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**MYWEB (Measuring Youth Well-Being)
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WP4: Direct engagement with children and young people (CYP)

Deliverable 4.1: Country level reports on interviews and focus groups from delivery partners (United Kingdom)

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Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Fieldwork characteristics	3
3. Main empirical findings	7
3.1. Understanding and measuring well-being among children.....	8
3.1.1. Global understanding/definition of wellbeing.....	8
3.1.2. Major domains	8
3.1.3. Happiness, life-satisfaction, and psychological well-being.....	11
3.2. Understanding and measuring well-being among young people.....	11
3.2.1. Global understanding/definition of wellbeing.....	11
3.2.2. Major domains	12
3.2.3. Happiness.....	16
3.2.4. Life-satisfaction	17
3.2.5. Psychological well-being	18
3.3. Remarks on the definition and operationalization of 'well-being'	19
4. Differences on the understanding of well-being depending on certain factors ..	20
5. Having their voices heard and survey engagement	20
5.1. Research involving children	21
5.2. Research involving young people	22
6. Other recommendations informing MYWEB project	25

1. Introduction

This report outlines the key findings based on the interviews and focus groups undertaken with children and young people in the UK for Work Package 4. First, the report describes the fieldwork undertaken, including the recruitment process, key characteristics of the participants, profile of the research team, ethical considerations, and limitations. Second, the main empirical findings are outlined, for children first, then for young people. This section of the report examines children and young people's understanding of well-being, identifies the major domains that influences their well-being, and considers aspects such as happiness, life-satisfaction, and psychological well-being. It also reflects on the definition and operationalization of 'well-being' in the fieldwork. Third, the key differences on the understanding of well-being are considered. Fourth, the key findings relating to engaging children in research are summarised. The report ends with key recommendations informing the MyWeb project.

2. Fieldwork characteristics

2.1. Fieldwork

Recruitment

Engaging schools and young people in the UK is a challenging process, which requires a certain amount of preparation. Researchers working with children and young people under 18 years olds need to be DBS (Disclosure and Baring Service) checked. This process ensures that the researchers do not have any criminal records that could prevent them from working with children. In the United Kingdom, it takes three to six weeks to obtain such clearance. Furthermore, researchers need to get parental consent to engage with children and young people under 16 years old. The amount of preparation that is required to undertake research in UK schools becomes a challenge for researchers, as schools are often reluctant to engage the time consuming process of facilitating such administration.

For this particular research, the UK team had established contact with a school in early November that agreed to participate in the project. Unfortunately, communication was discontinued and could not be re-established despite numerous attempts. A second school was instead enrolled and fieldwork began early in December. However, with the Christmas holidays approaching, the school's schedule was very busy which limited the amount of possible visits. The fieldwork in the school

consisted solely of interviews. The teachers could not arrange focus groups in the limited amount of time that was available.

Considering the challenges associated engaging schools in the UK, it was decided to undertake all of the fieldwork with pupils in the same school. This school is in the vicinity of Manchester and welcomes pupils from a range of backgrounds. In consultation with the researchers, the teacher providing logistical support for this project, with the help of other teachers, selected pupils in year 7 (11-12 years old) and year 11 (15-16 years old) that they believed to be representative of a range of characteristics in terms of school achievement and family background.

The fieldwork with young people in a non-school setting also had its challenges. Young people were recruited at youth clubs, during university lectures, and through accessing personal contacts. A ten-pound voucher was offered as a gift to thank them for their participation. However, the young people engaged with the support of one youth worker were not aware of the incentive before taking part in the interviews or focus groups. The youth worker chose this approach to demonstrate that good will can bring about rewards.

The table below outlines the number of interviews and focus groups undertaken for this report, as well as the interviewees' key characteristics.

Table 1. Main socio-demographic characteristics of the participants in the fieldwork

	Interviews	Focus groups
Pupils from primary school	3 interviews: 3 females 3 twelve year olds 3 born in the UK 2 ethnic minority background (black), 1 white 3 no disabilities 2 not disadvantaged, 1 disadvantaged background	N/A
Pupils from secondary school	4 interviews: 3 females, 1 male 3 sixteen year olds, 1 fifteen year old 4 born in the UK 3 white British, 1 ethnic minority background (Asian) 4 no disabilities 2 not disadvantaged, 1 disadvantaged, 1 advantaged	N/A
Non-organised young people	5 interviews: 4 females, 1 male 5 born in the UK 4 eighteen year olds	1 focus group with 4 young people: 4 females 2 sixteen year olds, 2 seventeen

	2 white, 2 ethnic minority background (1 Asian, 1 mixed race - black/white) 5 no disabilities 1 full time student, 2 students working part time, 1 full time work, 1 NEET 3 not disadvantaged, 2 disadvantaged	year olds 4 born in the UK 3 white, 1 ethnic minority background (Asian) 4 no disabilities 3 in school, 1 NEET 4 disadvantaged background
Involved young people	4 interviews: 2 females, 2 males 2 sixteen year olds, 2 eight year olds 3 born in the UK, 1 born in Nigeria 4 ethnic minority background (3 black, 1 mixed race – black/white) 4 students 4 disadvantaged background	1 focus group with 4 young people: 4 males 2 sixteen year olds, 2 seventeen year olds 3 born in the UK, 1 born in Jamaica 4 ethnic minority (black) 4 no disabilities 3 in school, 1 NEET 4 disadvantaged background

Research team

The majority of the interviews were undertaken by the same researcher. Two other researchers were involved in this project. Two of the researchers have a PhD in sociology, whilst the third one holds a Master’s degree in sociology/criminology. All of them had previous experiences with interviews and focus groups. The primary researcher had also received training about child protection within the context of research.

