

# VCS Health and Wellbeing

## Factsheet 1: What is Health and Wellbeing?

After reading this you should be able to define health and wellbeing

### What is health and wellbeing?

'Health and wellbeing' is one of those terms that everyone thinks they know what it means but there is no single agreed definition.

When asked, the majority of local voluntary organisations (98%) felt they make a positive contribution to people's health and wellbeing.

In order to know what difference you have made, and to be able to measure it, you have to understand how you may positively impact on someone's health or wellbeing.

### Health

The World Health Organisation says "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."

The two CVSs and Public Health Dorset accept a holistic definition that looks at an individual's health and lifestyle considering physical, intellectual, emotional and social factors such as income, housing, local environment etc.

### Wellbeing

Wellbeing can be understood as how people feel and how they function, both on a personal and a social level, and how they evaluate their lives as a whole, i.e.

- How people feel refers to emotions such as happiness or anxiety.
- How people function refers to things such as their sense of being able to achieve things or their sense of being connected to those around them.
- How people evaluate their life as a whole is captured in their satisfaction

with their lives, or how they rate their lives in comparison with the best possible life.

Wellbeing is not exactly the same as happiness. Happiness often refers to how people are feeling moment-to-moment and does not always tell us about how they evaluate their lives as a whole, or about how they function in the world. Well-being is a much broader concept than happiness: it includes happiness but also other things such as how satisfied people are with their lives as a whole, autonomy (having a sense of control over your life) and having a sense of purpose in life.

### Definitions

#### Health

is having a state of sound body and mind

#### Wellbeing

is about how individuals feel, about themselves, feeling healthy, happy and well off.

#### Health and wellbeing

is made up of four factors, physical, intellectual, emotional and social. These are the factors that help us through the day and keep us going.

#### Physical health

is the functioning of the body.

#### Intellectual health

is the ability to think clearly

#### Emotional health

the ability to recognise emotions such as fear, joy, grief, anger etc. and to express them appropriately. And the ability to cope with stress, anxiety and depression.

#### Social health

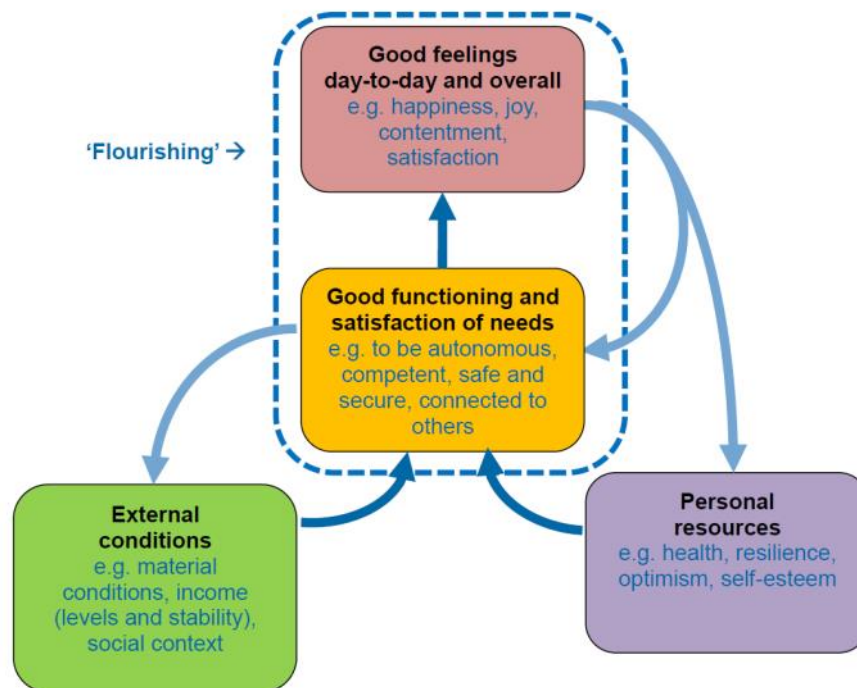
the ability to communicate with other people and form relationships.



## Models of health and wellbeing

### nef Dynamic Model of Wellbeing

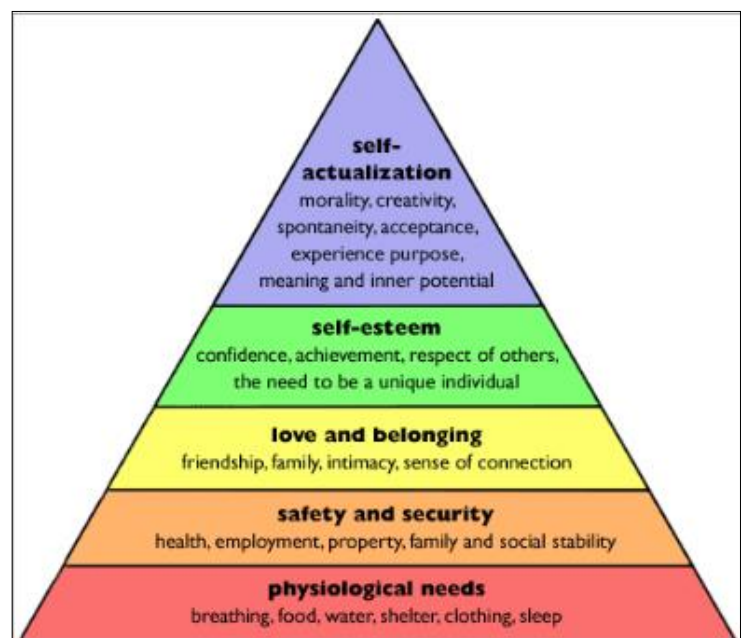
The New Economics Foundation (nef) has what it calls a dynamic model of wellbeing. The model describes how an individual's external conditions – such as their income, employment status and social networks – act together with their personal resources – such as their health, resilience and optimism – to allow them to function well in their interactions with the world and therefore experience positive emotions. When people function well and experience positive emotions day-to-day and overall, we can think of them as 'flourishing'.



### Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's model places the most important human needs; food, water, shelter etc. at the bottom and suggests that people need all the things in one level before they can reach the next level and achieve self-actualisation or their true potential.

Voluntary groups are helping individuals climb the hierarchy of needs by supporting their housing needs or reducing their social isolation but may not recognise the positive impact they are having.



### More Information

- For more detail on the nef Dynamic model of wellbeing see [Measuring Well-being](#)
- For more information on Maslow see: [www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html](http://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html)
- This and other Factsheets are available from Bournemouth CVS (01202 466120) or at [www.bournemouthcvs.org.uk/healthandwellbeing.asp](http://www.bournemouthcvs.org.uk/healthandwellbeing.asp)