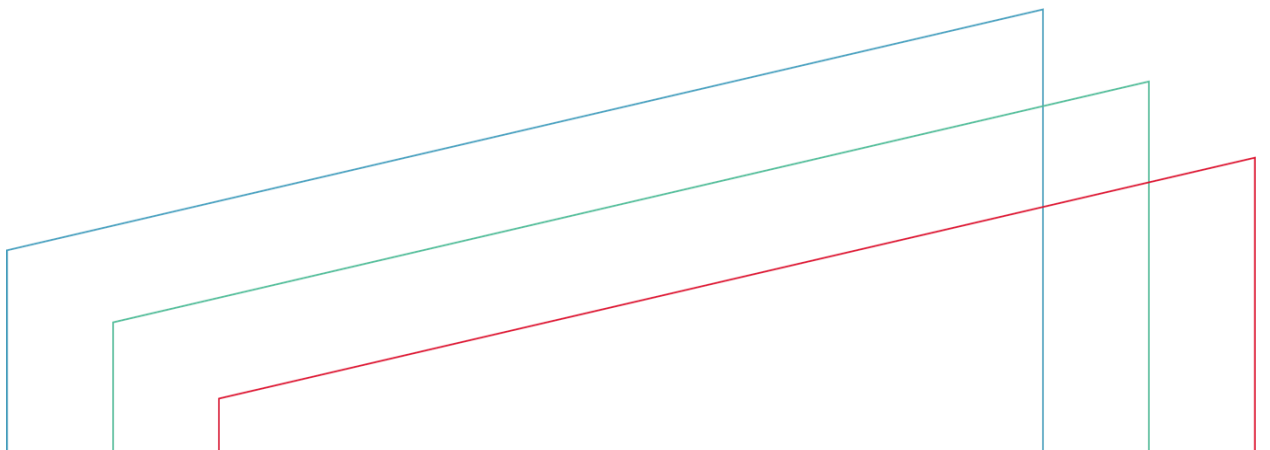




# THE SIX DOMAINS OF MENTAL WELLNESS BY LEARNING LABS

eQuality Solutions

**New Economics Foundation**



**Title:** The Six Domains of Mental Wellness by Learning Labs

**Date:** January 2021

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**Date:** 19/01/2021

**Quality assured by:** Rosie Maguire

**Date:** 20/01/2021

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## INTRODUCTION

The evidence base regarding wellbeing is growing. More and more academics, policymakers, politicians, and businesspeople want to understand the drivers of people 'feeling well'. By better understanding what leads to good wellbeing, we can make better decisions individually and collectively about how we can co-create good lives. Such a wealth of ideas and evidence can be overwhelming, however, particularly if we are looking for evidence of what can help a specific target group.

eQuality Solutions approached NEF Consulting in the summer of 2020 with the skeleton of a new approach to understanding the wellbeing of a target group they work with: Higher Education students receiving a Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA). They had noticed an increasing number of students with mental health conditions cited as their reason for applying for a DSA. Their model, the Six Domains of Mental Wellness, was based on information they had found through secondary research on the internet of existing models of wellbeing. Their intention was to develop an additional component to their Learning Labs product which would enable users to learn more about drivers of wellbeing (through the Six Domains) and assess their own wellbeing at a point in time.

We brought together their initial ideas of domains of wellness with other theories of wellbeing and its drivers, through a rapid scan of literature. The resulting Six Domains of Mental Wellness are therefore underpinned by evidence of the interactions between different drivers of wellbeing and interventions, particularly where there is a bidirectional relationship between them, ie they can reinforce each other. The Six Domains that will be seen by those using the eQuality Solutions product will be presented as discrete. The team will need to ensure that the true complexity and interrelatedness of drivers is recognised in how content is created and linked.

This short report sets out our understanding of wellbeing and seeks to apply some of the evidence for what this means in the context of students and young people, and those with disabilities and additional needs. We start with an overview of what wellbeing is, before providing some of the latest evidence of the drivers of wellbeing that underpin the Six Domains of Mental Wellness model. We then propose a series of measurements that can be embedded in the model to provide users with a snapshot of their wellbeing, which will be used to direct content. We conclude with recommendations for implementation and next steps.

## METHODOLOGY

We conducted a rapid review of available theories of wellbeing, evidence of drivers of wellbeing and interventions which have been seen to have an impact on drivers of or overall wellbeing. Our search focused on population-level theories initially, with additional searches conducted for evidence that particularly relates to students, as well as adults and young people with disabilities and additional needs. Searches were conducted using Google Scholar and through specific centres of evidence, such as the [What Works Centre for Wellbeing](#).