The guide sheet for interviews with younger children was slightly readapted to reflect the vocabulary of that age range (11 to 12 years old). Beyond this, the questions were generally understood by CYP.

Ethical considerations

Research with children and young people (CYP) requires detailed ethical considerations to ensure that they consent to take part in the research and to protect them from harm. The research team made sure to explain to each participant that they could withdraw from the research at any time and that there were no right or wrong answers.

Following recommendations for this work package, the research team that engaged with the schools introduced themselves and the project to the children in a preliminary meeting. It was

particularly important for children age 11 to 12 to have met the researchers before taking part in the interview. When the research team came to do the interviews, the process went smoothly.

During one interview with a young person, some information about the lack of support for mental health issues such as depression and anxiety was disclosed. At the end of the interview, the researcher spent a few minutes with the young person to identify appropriate services available to young people.

Methodology

The interviews and focus groups were all recorded with the permission of the participants and fully transcribed. The transcripts were coded through a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (NVivo) to ensure systematic analysis. The structure of the interview schedule provided the starting point of the thematic analysis, which was then adapted to the data emerging from the transcripts. This process facilitated the identification of new themes.

The main empirical findings presented in this report follow a narrative provided by the thematic analysis. The quotes used to illustrate the children and young people's views were all anonymised. Names and locations were changed.

Limitations

A number of limitations need to be identified. First, the sample of participants accessed here is not representative of the UK population. It is very much of CYP growing up in an urban setting, with a strong bias towards disadvantaged areas and female participants. However, CYP coming from disadvantaged areas tend to be under-represented in research. This bias could therefore bring about information that is not always easily accessible.

Second, about half of the interviews and focus groups undertaken with young people took place in a semi-confidential setting where a youth worker was present in the room although not necessarily seated at the table with the interviewer and young person/people. This may have had an impact on the responses provided. This was not an issue in the school where the DBS clearance enabled the researchers to stay alone with the children and young people during interviews, ensuring confidential settings.

It is important to note another important limitation to this study. One of the objectives of the fieldwork was to explore children and young people's perceptions of participation in social research, and more specifically longitudinal surveys. However, the interviewees are necessarily those who chose to participate in this research, which introduces an important bias. The views of children and

young people that were not willing to contribute to this research are not captured in this report and therefore conclusions on how to engage CYP in a longitudinal survey have considerable limitations.

2.2. Methodological differences among interviews and focus groups

Interviews and focus groups call for different dynamics. Here, it is not possible to compare the two approaches for children because of the fieldwork limitations described above. However, it can be noted that interviews went smoothly with the children, who all seemed at ease with the researchers and comfortable talking about their families and friends.

The interviews and focus groups with young people were different. The focus groups were organised by gender. It was decided that at this particular age (16 to 18), boys and girls would be more comfortable talking about their well-being amongst themselves. Furthermore, despite requesting the presence of five to nine young people, the focus groups only comprised four young people at a time. Whilst this was not intentional, it provided the necessary space for each participant to be able to take part in the conversation. A larger group might have brought further challenges.

Interviews provided a personal and confidential space where the young person could express their opinions without being disrupted. Families were mentioned in more detail in interviews than in focus groups. Focus groups involved much livelier conversations, especially amongst the girls. Topics such as racism, job opportunities and relationships were discussed. Whilst those debates brought up some interesting information, they also created an atmosphere where responses were at times criticised. However, this did not hinder the communication process. Each interviewee expressed their opinion and displayed sufficient confidence to disagree with other participants. Consensus was generally reached amongst participants. The focus group involving boys generated less debate and disagreement.

3. Main empirical findings

This section of the report examines children and young people's understanding of well-being, identifies the major domains that influences their well-being, and considers aspects such as happiness, life-satisfaction, and psychological well-being. Children's views are presented, following by those of young people. This section also reflects on the definition and operationalization of 'well-being' in the fieldwork.

3.1. Understanding and measuring well-being among children

Global understanding/definition of wellbeing

The concept of well-being overall remains quite abstract for the children interviewed. The children interviewed have heard about the concept, in school or in church, but find it difficult to describe. Well-being can be associated with inequalities:

“I’ve heard it. I’ve heard it a lot. (...)In some of my classes, like English, and all that and sometimes I go to Sunday school and I hear about that there, so...[It’s about] Like children that don’t get a chance to like learn like us.” (Interview, Grace, female, 12 years old)

In some cases, the terminology appears confusing for children aged 12. Some interviewees, not knowing what well-being entails, appear to associate the word ‘well’ with ‘good’. Consequently, well-being becomes associated with good behaviour:

“I have heard of it, but I don’t know how to explain it. I know parts of it. (...)Like you’re being helpful and you’ve got a good attitude to people around you and in school and to the students and the teachers in school. That’s it, I think.” (Interview, Rose, female, 12 years old)

