

# OUR WELLBEING OUR VOICE



ACT NOW TO MEASURE  
YOUNG PEOPLE'S WELLBEING  
ACROSS THE COUNTRY

## Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill House of Lords Report Stage Briefing

5th January 2026

### About the Our Wellbeing, Our Voice Coalition

The wellbeing of young people in the UK is the lowest in Europe, with the latest [PISA](#) data revealing that 1 in 4 children report low wellbeing.

During the passage of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, we have consistently made the case for an amendment which introduces a national wellbeing measurement programme for children and young people across England. A consistent, national programme would provide the strategic framework and data required to understand the challenges young people face, develop solutions and understand their efficacy through the use of robust wellbeing data.

The [Our Wellbeing, Our Voice Coalition](#) is a growing group of [more than 60 organisations](#) with expertise in children and young people's wellbeing, wellbeing measurement, education and wellbeing economics. A full list of current members and campaign supporters is at the end of this briefing.

### Our Campaign

Together we are calling for the government to introduce a national wellbeing measurement programme for children and young people in England.

This programme would administer a regular and consistent survey of children and young people to create a mechanism for the government, schools, and all bodies and organisations supporting children and young people in their communities to actively listen to the voices of young people and act on the most pressing issues that are holding young people back from reaching their potential.

The measurement programme would be delivered through schools but would provide decision makers at every level - from national to local - with the information and evidence they need to improve wellbeing. It would be based on the five principles of our campaign to ensure that any measurement programme has **national coverage** but also provides opportunities for **local ownership**. The programme should be **youth centered** and **regularly delivered**. To get the best quality data, and to encourage public health based approaches to improving wellbeing we believe that young people's data should be collected on a **confidential** basis.

### Our principles

1. National Coverage



2. Local Ownership



3. Youth Centred



4. Regularly Delivered



5. Confidentiality



# Campaign Progress during the passage of the Bill

## House of Commons Stages

- ➔ **National Wellbeing Measurement raised at every Stage in the House of Commons**  
National Wellbeing Measurement was discussed in every debate, with an amendment laid by Munira Wilson MP for Twickenham at Committee and Report Stage.
- ➔ **The Our Wellbeing, Our Voice coalition spoke at the APPG for Children’s event on the Bill, submitted Committee stage written evidence, and several sector leaders made the case to committee in oral evidence sessions:**
  - Mark Russell, CEO of The Children’s Society
  - Baroness Anne Longfield CBE, Executive Chair of Centre for Young Lives
  - Dr Carol Homden CBE, CEO of Coram
- ➔ Then Minister for Early Education, Stephen Morgan MP, acknowledged the value of understanding wellbeing but raised some important concerns around a) the potential burden on schools, b) a reduction in school choice and c) any consequences on school accountability. Through endorsements of the campaign from the Association of School and College Leaders and the National Governance Association, as well as our focus on a truly voluntary scheme, we believe our proposals firmly address these important concerns.

## House of Lords Stages

- ➔ **Second Reading**  
National children and young people’s wellbeing measurement was raised by more than 10 peers, demonstrating cross-party support. Following Second Reading, Baroness Smith, as the responsible Minister, met with Lord O’Donnell to discuss the issue in more detail and share the Department’s current thinking.
- ➔ **Committee Stage**  
Peers debated cross-party amendment 472 laid by Baroness Tyler and Lords O’Donnell, Moynihan and Layard. Nine peers, from all major parties, spoke in favour of the amendment, receiving a positive response from the Minister but not securing the complete adoption of our proposals.

## How did the Minister respond?

In her summing up, Baroness Smith said, *“there is immense value in schools measuring, understanding and taking action on the factors which influence whether their pupils attend, achieve and thrive. Around 60% of schools already conduct some type of well-being measurement voluntarily.”* She said that the government is determined to support schools through a set of nationally endorsed measures, non-statutory guidance and a suite of resources to support schools in administering and responding to wellbeing surveys.

The Minister argued that in this spending round a centralised survey was not something the Department wanted to pursue. Baroness Smith did commit to exploring national collation of the data in the future and, in the short term, through annual publication of national survey data on pupils’ experiences in school.

## Addressing concerns raised during Committee Stage

Both the Minister, and other Peers, raised a number of concerns at Committee Stage that we are keen to address. These concerns were focused on a) costs of central administration of a survey in this spending round b) definitions and robust wellbeing measures and c) over-medicalisation of young people's mental health.

### a) Costs of central administration of a survey in this spending round

The Minister argued that the Department did not think that a centralised wellbeing measurement programme was “*necessarily the right way forward*” during this Spending Review Period.

Our submission to the recent Spending Review costed the administration of a national wellbeing measurement survey at just over £5m per annum. This is equivalent to less than 0.01% of the Department's budget. Furthermore, a well-designed survey would have significant benefits for other government departments, local government, and wider statutory and community partners. This relatively small cost could be easily recouped through improvements in wellbeing. Much of this sum is already being spent by schools using their own budgets to fund wellbeing surveys, but in a piecemeal manner with no benchmarking or data sharing to inform policy and practice.