We presented a revised version of the Six Domains of Mental Wellness to the team at eQuality Solutions. Once this had been agreed, we undertook an additional search to identify questions that could be used for each of the components to create a snapshot survey for users to assess their wellbeing. This built on an initial review of potential measures by Clinical Neuropsychologists Dr John Welch at Newcastle Upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Dr Clive Skilbeck at the University of Tasmania, as well as those recommended through the What Works Centre for Wellbeing [Guide to Measuring Wellbeing](#) and other research centres that measure wellbeing at a population level.

Staff within NEF Consulting and eQuality Solutions piloted the resulting questionnaire and we made amendments to increase the accessibility of the questions. We will fully pilot the model and initial questionnaire during the initial rollout of the product in early 2021.

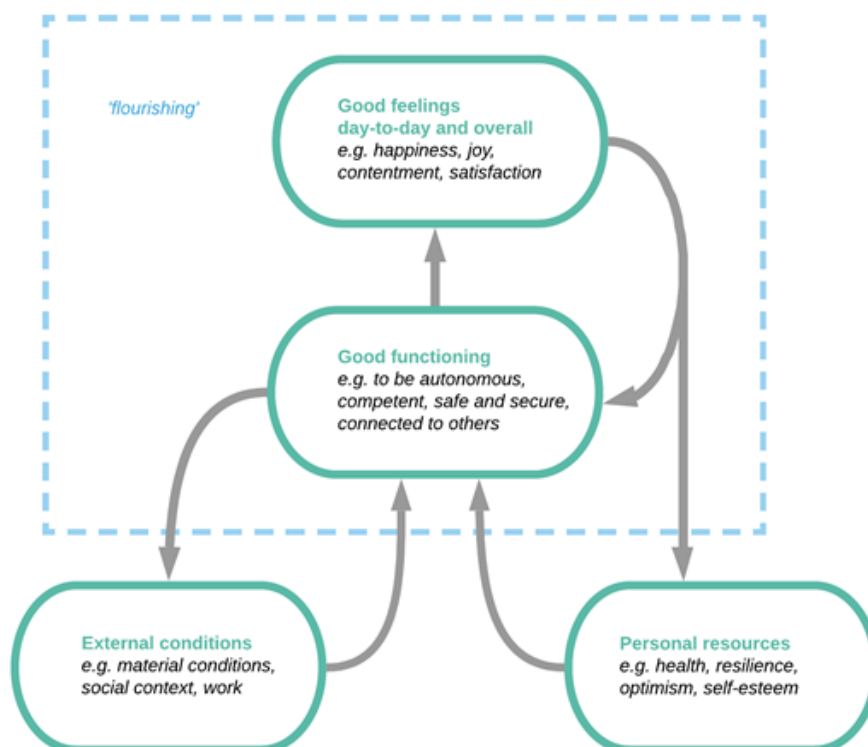
## WHAT IS WELLBEING?

Simply put, wellbeing is “how we are doing as individuals”.<sup>1</sup> It is a way of thinking about whether we are surviving or thriving. There are a number of different ways academics and governments define it. Our general understanding is that it comprises two elements: feeling good and functioning well.<sup>2</sup> And when we think about trying to measure wellbeing, we try to understand things that can be measured and seen from the outside, as well as asking people how they feel in themselves and how satisfied they are with their lives.

One way of understanding wellbeing is called The Dynamic Model of Wellbeing.<sup>3</sup> The model shows that there are many things that affect our experience of life – things we can influence – and these are mutually reinforcing. It acknowledges both the environment in which we live as well as what is inside us and how these things combine to affect how we experience the world. For example, if we feel well, to build relationships with others. If we feel that we can independently make decisions about our lives and use our skills, we are better able to affect the things that are going on around us.

What this model articulates is not that there is a linear process of creating wellbeing, or that all drivers of wellbeing are mutually exclusive. It also reminds us that if we are seeking to improve wellbeing, we need to acknowledge and understand that we may not be able to influence all drivers, so we should be transparent about the aspects that we have the capacity for and interest in learning more about.

Figure 1: The Dynamic Model of Wellbeing



The Six Domains of Mental Wellness, as developed by eQuality Solutions and refined through our additional research, focus on two areas of this model: **Personal Resources** and **Good Functioning**. Put short, they are a way of supporting users to better understand the drivers of their wellbeing in these two zones that are within their direct control, without claiming a grand theory of overall wellbeing.

## WHAT DOES THE EVIDENCE TELL US ABOUT THE DOMAINS OF MENTAL WELLNESS?

In this section, we present some of the drivers of wellbeing and its components under each of the Six Domains of Mental Wellness. There is some difference in the complexity and breadth of evidence under each domain, relative to the evidence available for that particular domain, and for the population of interest. For example, we know that mental health is the biggest driver of wellbeing overall, therefore there is significant insight into this section as there is more of a need to ensure that the drivers of wellbeing under this domain are understood and met, as a prerequisite to other domains. We also provide some examples of activities and interventions that can have an impact which may be of use in the subsequent Learning Labs+ resources.