“I think well-being is like people being good or something.” (Interview, Sophie, female, 12 years old)

Other children appear more aware of the meaning of well-being, and more particularly of subjective well-being or psychological well-being:

“How you are. Like how you feel and stuff.” (Interview, Eva, female, 12 years old)

3.1.1. Major domains

Family appears to be the most important domain to the children interviewed. This domain is not limited to the direct family as it also includes the extended one, such as grandparents and cousins. Family is the domain that children refer to the most often in relation to what is important to them; what makes them feel happy or sad. In general, children mentioned family as a factor contributing to their happiness. Some also described how family members make them feel safe:

“I’ve got my family around with me and sometimes my nana and granddad comes down but my other nana and granddad they can’t come because they live in Boston. But my nana who came down, (...) she came down because she drops us off because my dad works till five (...) When I’ve got my family round I do feel safe.” (Interview, Rose, female, 12 years old)

Amongst family members, siblings are often mentioned by the interviewees. Brothers and sisters are obviously a very important feature to a child’s life. They are often mentioned very fondly, yet also associated with annoyances:

“I have two sisters, one brother and they’re really annoying. (...) Well they get most of the attention, so...” (Interview, Sophie, female, 12 years old)

Children regularly mentioned how different aspects of their lives were important for making them **‘feel safe’**. In addition to their family, another such aspect was their dwelling:

“If you don't have a house then you’re not going to feel safe because if you don’t have anywhere to live you’re going to feel scared of a night-time because there’s nowhere to hide” (Interview, Grace, female, 12 years old)

Friends were another prominent domain in the children’s discourses. The interviewees often referred to their friends in positive terms. For instance, Grace describes them as confidants worthy of trust:

“Friends are like special because if you want to tell them a secret you know they’re not going to tell anybody because like they’re your best friend and if you didn’t have a friend then you wouldn’t have anybody to tell like secrets.” (Interview, Grace, female, 12 years old)

Yet, friends can also be associated with negative feelings, after an argument for instance. It is also interesting to note that some of the children interviewed started going on dates. Whilst this domain is not as prominent as for the young people, it still appears to impact the child’s everyday life and well-being:

“Well, last week I fell out with my friend. (...) because the point was that this boy, I went out with him, and after I felt really, really ashamed. Big headed. He looked like an alien. (...) And then he kept on making silly remarks to me at school. He was saying silly things about me saying this, that, this, that, and my friend went and started giggling along with him.” (Interview, Sophie, female, 12 years old)

Education is perceived by the children interviewed as necessary for obtaining a good job in the future. They associate education with job opportunities and consequently future quality of life. This link is very clearly understood by all of the interviewees:

“You get to learn new stuff that you’d never heard of and so you get a good education if you want to work in somewhere that’s a good place to work at. (...) Because then you don’t have a miserable life because some people they don’t really pay attention in school and then when they grow up they have a really, really miserable life.” (Interview, Grace, female, 12 years old)

Nevertheless, school can also be associated with stress and anxiety. This is particularly the case in relation to tests or homework. As Grace describes it, school can become a very stressful environment for a child who hasn’t grasped what was taught in class:

“If we don’t have a test on that day I like [school], but if we do have a test on that day I go all stressed out and all that because... sometimes the work is really hard and you don’t get it and when the teacher explains it to you, you don’t really get it and when it comes to do the homework you’re like I don’t know this.” (Interview, Grace, female, 12 years old)

The children interviewed usually consider **health** in terms of a healthy diet and exercising. For the 12 year olds interviewed health is also associated with not starting bad habits such as smoking. Some of the children described how they ask their parents to buy some fruits:

“Yes [my health is important] ‘cause I’ll never start smoking. I know I’m never going to start smoking. I eat fruit. I eat the fruit rolls downstairs at lunch (...) So my health is good because I eat fruit. I ask my mum could I help her with the shopping, and I ask her “Mum, could we get some fruit?” (Interview, Rose, female, 12 years old)

Having access to **outdoors play areas** is also important for the children interviewed. They appear to generally use and appreciate the parks and playgrounds available close to their home:

“There’s a park near us. It’s not really that far. (...) Yeah it’s really good. There’s swings. There’s a football pitch and there’s roundabouts and slides and lots of good things.” (Interview, Grace, female, 12 years old)

Some of the children interviewed appeared to be very aware of **environmental issues**. They consider that it is important to protect the environment, and keep it clean in order to protect animals like insects that surround them:

“Just like lots of people just throw stuff on the floor and they don’t really put it in the bin, so... Yeah [it is important to protect the environment] because if the environment’s not clean then it’s just going to hurt like the bees and all the flies, all the other kind of animals.” (Interview, Grace, female, 12 years old)

3.1.2. Happiness, life-satisfaction, and psychological well-being

Children's **happiness** appears overall to be associated with their family situation and school results. Overall, it also appears important to them that their work and good behaviour are recognised:

"[I am happy] when I've played a prank and I think I've played it really good. (...) When I'm good and I get praised. That's about it." (Interview, Sophie, female, 12 years old).

Life-satisfaction was more difficult to capture. Overall, as for happiness, it appears to be linked to their good behaviour. Some children are satisfied with who they are and what they are doing.

