

1 TOOL 1: MENTAL WELLBEING

As you know, at the beginning of the Living Well Portfolio, we were fortunate enough to gain permission to use the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS).¹

We have not recommended that all projects use WEMWBS; please check with GHK if you are unsure whether your project is one of them!

There are a number of reasons why this tool is suited to many projects within the Living Well Portfolio:

- It measures exactly what projects are attempting to promote: i.e. mental wellbeing, not mental ill-health;
- The statements are positively phrased: negatively phrased statements can often make beneficiaries think they are part of a project to address mental ill-health, which would be inappropriate to the vast majority of projects in this Portfolio;
- There are no 'cut-off' points: people's scores do not define them as 'ill' or 'well';
- There is data available from previous surveys: comparisons can be made; and,
- The tool is comparatively easy to administer and score.

However, there are also several important potential drawbacks:

- WEMWBS has been validated for use in measuring mental wellbeing in populations and groups: it has not yet been validated for individuals;
- WEMWBS has not yet been validated for measuring mental wellbeing in English-speaking ethnic minority populations; and,
- WEMWBS has not yet been validated for measuring change at individual level.

Despite these drawbacks we are still recommending its use. This is because:

- Just because WEMWBS has not yet been validated for these types of measurement does not mean that it isn't suitable for this purpose. Indeed, the best evidence we have suggests that it will eventually be validated in this way²; and,
- WEMWBS forms a key part of the national evaluation tools (developed by the New Economics Foundation); it is also being used in other surveys – e.g. in Scotland and the North West.

Recently, the scale has been updated. The original version, as issued at the beginning of the evaluation, had 14 questions ('items'). The revised versions – the Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale – has just seven and the team responsible

¹ We have been in contact with the team that produced the tool and will be informing them of projects that are using it: there is no need for individual projects to seek permission.

² The draft user-guide for WEMWBS states that "*Affectometer 2* [another tool for measuring mental health that WEMWBS is based upon] *is sensitive to change and there is no reason to think that WEMWBS will not be*".

for its development note that it is as robust as the 14-item version, but that the burden on those completing it (your beneficiaries) is reduced.

1.1 Administration of WEMWBS³

WEMWBS is typically administered in a self-completion format, where people are given the scale in hard-copy, or on a computer. It is not yet known whether the scale is robust if an interviewer reads out the statements, so we don't recommend that it is used in this way.

It is important to consider the possible effect of administering the tool on your beneficiaries: answering these questions may make people reflect on their poor state of mental wellbeing. It would therefore be good practice to have information about available support services to signpost people to should this occur. From the feedback we have received in projects' experience of using the 14-item scale, it seems that there have been some (isolated) incidents of respondents becoming upset when completing the scale.

However, the 7-item scale ought to reduce the likelihood of this happening, since one of the main 'problem' items on the 14-item scale was 'I've been feeling loved', which is not included on the 7-item version. Moreover, from projects' experience, but also from the experiences of using the 7-item version in population surveys, it seems that the scale is more acceptable to people if done as part of a more general set of questions (e.g. gathering information on people's age, gender, ethnicity etc).

1.2 Core Indicators for Mental Wellbeing

Our indicators have to take account of: the way in which projects are able to use the tool (we assume that the more technical the requirements, the less likely projects are to use it); and, the current state of the tool's validation. We have therefore decided upon the use of two core indicators; they are:

1. **No. of beneficiaries with improved mental wellbeing.**
2. **Change in mean score for all of a project's beneficiaries.**

As noted earlier, one of the most appealing features of the scale is that it is comparatively easy to score. Each of the statements asks for a response on a scale that ranges from 1 ('None of the time') to 5 ('All of the time'). These scores are then added up to give a total figure.

The maximum possible score is 35 (7x5), the minimum is 7.

For the first Core Indicator - '**No. of beneficiaries with improved mental wellbeing**' – beneficiaries should (at least) complete the scale when they enter the project and as close as possible to leaving it (or after a suitable, and standard, period decided by project staff).

³ A full user guide for WEMWBS, and other points of note in using the scale, is available at: <http://www.healthscotland.com/scotlands-health/population/Measuring-positive-mental-health.aspx>

The figure given should be the cumulative number of individual beneficiaries who have an increased score (by whatever margin) between entering and leaving the project. So, for example, if 100 people complete the scale as they enter the project and 60 of them subsequently have a higher re-test score, then the figure reported should be 60.

For the second Core Indicator - **change in mean score for all of a project's beneficiaries** – you should calculate a mean⁴ score for everyone when they are first assessed and then again when they are re-assessed. The figure given should be the difference between the second and first scores (i.e. it could be positive if beneficiaries' mental wellbeing has improved or negative if it has declined). The figure given should be to one decimal place, e.g. 47.3.

1.3 Access the Revised Version

The 7-item WEMWBS is shown in full below and is also available for download at:

<http://www.biomedcentral.com/content/supplementary/1477-7525-7-15-S2.doc>

Finally, please note that the scale must remain unaltered and must include the copyright statement on the bottom of the scale. Also, any report you produce using data generated from WEMWBS should contain the text:

"The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale was funded by the Scottish Executive National Programme for improving mental health and well-being, commissioned by NHS Health Scotland, developed by the University of Warwick and the University of Edinburgh, and is jointly owned by NHS Health Scotland, the University of Warwick and the University of Edinburgh."

⁴ Add up everyone's total scores and divide by the number of people completing the scale.

The Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (SWEMWBS)

Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts.

Please tick the box that best describes your experience of each over the last 2 weeks

STATEMENTS	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling useful	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling relaxed	1	2	3	4	5
I've been dealing with problems well	1	2	3	4	5
I've been thinking clearly	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling close to other people	1	2	3	4	5
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	1	2	3	4	5

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