### Personal resources

#### Emotional

*Six Domains of Mental Wellness: Emotional wellness is understanding and appreciating a balance of emotion day-to-day but also having the resilience to cope well with stressful or unexpected events.*

Mental health is the biggest driver of wellbeing.<sup>4</sup> One in four people in England experience some form of mental health problem every year.<sup>5</sup> This can be even higher in the student population: across UK Higher Education institutions, one-third of students “reported clinical levels of distress” in addition to 40% of Further Education students in their first year.<sup>6</sup> For students with intellectual disabilities, the likelihood of having mental health problems is even higher.<sup>7</sup> One explanation for the overall higher rate of poor mental health is that students are commencing a new form of education as an age group with the highest level of mental health difficulties (school-leaving age).<sup>8</sup> For students with intellectual disabilities, the transition to adulthood can be a time of increased depression and anxiety, due in part to poor coping mechanisms.<sup>9</sup> It is also important to note that the stigma of having poor mental health can compound the experience and have a lasting effect on wellbeing.

What causes poor mental health is complex: childhood deprivation is a driver of later mental health difficulties.<sup>10</sup> Social isolation, having a long-term physical health condition, and severe or long-term stress have also been found to contribute.<sup>11,12</sup> Academic study has been associated with poor mental health<sup>13</sup> in particular burnout from high perceived demands of study which results in emotional exhaustion and feelings of inadequacy.<sup>14</sup> Having poor mental health affects how individuals’ function: for example, poor mental health in childhood affects educational attainment and employment.<sup>15</sup> Poor mental health is known to affect students’ “physical, cognitive, emotional and interpersonal functioning” reducing their information processing abilities, memory, attention, decision-making, and motivation.<sup>16</sup>

While mental ill health can be found to have a direct detrimental impact on overall wellbeing, it can help to first understand how to manage emotions day-to-day. This can enable the self-management of some of the symptoms of poor mental health and prevent them getting worse<sup>17</sup> (although this should not be at the expense of seeking formal treatment if needed). Research has found that when young people are able to understand and master their emotional skills, it can have a direct impact on their health, wellbeing, attainment, and avoidance of behavioural difficulties.<sup>18</sup>



Much of the literature on developing resilience focuses on how to develop protective factors as a response to life stressors, such as work or study deadlines, family relationships, becoming ill, or being a carer.<sup>19</sup> Protective factors are individual characteristics or external conditions that help young people resist or balance risks or challenges they face.<sup>20</sup> Examples include strong social support networks, mentors, and positive learning experiences.<sup>21</sup> Without protective factors and strategies to respond to stressors, people can develop negative responses: aggression and control (active) or feeling unable to or avoiding acting (passive).<sup>22</sup>

### **What kinds of interventions and activities can help?**

- Art exercise and peer-support interventions as well as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) have been found to lead to reductions in depression and anxiety, to a greater extent than mindfulness-based interventions.<sup>23</sup>
- Outdoor activities for young people, leadership training for sports and dance activities, and peer-led music projects have been found to contribute to emotional regulation, as well as increased self-esteem and organisational and leadership skills.<sup>24</sup>
- The National Citizen Service – a voluntary personal and social development programme for 16–17-year-olds in England and Northern Ireland – has been found to have a significant impact on young people’s anxiety levels and resilience as well as confidence and sense of worth.<sup>25</sup>
- An eight-week programme for students with learning disabilities was found to have an effect on levels of anxiety. The programme included progressive muscle relaxation, guided imagery, self-instruction training, as well as training in study and test-taking skills.<sup>26</sup>
- Intangible cultural assets such as spoken word, song, meditation, religious ceremonies, and sharing meals can be a resource for coping, particularly as a way to connect with heritage and to provide opportunities for sharing and help.<sup>27</sup> Arts activities have been found to increase coping skills.<sup>28</sup>
- CBT and skills-based psychosocial education for young people have been found to promote resilience and reduce the risk of developing mental health problems.<sup>29</sup>
- Health-promoting education institutions are related to higher levels of reported resilience in students. New students and those with additional needs gained the most from such approaches.<sup>30</sup>
- Training to become more aware of sensations, thoughts, and feelings for 8 to 12 weeks has been shown to enhance wellbeing for several years.<sup>31</sup>

## Physical

*Six Domains of Mental Wellness: Physical wellness is being physically fit, sleeping well, having good concentration, and rarely suffering with illness.*

Physical wellness includes taking care of our body and health through a balance of exercise, rest, and nutrition.