"Yes, I do [like my life] because I like who I am, who I be, what I do and like what kind of sports like athletics and stuff like that." (Interview, Rose, female, 12 years old)

Psychological well-being is similarly linked with how pleased children are with their behaviour. Other domains that can be captured are their first steps towards autonomy. For example, Sophie explained how happy taking the bus by herself makes her feel:

"Because I get on the bus by myself. I get on the bus by myself and that gives me a little time for relaxation before I go home. I'm really, really happy that I've got to that bus driving to school. I get the bus by myself..." (Interview, Sophie, female, 12 years old)

3.2. *Understanding and measuring well-being among young people*

3.2.1. Global understanding/definition of wellbeing

Well-being is a concept young people have encountered in school and in psychotherapy for some of them. Yet, a minority of young people were not able to explain the concept of well-being.

Overall, the global understanding of well-being from the young people's perspective covers numerous topics such as physical and emotional health, basic needs such as having a house, education, freedom, happiness, security, future opportunities, and psychological aspects such as self-esteem:

"I think to me it sounds like how I look after myself and what I do that affects me, like health and things like that. (...) Well I associate happiness with wellbeing so I feel if you've got good health you'll be healthy be happier and if you have good relationships with people around you and you're happy" (Interview, Gemma, female, 18 years old)

3.2.2. Major domains

Family is particularly important for young people. Young people describe their families as being a supportive and stable structure. Once again, this includes the extended family such as grandparents, cousins, nephew and nieces. Some of the young people are growing up in families that are going through or have been through separations and became reconstituted families. Overall, families were always described by the young people as a core part of their lives and an important factor to their well-being:

“When I have a disagreement with my family and I fall out with them it kills me and it just absolutely makes me sad to be honest. (...) Seeing my granddad smile, that’s what makes me happy. Making sure that my mum’s fine, my little sisters they’re all right. But I think it’s when I speak to the little sister Iris who lives with her dad, that’s what makes me smile the most; it makes me dead happy.” (Interview, Marie, female, 16 years old)

Friends are particularly important for young people. The interviewees emphasised their need to socialise and the support provided by their peers. For some, friends are there to support when problems occur at home, whilst for others it is more about a general support that does not necessarily entail addressing personal problems:

“[Friends] were there if I ever did need anyone to talk to. They’d sit there and listen to me and then try and give me ways to help resolve the situation, stuff like that.” (Interview, Jane, female, 18 years old)

“When I go out with friends we chat like to relieve the stress about what’s happened over the week, like to share; not to share problems but to like speak about other things that aren’t your problems.” (Interview, Charlie, male, 18 years old)

Romantic relationships are also central to a young person’s life. They are often referred to as another part of their support network. Whilst **boyfriends and girlfriends** are often associated with happiness, they can also be considered less positively. For instance, Luke notes that finding a girlfriend is not a priority for him since she could distract him from his goals, whilst Eva refers to jealousy:

“Girlfriends, there’s two sides to that. They could be a distraction or they could be good, it’s up to you. In my plan I’ve said to myself my assignments first should be finished, get my job while I’m working and then get a girl for Christmas.” (Interview, Luke, male, 18 years old)

“Yeah I’m happy with him. It’s just really stupid things. I get really jealous really easily.” (Interview, Eva, female, 16 years old)

Groups of peers are not always associated with friendship or romance. Indeed, interviews indicated that **peer pressure** can be very strong. For instance, Skye explains how the young people who live in her neighbourhood pressure other young people to drink and take drugs:

“You get pressured to do a lot of stuff. Like, because my area is dead rough, you get pressured to, like, go and smoke, go and do drugs, go and drink alcohol and you get pressured to do that.” (Interview, Skye, female, 15 years old)

Bullying is another issue encountered by young people, particularly in schools. This topic was mentioned numerous times by interviewees, some with stronger words than others. For instance, Jane, who is currently NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training), keeps very negative memories of her time in school where she was bullied. She considers bullying to be a cause to her depression:

“I absolutely hated [school]. There was a lot ... it was bullying but I wouldn't say it was physical bullying; it was like emotional bullying. I had to go through it and that were crap. It caused a lot of problems with me. That's like one of the root causes of my depression.” (Interview, Jane, female, 18 years old)

Physical appearance is also key for young people to integrate groups of peers. **Clothes** are important indicators for young people who judge and are judged based on what they wear:

“And people are just judgemental about things that you wear. But I don't blame people sometimes because I judge; the first impression like what people have got on, I'll look them from head to toe and I'll judge them like what they've got on and stuff like that. Everybody does.” (Interview, Melissa, female, 16 years old)

Young people consider school, college, and universities as places where they can fulfil themselves. The majority of young people view education as a way to access a good job in the future. Yet, some question the need to get such qualifications, as some jobs do not request them. **Education** is not always associated with well-being:

“I think people would be able to get a standard job without any qualifications and still be able to financially support themselves and be happy.” (Interview, Charlie, male, 18 years old)

Furthermore, the educational setting appears to favour **stress** and anxiety for most students. The young people interviewed all described how tests, assignments, exams, are associated with some level of stress:

“I mean, honestly during this period where we had the mock [exam] I was, you know, out of a lot of sleep and really hectic it was, yes. (...) there is quite a lot of work, I mean, even the preparation for the real exams is just itself really tiring and when the real exams come it's

almost as if though you've forgotten all the things that you need to know because of the stress that you've gone through." (Interview, Adnan, male, 16 years old)

