures such as the Open University, Which?, the School for Social Entrepreneurs and Healthline (the precursor of NHS Direct). We work across the UK and internationally – carrying out research, influencing policy, creating new organisations and supporting others to do the same, often with imaginative uses of new technology.

We now have over 60 staff, working on over 40 ventures at any one time, with staff in New York and Paris as well as London and Birmingham in the UK.

www.youngfoundation.org

About the Local Wellbeing Project

The Local Wellbeing Project was a three year initiative to explore how local government can improve the wellbeing of its citizens. The project brought together the Young Foundation, Professor Lord Richard Layard at the London School of Economics' Centre for Economic Performance, Local Government Improvement and Development (formerly IDeA), and Hertfordshire County Council, Manchester City Council, South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council.

The aims of the Local Wellbeing Project were:

- to establish the value of local government prioritising wellbeing in service delivery and strategic planning with local communities;
- to explore effective ways to measure wellbeing and resilience at local level; and
- to develop replicable practice to maximise wellbeing in service delivery.

Summary

What is WARM and who is it for?

The Wellbeing and Resilience Measure (WARM) is a framework to measure wellbeing and resilience at a local level. WARM helps identify who is vulnerable, who is not, and why. It supports localism, by giving better information to both communities and residents, and agencies responding to their concerns and aspirations.

Wellbeing and resilience measures can enable local professionals and communities to see which services are having an impact on people's lives at a local level and which are not; identify a community's strengths as well as its weaknesses; and make more informed decisions about where to direct limited resources.

Understanding how people feel about the quality of their lives is important for local decision-makers and service providers at any time, but becomes vital when resources are as scarce as they are in these uncertain times.

WARM gives fresh insights into the dynamics of communities. It can be used to:

- **Measure life satisfaction:** Capture information on how well – or not – a community is faring. This could be as part of a routine 'state of the community' health check or part of a more targeted mapping exercise.
- **Map local assets and vulnerabilities:** This can contribute to a general audit of the community or focus on specific issues, such as how to work with vulnerable families, or social capital.
- **Inform local decision making:** WARM provides a strong starting point for service re-design and developing local initiatives.

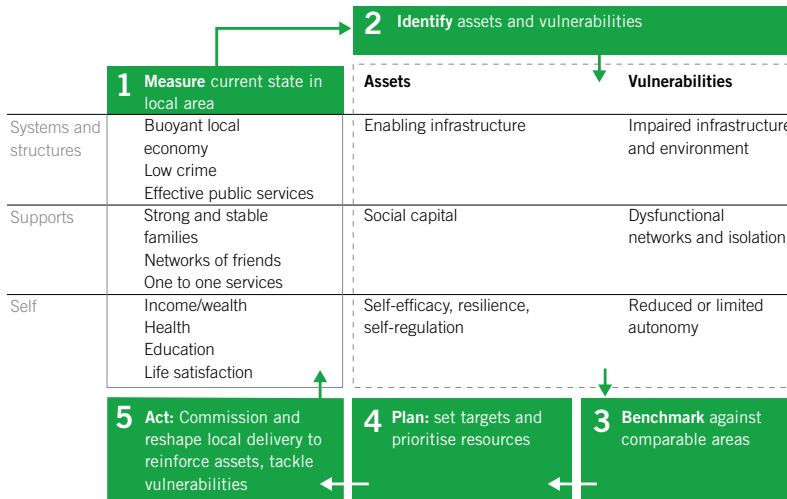
It is our hope that wellbeing and resilience measures will soon become as much of a determining factor for policy makers as Gross Domestic Product is for economists and the weather forecast is for farmers.

The WARM framework does not require additional data collection but encourages communities and agencies to use existing data to create a narrative about local neighbourhoods. Rather than offering a way of comparing performance and needs between local authorities or neighbourhoods, our framework lets communities explore the detail of what goes on in their area, looking at the experiences of different groups

How should WARM be used?

WARM has five stages:

Figure 1: The five stages of WARM

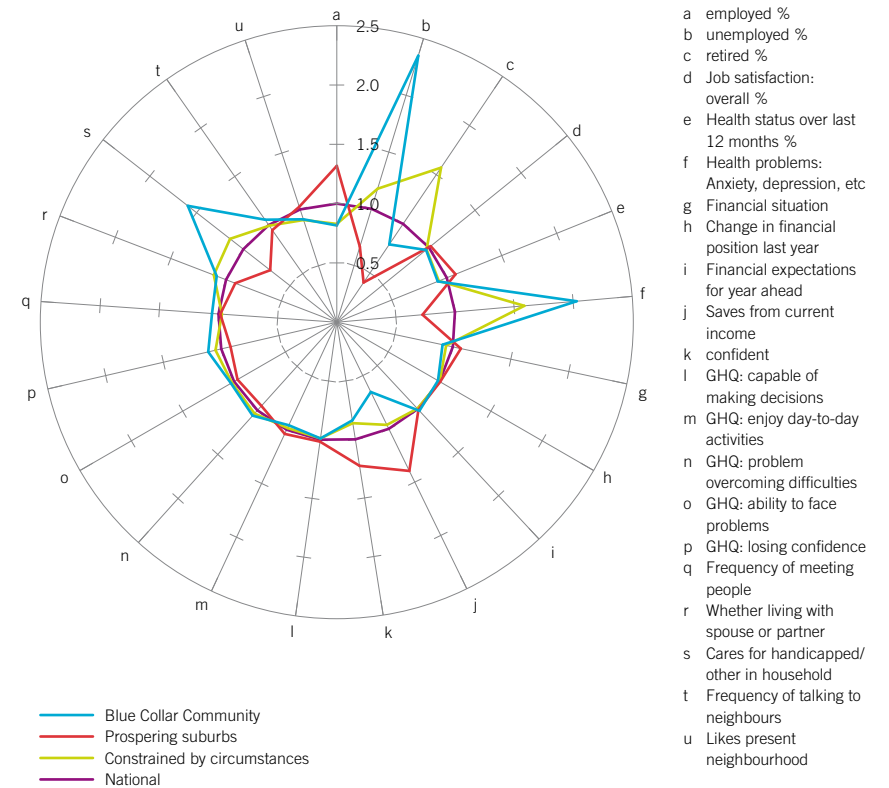


The **first stage** is to measure wellbeing. To do this we look at three domains:

- **Self:** the way people feel about their own lives
- **Support:** the quality of social supports and networks within the community
- **Structure and systems:** the strength of the infrastructure and environment to support people to achieve their aspirations and live a good life.

Three types of data are particularly useful at this stage:

- Trend data for key indicators, such as health, education, income and incapacity benefit – as useful measures for objective conditions within the area, which can be broken down to neighbourhood level (lower super output level).
- Any local surveys which capture data on levels of life satisfaction. These could be included in local annual opinion surveys or as one-off initiatives by local authorities or health agencies. For instance, some local authorities include the following question in annual surveys: Thinking about everything which affects how you feel about yourself and the place where you live, how satisfied would you say you are with your quality of life overall?
- A proxy 'WARM estimate' of life satisfaction, which uses British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) data to construct an indicator of levels of individual



life satisfaction in areas with similar demographic profiles, to predict likely levels of life satisfaction where no primary data exists.

The **second stage** measures resilience, by creating a map of assets and vulnerabilities in the community. Accurately identifying the assets, for example social capital, and the vulnerabilities, for example social isolation, helps estimate the capacity of a community to withstand shock and pinpoint where support should be targeted.

Domain	Assets/vulnerabilities	Examples of indicators
Systems and structures	Enabling infrastructure/ impaired infrastructure	Number of vacancies Number of FE colleges Average travel time to employment centre
Supports	Social capital/ dysfunctional networks or isolation	% of single pensioner households % of people that provide unpaid help
Self	Self-efficacy/reduced or limited autonomy	Average number (per LSOA in ward) of people in receipt of incapacity benefits Mental health indicator

The **third stage** is a benchmarking process. We use national and local authority wide data to draw out local trends in life satisfaction.

Applying a benchmark helps:

- distinguish between community-level and wider trends. It is important to disentangle what is happening at the very local level from broader trends across a local authority area, a region, or even nationally
- identify which members of the community are vulnerable and why, and those who are not vulnerable
- make a realistic assessment of what local interventions can and cannot achieve.

There are two parts to this stage. First, we have compared data at a local level with data drawn from local authority level to identify differences in wellbeing.

Second, we have used data drawn from BHPS – the same starting point as the WARM estimate of life satisfaction. We have used the BHPS data to estimate how communities with similar demographic profiles fare across selected variables (e.g. employment, retirement) that correlate with life satisfaction. We have used BHPS data to present all the variables on the same scale by standardising all averages as a proportion of the national total.

The fourth stage is about planning. We use the data provided from stages one to three to inform communities, commissioners and local partnerships about what is working well, and where further interventions are needed. This stage can also involve the public, political leaders, community organisations and business.

The fifth stage is about action – creating or redesigning local services to ensure they respond effectively to local needs and wishes. We see the five stages of WARM as an iterative process. The process should be repeated over time to help identify the extent to which interventions have led to tangible improvements in life satisfaction.

We see the **five stages of WARM** as an iterative process. The process should be repeated over time to help identify the extent to which interventions have led to tangible improvements in life satisfaction.

Conclusion

Examining a local community through a wellbeing and resilience lens focuses attention on a community and its component parts: who is vulnerable, and who is not, and what the impact of a community's vulnerabilities is on its residents. This lens also shifts attention from mapping an area's vulnerability to understanding the capacity and capability of communities to help themselves. From this starting point, local agencies can begin to ask better questions about how the work of agencies contributes to improvements in the quality of their life.

Our work emphasises the need not only to think more creatively about existing data sources, but also prompts questions on whether we have the right data, at the right time, with the right level of detail. Measures of wellbeing, resilience and social wealth are crucial. Measures that capture levels of emotional resilience – capacity of individual to bounce back from adversity, quality of social supports and the availability of assets to help restore communities following a shock – provide vital information for local decision makers.



THE YOUNG FOUNDATION

The Young Foundation
18 Victoria Park Square
Bethnal Green
London
E2 9PF

+44 (0)20 8980 6263

youngfoundation.org

Charity number 274345 Company number 1319183
A company limited by guarantee. Registered in
England at the above address.