Much of the research and literature suggests both physical health and mental health are strongly associated with one another. Poor mental health can have a negative impact on our physical health. For example, high levels of depression and anxiety are linked to an increased risk of dying from cancer.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, good physical health can positively influence mental health. Practising healthy lifestyle habits such as exercising, eating fruit and vegetables, and being in good physical health, is positively associated with our subjective wellbeing.<sup>33</sup> There are several components of the physical domain affecting mental health:

**Physical activity.** In addition to improving physical health, exercise is positively associated with wellbeing and reduces symptoms of depression and anxiety.<sup>34</sup> Physical activity, particularly if outdoors, is also associated with increased cognitive function and self-esteem.<sup>35</sup>

**Nutrition/diet.** Nutritional intake is important for both our physical and mental health. A poor diet (eg high levels of saturated fat and processed food products) is linked to poorer mental health in children and adolescents.<sup>36</sup> A healthy diet is linked to greater levels of wellbeing. There is a strong association between increased fruit consumption and increased wellbeing.<sup>37</sup>

**Alcohol and substance use.** A systematic review found that smoking cessation is associated with reduced depression, anxiety, and stress in comparison to continuing to smoke.<sup>38</sup> Alcohol consumption also influences wellbeing; one study found that lower self-esteem was associated with excessive alcohol assumption.<sup>39</sup>

It is clear that these lifestyle factors are important in influencing mental health. A study found that adults with intellectual disabilities are at higher risk of obesity, physical inactivity, tobacco and alcohol use, and poorer nutrition in comparison to those without an intellectual disability.<sup>40</sup> One explanation for this relationship is the poorer living conditions for those with intellectual disabilities.<sup>41</sup> Current guidelines state that adults should do at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity a week or 75 minutes of vigorous activity a week. Approximately two-thirds (63.3%) of the UK population are physically active under this classification.<sup>42</sup> Many studies have found that the proportion of those meeting the recommended amount of exercise is far lower for people with intellectual disabilities.<sup>43,44</sup>

**What kinds of interventions and activities can help?**

- Good nutrition could start at an early age. Many interventions focus on improving children and young people's knowledge and behaviour around eating. An example of a successful intervention includes a health-promoting-schools approach, ie a school-based nutrition programme that increases the consumption of fibre, healthier snacks, water, and fruit and vegetables.<sup>45</sup>
- Family-based interventions could prevent smoking in adolescents. A systematic review of family-based programmes found that encouraging authoritative parenting (showing strong interest in and care for their child) might reduce uptake of experimentation with smoking by between 16% and 32%.<sup>46</sup>
- E-health apps have been evidenced as beneficial in raising awareness of alcohol and substance misuse. A study conducted on an app aiming to stop binge drinking through estimating their risks found that there was a reduction in young people binge drinking after using the app.<sup>47</sup>
- Links between youth social action have been drawn to improved physical health outcomes indirectly (eg through improvements in education/employment), and there is some evidence from the National Citizen Service that indicates positive health impacts such as reduced drinking and smoking; however this needs further study.<sup>48</sup>
- Couch to 5k aims to improve physical health through running. An activity that requires no exercise equipment outside of trainers, running has many mental benefits and can be a stress reliever. Users download podcasts to their mobile device and the app provides a choice of coaches to track progress.<sup>49</sup>
- Many evaluations show leisure activities and outdoor hobbies in green spaces have a positive impact on wellbeing. For example, the evaluation for the South Downs National Park Authority provides qualitative evidence from residents who participate in activities in green open spaces and highlights addressing feelings of loneliness and isolation.<sup>50</sup>

## Spiritual

*Six Domains of Mental Wellness: Spiritual wellness is having a purpose that is personal and meaningful and creates both a positive sense of self and a positive impact on others.*

Wellbeing is closely linked to a sense of meaning and purpose,<sup>51</sup> ie a feeling that what we are involved with and do has a purpose. There are three components to this: making sense of life (cognitive component), pursuing purpose (motivational component), and significance, ie that it matters (evaluative component).<sup>52</sup> This relates closely to the goals that people set for themselves in their lives. Evidence has found that when people create goals that are linked to commitments to others, whether they be friends, family, or wider communities, these can result in increased life satisfaction,<sup>53</sup> over and above goals solely related to personal achievement.