At the conclusion of the Committee stage debate, the Minister stated that “*in the longer term, we will also explore whether and how this data could be collected centrally to inform national policy*”. Attempting to reverse-engineer data sharing platforms, and asking for current providers to make further changes to their operational models, would, in our view, run the risk of being expensive and unlikely to work at scale. Planning for datasets to be comparable and easily collated upfront is the best way to ensure that the ongoing costs of a measurement programme are minimised and the policy benefits maximised.

### b) Definition of wellbeing and robust measures

During their intervention, Baroness Fox said “*I am not entirely sure we know what we are measuring. There is no clear definition of wellbeing to measure.*” Other noble Lords spoke about the need for robust and validated measures.

Whilst the term wellbeing is used broadly in everyday conversation, measures of wellbeing at a population level are well-established and used internationally. The ONS' own wellbeing measurement for the adult population relies on just four simple questions for its headline measures on the nation's wellbeing.

It is the case that the introduction of a wellbeing programme would require the Department to make decisions about what measures to include, but the government's own proposals require that in any case. We would welcome a wide-ranging national consultation on this issue. Through engagement with young people, but also with schools, wider stakeholders and experts, it is possible to find a set of measures that explore a range of domains and drivers that are vital to wellbeing like physical activity, sleep, relationships, and hobbies.

### **c) Over-medicalisation of young people's mental health**

At Committee Stage, Baroness Spielman raised concerns that in asking young people about their mental health we may worsen their mental state:

*"If we do not want measurement processes in themselves to harm children, we should not collect data by constantly asking children who are not unwell about their wellbeing, and especially about their negative emotions."*

Whilst there is some evidence to suggest that certain intervention-based approaches around mood and emotions can result in increasing concerns among young people, the same is not true of the public health approach for which we are advocating. In fact a public health-led approach to measuring wellbeing has a range of advantages:

- Questions about negative emotions form only a small part of typical surveys, and questions about emotions and feelings can be tailored for younger children.
- Surveys are confidential so young people can answer truthfully and understand that their answers are not linked to any interventions or support that they may or may not receive
- Young people can skip any question they wish - they are free to answer whichever questions they choose or not to participate at all.
- A well-constructed set of wellbeing measures often acts to de-medicalise young people's mental health by demonstrating that things like good sleep, reduced screen time, engaging in hobbies and succeeding in school are linked to overall happiness.
- As a public health approach, wellbeing measurement helps to prioritise and evidence non-medical interventions to improve wellbeing - thus working to potentially reduce numbers seeking NHS support.
- Due to confidential results, a wellbeing measurement programme would underpin a whole-school approach to mental health where schools, and wider society, look to ensure the conditions for everyone to thrive, rather than targeting specific interventions and specific young people.

## **Questions for the Minister**

The Department has begun to make progress on this issue during the passage of the Bill. As the Bill nears its final Stages we are keen to press the Government to adjust its plans and commit to the national collation of wellbeing data. Without this crucial change, schools, communities, the Department, and wider Government, are unlikely to unlock the maximum benefits of our proposed public health approach to improving the lives of children and young people.

As such, we will be tabling an amendment for a completely voluntary national children and young people's measurement programme that collates and publishes data centrally.

**Q1. "Would the Minister be able to set out a timeline towards national collation of wellbeing data so that we can see the maximum benefits, across society, of this approach?"**

**Q2. "What estimates have the Department made of the costs of administering a wellbeing survey centrally? How much are schools already spending on this?"**

## Additional campaign resources

- ➔ [Campaign overview](#)
- ➔ [The case for national children and young people’s wellbeing measurement](#)
- ➔ House of Commons [Second Reading](#) and [Report Stage](#) Briefings on The Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill
- ➔ House of Lords [Committee Stage](#) Briefing on The Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill

## Amendment Text

### “Establishment of a national children’s wellbeing measurement programme

- (1) The Secretary of State must establish a national children’s wellbeing measurement programme.
- (2) A programme established under this section must—
  - (a) conduct a voluntary annual online national survey of the wellbeing of children in relevant schools in England;
  - (b) make provision for school, parental and student consent to participation in the survey, ensuring that participation is voluntary and that results are handled confidentially;
  - (c) provide central analysis of data and support for schools in the administration of the survey;
  - (d) regularly publish the results of the survey and provide relevant data to participating schools, local authorities and other public bodies for the purposes of improving children’s wellbeing.
- (3) For the purposes of this section, “wellbeing” includes the drivers of wellbeing, including nutrition, physical activity, participation in arts, culture and entertainment and any other factors the Secretary of State deems relevant.
- (4) For the purposes of this section, “relevant schools” includes academy schools, alternative provision, maintained schools, non-maintained special schools, independent schools, and pupil referral units.”

### Member’s explanatory statement

This amendment would require the department to introduce a national wellbeing measurement programme, based on a survey that would be voluntary for schools and pupils. The intention is to protect the anonymity of participants, ensure that no one is compelled to take part, and safeguard the privacy of any information provided.

## Further Information

We would greatly welcome support during Report Stage. If you are interested in receiving more information, or any assistance with drafting or reviewing speeches, please contact [james.robertson-2@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:james.robertson-2@manchester.ac.uk).

# Campaign supporters