Amongst the young people interviewed for this research, some were not in education anymore. **Employment** is then a key factor to one's well-being. As described by Alice, she felt much more secured about her future and her general well-being once she found a full-time position:

"I would have questioned my happiness a few weeks ago prior to me getting this job because I felt stuck in my current role. I was only working part time and I did often question my happiness and question my future but once I got myself out of that and got myself looking forward, now I don't feel like there's any anxiety or there's any question towards my wellbeing. (Interview, Alice, female, 18 years old)

The **neighbourhood** was also mentioned as a factor that influences young people's well-being. The young people's discourses also emphasised that young people can witness, or at least are aware of, crimes that are carried on by gangs. As discussed during a focus group, this type of environment does not promote well-being:

"Yeah, yeah I was just going to say that I think living in an area like [this one] with a bad well-being... well effect on a lot of people in terms of their well-being because when you grow up in a community like this and you're seeing things that have happened, especially with the gangs, with seeing weapons and guns and knives and that, that can have a negative impact on your wellbeing, because when you look at well-being it's looking at your health and the way you are physically in your body etc. so I think when you look at communities it's all about obviously the people around you and what your community's like because that has an impact on you, as a person." (Focus group, 16-18 years old, male, organised)

Some young people noted that their chances of getting a job were diminished because of their postal address the stereotypes attached to it. Other types of **discrimination**, such as racism and stereotypes associated with teenagers, were also prominent in the interviews:

"I think it is that because especially in newspapers these days it is always bad stuff about young people, there's hardly anything good. Young people are always robbing people, getting in fights, stuff like that and a lot of people believe the media so then they obviously don't trust young people. They probably think they're not reliable. There's always young people that don't turn up or like are constantly late..." (Interview, Jane, female, 18 years old)

Other interviewees are more positive and talk about equal chances and numerous **opportunities** available for young people in the UK:

"I just think we've got a lot. We've got good education. We've all got an equal chance to... We've got our education. We've all got a chance to do what we want with our lives." (Interview, Paula, female, 16 years old)

Young people recognise that **health** is the basis of well-being. Someone who is unhealthy will not be able to attend school or go to work. Health is closely associated with nutrition. **Mental health** was also mentioned in numerous cases as an important factor to well-being. Some interviewees indicated that they had some mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety attacks, or that they had been referred to Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services in the past. For some of the interviewees, physical health and mental health are intertwined:

“Yeah health is quite important because if you’re sick you wouldn’t, life wouldn’t be the same. If you’re sick you get tired, you don’t want to do nothing, and you’d be depressed” (Interview, Rob, male 18)

Teenage pregnancy is a theme that emerged various times during the interviews. Whilst none of the interviewees were pregnant or had a child, some of them were seeing close friends or members of their families cope with teenage pregnancy. Teenage pregnancy is also a factor that affects many aspects of young people’s life, including their access to further education:

“My best mate actually she’s actually pregnant. She’s just turned sixteen but she fell at fifteen. Because she got pregnant to my brother mum’s more focussed on them now. You, like, get stepped back because there’s a little baby now (...) we’re similar ages so they’re closer in age than me and my best mate. (...) He did go to college for, like, two weeks but then sacked it because he wanted a job to provide for the kid.” (Interview, Skye, female, 16 years old)

“My primary school best friend is pregnant, and she has a kid now. (...)More teenagers get pregnant than women these days. If they want a child and they think they are capable of bringing up their child then go for it. I’m not necessarily saying it ruins your life because young mums do better than most mums. (...) But you won’t be able to do anything. Yeah you don’t get to go on holiday, how are you going to afford nursery? How are you going to afford clothes shopping, school or college or whatever.” (Focus group, 16-18 years old, female, non-organised)

Social media is another topic that appeared in a few interviews, as well as in the focus groups. Most of the interviewees indicated how social media helps them keep in touch with their friends, especially during the transition from school to university. However, others mentioned risks such as potential fake profiles on social media platform like Facebook. Furthermore, some young people emphasised the negative impact social media can have on relationships:

“It’s terrible. There’s nothing good about being young today. If you ask me what was good about being young ten years ago I’d say everything but now, today, I’d say no, nothing. Because everything’s about social networks these days. Everything back then was just like actual, physically getting together and speaking to each other; well not speaking to each other but just like being kids.” (Interview, Charlie, male, 18 years old)

In regards to material conditions, young people's prime concern revolves around **accommodation**. Those who are not yet at university wonder how they will pay for their accommodation, whilst those who are attending university still live with their parents or a family member. **University fees** are the biggest financial concern for the young people interviewed. As noted by Adnan, university fees are high and will require a bank loan that will take them years to pay back:

"I was quite stressed, especially since the government has changed quite a lot of laws and the university fee has increased quite a lot of times. That is worrying me, because we're not a rich family, and I think there are a lot of families like me out there and £9000 is not something which everyone can afford. And especially for about two, three years and then you have to obviously go... when you work you have to keep paying a particular fraction of your salary for to repay that bank loan which you borrow and it's tough, Miss." (Interview, Adnan, male, 16 years old)

3.2.3. Happiness

Overall, the young people interviewed declared being happy. The interviews reveal that happiness is linked to some of the key domains explored in the previous section. This is particularly the case for relationships. For instance, some participants state that their family makes them happy. Others will indicate that having a strong network of friends is important for their happiness. Consequently, moving houses and losing contact with old friends can impede one's happiness:

"I think . . . I was happier before. Because I was with my friends in that secondary school that I came from who were with me from primary schools. And obviously I knew them for a much longer period and, you know, I had outside school friends as well. My cousins also live in London so I'd interaction with them and Manchester's obviously; I haven't got any connection to anyone over here except from friends in school." (Interview, Adnan, male, 16 years old)

Happiness is not necessarily associated with material conditions. Some young people coming from a disadvantage background indicate that they are happy despite the context surrounding them.