Linked to the sense of meaning within the wider world is feelings of self-esteem, ie how an individual feels about themselves and their life in general.<sup>54</sup> Positive self-esteem enables people to respond positively to the challenges of life around them; conversely, low self-esteem can reduce people's willingness to socialise<sup>55</sup> or to try things they find challenging. There is a relationship between self-esteem and self-efficacy, ie the belief in our own abilities.<sup>56</sup> This is covered further in the motivational domain. Self-esteem has been associated positively with social comparison (when individuals compare themselves to others) when people experience achievements, and depression when associated with negative experiences of group belonging.<sup>57</sup>

For young people, there is evidence that participating in social action can have a positive impact on their wellbeing as a whole, as well as other things they may gain from it, such as improved health and skills.<sup>58</sup> Taking part in volunteering opportunities that have varied and interesting activities, particularly those that may be a new way of presenting themselves has been found to have an impact on people's self-worth. This is particularly the case for those from vulnerable backgrounds.<sup>59</sup>

### What kinds of interventions and activities can help?

- Music interventions can enhance our sense of purpose in life.<sup>60</sup>
- Participating in social action programmes can increase self-confidence, a sense of direction, and a sense of purpose.<sup>61</sup>
- Emotional resilience coaches can help young people to develop skills to cope with challenges, as well as improve their self-esteem.<sup>62</sup>
- Volunteering can have a favourable effect on depression.<sup>63</sup>

## Good functioning

### Intellectual

*Six Domains of Mental Wellness: Intellectual wellness is pursuing regular activities that stimulate the mind and bring joy to the individual or satisfy the soul.*

Having a 'high-quality' job, ie one that has security, relationships with others, and some level of autonomy over how work is undertaken, is important for wellbeing.<sup>64</sup> While this evidence covers the population more generally, those studying may already be thinking about the kind of work they would like to do and how it will impact their lives and wellbeing. Students are likely to be aware of the impact of (potential, future) employment on their wellbeing, both in terms of the kinds of work which will be good for them and avoiding unemployment, which is well documented to have a negative impact. For example, after the 2008 Great Recession, young people who were unemployed had lower wellbeing than their peers and even those who found work experienced a longer-term effect on their overall life satisfaction.<sup>65</sup>

Broadly, learning has an impact on wellbeing: it helps individuals to develop a sense of purpose, enable progression, and facilitate social contact with others.<sup>66</sup> These skills can help individuals with further learning and personal progression and can also help to reduce stress and depression.<sup>67</sup> Such learning can take place inside and outside of educational settings. However, evidence shows that different forms of learning can have different impacts on wellbeing: learning that facilitates the development of personal skills and resources such as self-confidence or deepened social relationships enables the process of learning to have an impact on wellbeing.<sup>68</sup> For these skills and outcomes, the way in which the learning environment itself is structured is key. In addition, gaining a qualification has been found to have a positive impact on wellbeing.<sup>69</sup>

However, learning experiences are not homogenous: students who have difficulty in understanding new topics and work, or who have a fragmented knowledge base, can experience study-related burnout.<sup>70</sup> Those groups that are in most need of support can be those that are most affected by the potential negative impact of studying. Identification of sources of stress and support are essential for students to build up the protective factors to enable them to manage their wellbeing.<sup>71</sup>

Spending time taking part in activities that are enjoyable has been found to be positive for wellbeing, whether it be arts and cultural activities,<sup>72</sup> sports and exercise,<sup>73</sup> or spending time outdoors.<sup>74</sup> These are an opportunity to both have a positive experience, and also develop and enhance the skills we need for all areas of our lives. They are an opportunity to get out, meet people, and improve skills such as communication as well as specific skills that can help with our creativity. For example, spending time in nature helps to reduce stress, makes us feel more creative, and helps with memory retention.<sup>75</sup> Hobbies in general have been linked with lower rates of stress, low mood, and depression.<sup>76</sup>

Volunteering is associated with positive wellbeing, particularly in terms of overall life satisfaction, increased feelings of happiness, and reduced negative feelings and symptoms of depression.<sup>77</sup> Getting involved with volunteering has been found to particularly benefit a number of groups including people with lower levels of wellbeing, those living with chronic physical conditions, people from lower socioeconomic groups, and those who are unemployed.<sup>78</sup>

### What kinds of interventions and activities can help?

- Taking part in visual arts gives people a sense of purposeful activity, which also results in positive emotions, making connections with other people, and providing a continuous learning experience.<sup>79</sup>
- Mentoring, coaching, and counselling programmes are associated with positive effects for students: in terms of both attainment and retention within programmes.<sup>80</sup>
- There are a wide variety of activities that can directly affect the wellbeing of young people: group-based and peer-supported sport and dance programmes, yoga, aerobics, and hip hop dance.<sup>81</sup> More specifically, dance training, yoga, and Baduanjin qigong have been found to impact on mood (including feelings of anxiety and depression), as well as attention. This is significant compared to other activities such as ice skating or body conditioning.
- Taking part in everyday creative activities is associated with higher levels of positive feelings.<sup>82</sup>
- Taking part in outdoor recreation with families improves wellbeing via escapism, relaxation, and sensory experience.<sup>83</sup>
- Music is good for wellbeing: listening to music can help with stress, anxiety, and enhance a sense of purpose; group singing can increase feelings of happiness as well as forge social connections; music can enhance the positive effects of physical exercise; and music therapy can help to alleviate anxiety.<sup>84</sup> Active music making (playing, creating new music) can be particularly helpful for individuals from marginalised groups to build community and share culture and heritage.<sup>85</sup>
- Participating in youth projects can help young people to develop skills, feel more respected, and become more independent and socially included. They can also help to break down barriers with other age groups and gain new qualifications.<sup>86</sup>
- As COVID-19 has affected the way in which people experience visual arts and culture, there is an emerging evidence base on the impact of online engagement. Engaging in the visual arts online has been found to reduce symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress.<sup>87</sup> There is also emerging evidence that singing in virtual choirs can enhance wellbeing.<sup>88</sup>

