



Community Wellbeing FAQs

What is community wellbeing?

Personal wellbeing can be defined as when our “basic needs are met, ...people have a sense of purpose, ... they feel able to achieve important goals, to participate in society and to live the lives that they value and have reason to value” (National Economic and Social Council, 2009). Personal wellbeing is also often directly linked to physical and mental health.

From this we can see that a community with high wellbeing would be one where all people have a strong sense of belonging and identity, opportunities to work individually and together for the common good, are able to support each other through different life stages, access the services they need, live in a positive environment, and are able to participate in the making the decisions that affect them. Since our actions have impacts that can be felt into the future, community wellbeing involves considering the wellbeing of future generations as well as the present one.

A community can be a geographic one, for example people living in a particular area, or a “community of interest”, for example young people, or people with a disability, or hillwalkers etc. Community wellbeing for PPNs includes considering the interests of many communities of interest as well as the whole community within the geographic area of the PPN (or Municipal District).

So, is there a difference between Community wellbeing and individual wellbeing?

Yes. Clearly, communities are made up of individuals so there is a strong link between the two. However, community wellbeing looks at a community as a whole and tries to assess what are the key issues overall. Consequently, it is a wider, more visionary idea that encompasses broad hopes and aspirations that all the community support. Community wellbeing involves us looking at the interactions and interdependencies between people, and the environment in which they live and work.

Is Community Wellbeing an Irish concept?

The idea of community wellbeing is used around the world, where it has been measured in different ways and from different perspectives. Government agencies in Wales, Scotland and Canada in particular have done intensive work on measuring and supporting community wellbeing. In Ireland, the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) wrote a detailed report on the topic in 2009.

However, most other approaches have been “top down”, whereas the PPN Wellbeing Initiative in Ireland is (as far as we know) the first attempt to develop a “bottom up” approach to creating a Vision for Community Wellbeing, where the communities themselves develop their own vision of what great wellbeing would involve for them.

So why is Community Wellbeing important for PPNs?

The working group on citizen engagement which originally proposed the PPN structure recommended that the first thing that a PPN should do was to work with its members to draw up a Vision for Community Wellbeing. This Vision, which would set out the wellbeing that the PPN member groups wished to achieve within the community, would then guide the development of policy positions for the PPN, and also inform PPN representatives on Boards and Committees and support Linkage or Thematic Groups in their work. Since the wellbeing Vision is broad and aspirational it can guide representatives and policy making that deals with more detailed specifics. For example, the Vision for Community Wellbeing might say that wellbeing in the community will need “...an adequate network of rural transport services to meet the needs of different user groups.”, and this will guide PPN

representatives on the Transport and Infrastructure SPC in how they engage on specific proposals for example for bus, “rural link”, community taxi and other service proposals.

How has this framework been created?

Since 2015, *Social Justice Ireland* and the *Environmental Pillar* have been working together to help develop a framework for wellbeing for PPNs. They have surveyed the literature and brought together teams of national experts including the PPN Advisory Group Secretariat and Worker representatives to input to the process.

From this, six headings were drawn up under which community wellbeing can be considered. These were then presented and discussed at the National PPN conference in Sligo in 2017.

How has the toolkit been developed?

In 2017, the Environmental Protection Agency agreed to fund a project to develop a toolkit for community wellbeing Visions based on piloting the work in 4 pilot PPNs. There was an open invitation to all PPNs to take part and Longford, Wicklow, Roscommon and Cork City¹ were selected, representing different types of PPN (urban/rural, whole PPNs/ Municipal Districts, different parts of the country, etc.).

The pilot task group consisted of the worker(s) and at least one Secretariat member from each pilot PPN. Other group members were Michael Ewing and Justin Byrne of the *Environmental Pillar*, Sean Healy and Sara Bourke of *Social Justice Ireland*, Simon O’Rafferty, consultant with the *Environmental Protection Agency* and facilitator Harriet Emerson.

The pilot task group co-created the overall methodology for PPNs to devise their Visions for Community Wellbeing for This and Future Generations and built a toolkit to support other PPNs with this process. Pilots were carried out in Wicklow (Feb 2018), Longford and Roscommon (Mar 2018) and in Cork City (May -June 2018). The learning from these pilots has been used to create this toolkit.

Who needs to be involved in developing the PPN Vision for Community Wellbeing?

To achieve a Vision for Community Wellbeing for This and Future Generations it is vital that the PPN establishes a Wellbeing team comprising the worker and Secretariat members. This team will then lead and guide the process and work for the involvement of all their member groups to reflect the different social inclusion, community development and environmental interests in the city/county.

What is involved in developing a PPN Vision for Community Wellbeing?

The toolkit outlines an 8 stage process, but briefly this involves

- a) Preparation – development of team, publicising the idea, planning
- b) Consultation – public meeting(s), online and direct inputs
- c) Drafting – Harvesting the feedback from the consultation and drafting the Vision.

At all stages in the process, the PPN member groups have an opportunity to input and comment. The final Vision must be passed by the relevant PPN Plenary to be formally adopted.

How long does a Vision for Community Wellbeing last?

No set period has been determined for the duration of a Wellbeing Statement at present. PPNs will use the Vision for Community Wellbeing as a reference document for representatives on Boards and Committees and for Linkage Groups. It can also be used as a reference against which to measure progress over time. It will be necessary to revisit and revise the Vision for Community Wellbeing at least every few years, particularly as the

¹ South Dublin PPN were originally part of the process, but were unable to continue and were replaced by Cork City

interests of certain groups may need to be better incorporated, or changes within the community need to be better reflected.

What other impacts will the PPN's Vision for Community Wellbeing have?

The Vision for Community Wellbeing will give each PPN a unique understanding of what matters within their community and what they are striving to see achieved. In this way, it will inform the work of the PPN. In particular, PPN representatives and Linkage Groups will use the document as a basis for their work to influence policy.

In addition, the PPN's Vision for Community Wellbeing will be communicated to the local authority and other agencies that the PPN identify as having a role in the community, to inform them of what the community wants to achieve for wellbeing in their area. In this way, the PPN will seek policies and plans from these agencies that will support wellbeing in the community.

What was the feedback from the pilot PPNs on the Wellbeing process?