"I'm happy with [my life]. I've made the best of what I have. Obviously, I've not had the best upbringing but I don't blame the past. You've just got to look forward. Just do what you can with what you've got." (Focus group, 16-18 years old, male, organised)

Some young people established a connection between happiness and satisfaction. Happiness is not based on what one owns, but on how satisfied they are with what they own. Rob illustrates this argument with car ownership:

“If you don’t have a car, it don’t mean you can’t be happy. So if you’re satisfied with what you have at that time, you’re most likely to still have a good wellbeing.” (Interview, Rob, male, 18 years old)

A minority of the interviewees declared that they were not happy. This was the case for Samia who had recently entered university and appeared to be finding the transition quite difficult. Happiness is a very subjective concept and it can be challenging to explain why one feels happy or not:

“I had a chat with my friend on the bus and I was, like, I’m not happy, I’m not feeling happy or content. I don’t know, there’s something missing, kind of, and that was last week so... And when I come to university I don’t have that happy vibe if you know what I mean. I mean, yes, college was really, you know, it was a lot more fun than uni, but I’ve got to this stage and I’ve got to deal with it.” (Interview, Samia, female, 18 years old)

3.2.4. Life-satisfaction

Life satisfaction is very closely connected to happiness. The young people interviewed generally declared being satisfied with their lives. They usually find satisfaction in their achievements, at in school or in sports:

“[I feel most satisfied with my] grades and school. That I’m doing well in school. And football, I’m doing well in that as well. (Interview, Skye, female, 15 years old)

However, life-satisfaction and happiness are not always interdependent. For example, Samia’s discourse on happiness and life satisfaction illustrates how some young people can be satisfied with their lives (i.e. acknowledging that they have a roof, they are being fed by their parents, and have access to education), but yet not be happy:

“I would [say that I am satisfied with my life], yes. Because lots of people are, you know, they’re in a worse situation than I am. (...) I’m achieving, you know, lots, like, I’ve got a job, I passed my driving, I’m at university, I’ve got friends. I’ve achieved, the things that I wanted to achieve, the things that I needed to achieve. I’m happy with what I’ve achieved. I’m just not happy which makes no sense. (Interview, Samia, female, 18 years old)

3.2.5. Psychological well-being

For young people, **autonomy** is an important aspect of their lives. It is often described in terms of freedom granted by their parents. This is therefore connected to trust. For young people, trust and freedom are the first steps towards autonomy:

“I think freedom [is what is best about being young today] (...) Yeah because you want to know that you’re trusted by your parents because if you don’t have the trust of your parents then what have you got?” (Focus group, 16-18 years old, male, organised)

Yet, this autonomy has its legal and material limitations. As minors, the young people interviewed are not allowed to drink, drive, or take a plane on their own. Their autonomy is also restricted by their lack of income:

“You can’t do stuff because of age restriction and money”. (Interview, Skye, female, 15 years old)

Having **responsibilities** also contributes to the interviewee’s well-being. The young people interviewed mentioned responsibilities towards their younger siblings or other family members such as nieces and nephews. This provides them with a sense of purpose:

“When I take part in what [my niece and nephew] are doing it does make me happy, knowing that someone’s relying on me. It’s weird.” (Interview, Jane, female, 18 years old)

Confidence is another theme that emerged during the interviews. The interviewees generally associated confidence with the ability to socialise, a vital aspect of a young person’s life:

“Obviously some people have a lack of confidence and they don’t feel right in a new place. I mean that makes you sad. If you go to somewhere, that everyone’s talking and you don’t talk.” (Interview, Luke, male, 18 years old)

The young people interviewed all indicated that the society they were growing up with was marked by discrimination. However, they also all indicated that they felt they were accepted in their community and described **positive relatedness** to society in general:

“Yes, I feel accepted in my community and I feel accepted in, yes, society, I do, yes. I mean, there’s lots of girls now wearing head scarves and, yes, there are the odd few that look at you differently but I think you’ve got to look at the positives, that you are allowed to wear a head scarf because many countries don’t...” (Interview, Samia, female, 18 years old)

Overall, the interviewees indicated that they consider things they do to be **worthwhile**. This was especially the case for education, which will ensure a good future. Young people’s discourses are generally quite focused on their future, which is described in terms of job satisfaction, stable

financial situation, and family. To some extent, they consider their present (i.e. school) as an investment that will ensure a more pleasurable future:

“At our age everything’s all about doing well, you know, because obviously you can’t just sit here and mess about, because everything we do now is only for our future. It’s mostly about just making sure you do well so that everything you want to do in the future will happen. I don’t know depending like what job you want to do, have a lot of money, you know for leisure and stuff like that.” (Interview, Melissa, female, 16 years old)

3.3. Remarks on the definition and operationalization of 'well-being' in the fieldwork

Children and young people encounter the concept of well-being in different arenas: school, social services, Sunday school (i.e. religion). However, the concept appears to be quite abstract for children aged 10 to 12. Some of them associated the term ‘well-being’ with the notion of ‘being good’. This is an issue to be considered when explaining the research objectives to children in that age group since there is a limit to how much a child will understand when researchers talk about ‘well-being research’. On the contrary, most young people (15 to 18 years old) seemed comfortable with the concept of well-being.