## Motivational

*Six Domains of Mental Wellness: Self-motivational wellness is feeling capable of making life-related decisions. This comes from within us and is linked to our personal goals.*

The motivational domain builds on self-determination theory which describes how individuals make choices and manage their own lives. An individual's motivation is affected by their situation but also the extent to which they feel in control of and able to affect the results of their actions.<sup>89</sup> There are three key components to the theory: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. These are understood as a component of an individual's basic psychological needs,<sup>90</sup> as well as means to support other domains of wellbeing. The relatedness component is explored in further detail in the social domain.

Pursuing goals and actions that are autonomous, ie self-driven rather than controlled by external factors, is associated with higher levels of psychological wellbeing, as they are more likely to be aligned with an individual's values, sense of self, and concerns.<sup>91</sup> For students, evidence has shown an association between a positive sense of autonomy and positive educational outcomes.<sup>92</sup> There is also a link between future aspirations (both in terms of *what* goals and *why*) and future career success and subjective wellbeing, ie when goals are satisfied that come from personal needs, they satisfy psychological needs.<sup>93</sup>

Competence is about individuals feeling a sense of accomplishment about activities and that they are able to use their abilities.<sup>94</sup> As referred to in the intellectual domain, learning generally is linked to positive wellbeing, whether it be functional learning or learning for enjoyment.<sup>95</sup> Research undertaken during the COVID-19 crisis found that mental wellbeing was linked to the ability to work as usual, ie to feel competent in what we are doing, rather than not, was related to positive wellbeing.<sup>96</sup>

In addition to self-determined motivation, the experience of immersion in activities is also an important driver of wellbeing and motivation to take part. Specifically, the level of engagement or flow that someone experiences when undertaking an activity. Evidence has found that students who are able to immerse in activities are more likely to experience positive feelings.<sup>97</sup>

#### **What kinds of interventions and activities can help?**

- Engagement in learning can impact on wellbeing throughout people's lives, both overall wellbeing<sup>98</sup> and in terms of increasing their sense of competence and mastery. Learning can be outside of formal learning environments and can include learning things 'just for the sake of it'.
- Training to develop skills in making decisions and solving problems, and to develop personal resources has been found to have positive effects in the workplace. This may also hold for other institutional environments.<sup>99</sup>
- Having a personal space that can be organised and personalised can help people to feel comfort and ease.<sup>100</sup>
- Unfinished tasks have been found to be a stressor in a work and study environment and related to flow, ie having a high number of unfinished tasks can reduce the chance of finding flow. Finding ways to complete tasks during work/study hours was found to increase the chance of flow both inside and outside of these activities.<sup>101</sup>
- Students have reported that they were able to find more flow when working in a team, especially if they were able to speak with each other. This happened regardless of the number of skills needed.<sup>102</sup>
- For students with mild intellectual disabilities, assisted support can increase autonomy and help reduce anxiety, particularly in relation to difficult learning activities.<sup>103</sup>
- Interventions based on social determination theory (SDT) can have an effect on components of SDT and health-related behaviours.<sup>104</sup>

## Social

*Six Domains of Mental Wellness: Social wellness is having strong relationships that create positive feelings of love and care, as well as connections to wider communities to feel valued.*

Social relationships are a key driver of wellbeing: both having people to be close to who are supportive, encouraging, and meaningful in life, and wider social networks which bring a sense of connection and self-worth.<sup>105</sup> Close relationships with friends and family help individuals to overcome challenges in their lives.<sup>106</sup> Conversely, loneliness is when the number and quality of relationships do not meet the hopes and desires of individuals.<sup>107</sup> Young people have been found to experience loneliness acutely, particularly when there is an expectation to build and maintain relationships. This is particularly relevant due to COVID-19, which has significantly affected young people's ability to join an active student community.<sup>108</sup>

However, not all relationships are positive; some can be a source of negative wellbeing. For example, social networking sites where people experience abuse or poor relationships with neighbours.<sup>109</sup>

As well as individual relationships, people's sense of belonging to a community also has an impact on their health and wellbeing. Belonging helps people to feel part of something and feel valued. It also increases the likelihood of participation in the community and to improving the community.<sup>110</sup> Those with higher levels of education, as well as people who participate in cultural, sports groups, and leisure activities are more likely to trust people in their communities.<sup>111</sup>

### What kinds of interventions and activities can help?

- For young people, social networking websites and apps can help to facilitate supportive relationships within a community of interest.<sup>112</sup>
- Neighbours can provide a source of practical help, routine advice, and emotional support.<sup>113</sup>
- Accessing community hubs (such as community centres) can help people to meet different social or generational groups, increase social capital, and build trust. They can also be a place to increase people's knowledge or skills.<sup>114</sup>
- Community projects often bring people together in a way that improves social networks and confidence and combats isolation.<sup>115</sup>
- Participatory arts such as music/singing, and sports such as swimming, offer places to share cultural values and traditions, celebrate identities, and enable feelings of belonging. They are a place for social connection within communities.<sup>116</sup>



## MEASURING THE SIX DOMAINS OF MENTAL WELLNESS

As part of the Six Domains of Mental Wellness, eQuality Solutions wants to enable users to take a snapshot of themselves across each domain. To that end, we created a short questionnaire, covering each of the subdomains. Each question is taken from an existing bank of questions and verified measurement tools that have been developed by academics and tested with different populations. Following a pilot of the initial questionnaire, we changed some wording slightly to ensure the questions are accessible. One example is reversing the answers to the questions so that all questions progress from low to high for consistency for users.

Table 1 sets out our proposed approach to measuring each of the subdomains, and the source of the questions.

*Table 1: Proposed measurement approach*

Domain/Subdomain	Question	Source and amendments
Physical: exercise	In the past week, on how many days have you done a total of 30 mins or more of physical activity, which was enough to raise your breathing rate? <i>This may include sport, exercise, and brisk walking or cycling for recreation or to get to and from places but should not include housework or physical activity that is part of your job.</i> (Never – Every day, 5 responses)	<a href="#">Sport England Adult Question Bank</a> Response changed from 0–7 days to a 5-point scale.
Physical: balance of energy	Please indicate for each of the statements which is the closest to how you have been feeling over the last week. <i>I felt active and energetic during the day.</i> <i>I woke up feeling fresh and rested in the morning.</i> (At no time – All the time, 5 responses)	<a href="#">WHO-5 Wellbeing Index</a> Change to wording (vigorous-> energetic), change from 6-point to 5-point scale.
Physical: nutrition	Including tinned, frozen, dried, and fresh fruit, on how many days in a usual week do you eat fruit? And including tinned, frozen, and fresh vegetables, on how many days in a usual week do you eat vegetables? Do not include potatoes, crisps, or chips. (Never – Every day, 5 responses)	<a href="#">Understanding Society Survey</a> Amended from a 4- to a 5-point scale.

Physical: nutrition	Thinking about the last week, about how often did you consume the following? <i>Alcohol</i> <i>Cigarettes</i> <i>E-cigarettes</i> <i>Other drugs for recreational purposes</i> (Never – Every day, 5 responses)	<a href="#">Global Drugs Survey</a> Question amalgamated from multiple questions, timescale changed from 12 months to past week, and amended from a 4-to a 5-point scale.
Emotional: overall balance of emotions	Please indicate which answer is the closest to how you have been feeling over the last week: <i>I have felt calm and relaxed</i> (At no time – All the time, 5 responses)	<a href="#">WHO-5 Wellbeing Index</a> Changed from a 6-point to a 5-point scale.
Emotional: overall balance of emotions	Overall, in the last week <i>How happy did you feel?</i> <i>How anxious did you feel?</i> (Not at all – Completely, 0–10)	<a href="#">ONS</a>
Emotional: resilience	How difficult or easy do you find it to deal with important problems that come up in your life? (Extremely difficult – Extremely easy, 0–10)	<a href="#">European Social Survey</a>
Spiritual: self-esteem	To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following: “In general I feel very positive about myself, as a person.” (Strongly disagree – Strongly agree, 5 responses)	<a href="#">European Social Survey</a> Switched order of responses.
Spiritual: purpose	Your goals are what you want to achieve, and your values are what matters most in your life. How satisfied are you with this area of your life? <i>Goals</i> <i>Values</i> (Very dissatisfied – Very satisfied, 5 responses)	<a href="#">Quality of Life Inventory</a>  Amended from a 6-point to a 5-point scale.
Spiritual: purpose	Overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile? (Not at all worthwhile – Completely worthwhile, 0–10)	<a href="#">ONS</a>