Overall, the major well-being domains can be operationalised in a child friendly way (i.e. ‘what is important for you’). However, happiness, life satisfaction, and psychological well-being were more challenging to capture. Indeed, young people could discuss the difference between happiness and life-satisfaction, but this distinction was harder to explore with younger children. As outlined in the previous section, the border between happiness and life-satisfaction is not always clear.

Another challenge associated with the operationalization of well-being in the fieldwork pertains to time. Well-being is a large concept and any topic raised by the children and young people can be considered pertinent. Yet, it is not possible to cover everything in one interview or focus group.

To overcome this challenge, the concept of well-being needs to be narrowed to ensure that key information is captured in the time bestowed or the fieldwork should be extended to comprise a series of interviews and focus groups focusing on some specific aspects of well-being.

This section outlined the main empirical findings gathered from the interviews and focus groups undertaken with children and young people. Overall, it can be noted that children aged 10 to 12 are probably too young to have a real grasp of the concept of well-being. Young people appear to have a better understanding of what it entails, describing both objective and subjective aspects of well-being. Well-being domains reflect fields that are ubiquitous in children and young people’s life

(family, friends, school, and employment). Some domains such as happiness, life-satisfaction and psychological well-being are strongly intertwined.

4. Differences on the understanding of well-being depending on certain factors

As indicated previously, the age of the interviewees had a strong impact on their understanding of the concept of well-being. The younger participants could not explain the concept. However, they could easily discuss the different domains affecting well-being, such as family, friends, school. New domains appear in the discourse of young people (15 to 18 years old), such as romantic relationships, alcohol and drugs, teenage pregnancy, social media, and financial concerns about university fees. Teenage pregnancy was only mentioned by female interviewees, which could indicate that it is a stronger concern from their perspectives.

The social background of the interviewees also influences the importance given to particular domains. For instance, the young people living in disadvantaged areas clearly stated how a neighbourhood influences one's well-being, whereas it was more of a non-issue for those living in nicer parts of the city.

Furthermore, the children and young people's family situation influence their understanding of well-being and the weight they put on different domains. For instance, children and young people whose parent has a medical issue will tend to consider health as a quintessential aspect of well-being:

"I think to me [well-being] sounds like how I look after myself and what I do that affects me, like health and things like that. (...) Well my Mum, she has ME [Myalgia Encephalopathy] and it's not really one of those things that... I don't know, it's not something they've recognised as a disability but I can see how it affects her." (Interview, Gemma, female, 18 years old)

5. Having their voices heard and survey engagement

5.1. *Research involving children*

For some of the children involved in this research, the concept of well-being is quite abstract, and therefore lacks importance. This can be an obstacle to research involving children. Indeed, it is important that the participant believes that the **topic** discussed is important. Some children might not be willing to contribute to a piece of research they perceive as non-important. Their interest is also dependent on how directly concerned they feel about the topic:

“If they just come up to me and say do you want to do a survey [on well-being] obviously I’m going to say no. (...) Because like it’s not really that important, because all it is is just asking you like how you feel and all that. But if it was like something important to me then I would say yeah. (...) Say like what do you feel about racism and why do you think it’s wrong, then I would say yes because it’s like questions based on me.” (Interview, Grace, female, 12 years old)

Children presented mixed views in regards to **having their voices heard** by adults. The adults they engage with generally include teachers and family members. Some children explained that adults usually pretend to listen to them whilst thinking about something else:

“No [adults don’t listen to me] not really because when you’re trying to tell [adults] something they always focus on the other thing and then when you ask them ‘what did I just say?’ they say, ‘I don’t know’. That’s what my Dad always does.” (Interview, Grace, female, 12 years old)

However, other children indicated that adults such as family members did listen to them. Sophie points out the fact that the interviewer is also listening to her:

“Yeah [adults listen to me] because you’re listening to me right now. (...) Well, my Mum does and my Nana does. My dad does.” (Interview, Sophie, female, 12 years old)

In terms of research methods, some children indicated that they enjoy having **conversations**. Consequently, the research process might need to involve interaction with adults, whether through completing surveys together or through interviews, in order to ensure that children enjoy taking part in the research:

“Yes [I would participate] because I like talking to people. I do like having conversations.” (Interview, Rose, female, 12 years old)

As suggested by Rose, **school observations** could provide further context to the research and allow children to show researchers how they interact in the school sphere:

“They could, like if people aren’t working in the school, then we could join them and then do sports and show them what kind of stuff we have done. (...) like see pop into lessons and see

what their work is, and how neat they're doing it, and if they are taking pride in their work." (Interview, Rose, female, 12 years old)