Spiritual: helping others	Helping others can include volunteering, helping your family and friends, and giving money to charities. How satisfied are you with this area of your life? (Very dissatisfied – Very satisfied, 5 responses)	<a href="#">Quality of Life Inventory</a>  Amended from a 6-point to a 5-point scale.
Intellectual: hobbies and interests	Play is a form of relaxation and can include sports, hobbies, gardening, visiting friends, etc. How satisfied are you with this area of your life? (Very dissatisfied – Very satisfied, 5 responses)	<a href="#">Quality of Life Inventory</a>  Amended from a 6-point to a 5-point scale.
Intellectual: experiences	Creativity includes artistic or musical interests – such as listening to and playing music, drawing, painting, photography and problem-solving activities that you do alone or in groups. How satisfied are you with this area of your life? (Very dissatisfied – Very satisfied, 5 responses)	<a href="#">Quality of Life Inventory</a>  Amended from a 6-point to a 5-point scale.
Intellectual: learning	Learning is to acquire new knowledge or skills such as learning a language, mastering a new cooking recipe, or passing a driving test, etc. How satisfied are you with this area of your life? (Very dissatisfied – Very satisfied, 5 responses)	<a href="#">Quality of Life Inventory</a>  Amended from a 6-point to a 5-point scale.
Intellectual: overall	Thinking back over the last year, to what extent did you make time, or allow yourself the time, to do the things you really <i>wanted</i> to do? (As opposed to <i>had</i> to do). (Never – Always, 0–10)	<a href="#">European Social Survey</a> Added clarification into question of making time.
Motivational: competence	To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following: “There are lots of things I feel I am good at.” (Strongly disagree – Strongly agree, 5 responses)	<a href="#">European Social Survey</a> Switched order of responses.
Motivational: autonomy	To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following: “I feel I am free to decide for myself how to live my life.” (Strongly disagree – Strongly agree, 5 responses)	<a href="#">European Social Survey</a> Switched order of responses.

Motivational: engagement	How much of the time would you generally say you are...? <i>Interested in what you are doing.</i> <i>Enthusiastic about what you are doing.</i> <i>Absorbed in what you are doing.</i> (None of the time – All of the time, 0–10)	<a href="#">European Social Survey</a>
Social: overall	Generally, how often do you meet socially with friends, relatives, or university/work colleagues? <i>This can be in person or online.</i> (Never – Every day, 5 responses)	<a href="#">European Social Survey</a> Amended 7-part answer to 5 and changed timescale from monthly to weekly.
Social: relationships	How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? <i>If I need help, there are people who would be there for me.</i> <i>If I want company or to socialise, there are people I can call on.</i> (Definitely disagree – Definitely agree, 5 responses)	<a href="#">Community Life Survey</a>  Amended 4-part answer to 5.
Social: community	Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people? We want you to think about all the people who are in your community, not just those that you know personally. (You almost always can't be too careful in dealing with people – People can almost always be trusted, 5 responses)	<a href="#">British Social Attitudes</a>  Placing of "can't choose" in centre of responses.

The data will be gathered by eQuality Solutions. Users will see an overall summary of their wellbeing. The aggregate anonymised data will be stored by eQuality Solutions for analysis on overall trends.

## SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

eQuality Solutions has developed Six Domains of Mental Wellness with a specific audience in mind: students who use the Learning Labs+ platform. What the domains offer is an insight into how Personal Resources and Functioning can be used as a means of imparting accessible information and support to students who may need additional help to understand and improve their wellbeing.

The model has been developed as a means of structuring information in an accessible way while providing students with evidence-led information that can be of use to them, both alone and with support. The questionnaire developed has a two-fold function: to provide users with a snapshot across each domain and provide a means of creating an aggregate dataset which can be used to drive further research and support to this target group.

Our role, as partners, has been to support eQuality Solutions to develop a practical model grounded in the latest theory and ensure that the initial iteration of the content links back to the evidence base. We have also provided support with developing the questionnaire and considerations about what data is being collected and how it will be used.

We look forward to the launch of the Learning Labs+ platform in early 2021 and finding out more about how students are using the resource. As noted in a recent publication by the What Works Centre for Wellbeing, there is a dearth of data on the nature of wellbeing of students in Higher and Further Education and this product presents an opportunity to better understand needs and how digital solutions can be part of an ecosystem of support.

With that in mind, we encourage eQuality Solutions as part of their rollout to do the following:

- Develop a plan for evaluation of the first iteration of the product.
  - In terms of impact: What did users learn about wellbeing? How did they use the knowledge and information to enact changes in their lives?
  - In terms of process: How are users navigating the Learning Labs+ platform? Is there content that is particularly useful/important? Why is it important for that particular user/group? How are mentors using the system? How do they add value to the user experience?
- Be clear on how the raw data collected from users on their self-reported elements of wellbeing is being held and used, and how such data could form part of wider knowledge creation. We encourage eQuality Solutions to engage with the wider wellbeing research community to use and share any data to inform developments across the sector and beyond.

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