When asked if they would rather be interviewed **at home or at school**, some of the children responded that both were fine whilst others indicated that school would be their preferred option. The interviewees explained that school would provide a better environment than home in terms of confidentiality, especially if younger siblings live with them:

"I would want to talk somewhere quiet and like no one's really there, just me and the person that's asking me the questions, because then I can really tell them what I think about it. No [I wouldn't have a quiet space at home] not really because there's always, there's lots of children and like my little sister she always goes around and everywhere I go she always goes, follows." (Interview, Grace, female, 12 years old)

In regards to **incentives**, children generally indicated that although not required to ensure their collaboration, it would be nice to receive a gift for their participation:

"I wouldn't really mind but if you're giving me like a gift, I'll be really grateful and say yes please." (Interview, Sophie, female, 12 years old)

5.2. Research involving young people

There is a general sentiment amongst the young people interviewed that their voices are not heard in the British society. The interviewees mentioned two reasons to this lack of participation. Some of them indicated that young people simply **do not voice their opinions**. There appeared to be some political apathy amongst the group of interviewees. Indeed, although some interviewees were active in social organisations, none of them was politically active. However, other interviewees noted that young people do express their opinions, through videos posted on social media platforms for instance, but that the government ignores the messages spread by the youth. In Rob's opinion, people do actively voice their needs and opinions to a government that does not react to the information provided:

"Have you not seen them videos that people post on Facebook? They have like 100 million views and nobody's taking no notice of it. Like, if I go to the government now and tell them, how many times has like the residents from [here] gone to the government and said that we need this, the government's not done anything. (Interview, Rob, male, 18 years old)

Overall, the interviewees responded positively to the idea of a survey measuring children and young people's well-being. The topic is an important drive to young people's participation as most of them specified that they would take part if the **topic** was interesting and relevant. Some of the

interviewees expressed a strong desire to have opportunities to voice their opinions. For those coming from a disadvantaged area, participating on a research about young people is also considered as a chance to break some of the stereotypes associated with young people living in rough neighbourhoods. Those interviewed stressed the importance of helping other young people:

“It’s for the benefit of the young people isn’t it? It’s not just for no reason. It’s all for good causes. I think if people like should be doing as much as they can for these sort of things.”
(Interview, Paula, female, 16 years old)

There was no consensus amongst the young people interviewed about the potential **impact** that a survey can have. For some, findings generated by surveys such as students’ satisfaction surveys are generally disregarded. Therefore, some young people appear to be sceptical towards the purpose of a survey. This will decrease their likelihood of participating in a survey on well-being:

“The survey that’s going round at the moment, about the courses, what you think about the courses. I know a lot of people think there’s nothing going to happen with it. If we put anything on it, is that actually be fed to anyone? And is anything going to happen about it? Or is it just going to be said and ignored? Because that’s what everyone thinks, it’s going to get ignored.” (Interview, Jane, female, 18 years old)

Others showed confidence in the policy impact research on young people’s well-being could have. As described by Alice, participating in a survey is taking part in a process that can bring about change:

“I know that our answers, because I’ve studied it, are important to what the government can do. If our answers are all negative then something can be changed and something possibly might be changed.” (Alice, 18)

In terms of the methodological approach, the respondents were open to the idea of completing a survey every six months or every year. There was no consensus about how this survey should be delivered. Some argued that an **online survey** would work best, as they already complete online surveys, for shops for instance. Others indicated that an online survey would get lost amongst the abundant commercial material that comes into view. Social media were mentioned as a potential method to deliver the survey. However, it was rapidly ruled out by some young people who would clearly prefer to meet with the researchers:

“[The survey] would be ignored. Because there’s so much stuff that’s advertised you just don’t even pay attention to it.(...) I think less of the social media and more of like human

interaction. Yeah. Definitely more one to one. Social media is not the way to do this.”
(Charlie, 18)

Some young people suggested that the research could include **observations**, potentially filmed in a similar way to television documentaries. Some of the young people appeared attracted to the idea of seeing themselves in videos generated by a research on well-being. Others suggested using such videos to document the context of their well-being, such as the neighbourhood they come from:

“In the neighbourhood. Like kind of like Ross Kemp and how he goes to places. He studies people like so I think the neighbourhood would be the best place [to do research].” (Rob, 18)

Some of the respondents indicated that their preferred setting would involve a face-to-face conversation with a researcher. Some argued in favour of a **focus group**, stressing their tendency to engage in activities as a group. Others argued that individual **interviews** would allow a greater focus for researchers to explore the topic in more detail:

“I think workshops and projects and stuff like that. Say if it was just me and you was like do you want to... I'd probably be like 'oh no thank you'. But say, if it was me and like a couple of others and my mates were like 'oh yeah we'll see what it's like', I'd come along as well.”
(Focus group, 16-18 years old, female, non-organised)

“[A focus group is] definitely less effective, because it's like sort of skimming the edges. Like because of six people, it's going to be like six times, yeah six times less effort spent on each person.” (Interview, Charlie, male, 18 years old)

It is also interesting to note that some young people acknowledged that their answers would fluctuate depending on their mood. This poses some methodological challenges in terms of **reliability**:

“If you met me in a bad week the replies I'd be giving would be different from this.”
(Interview, Luke, male, 18 years old)

Young people were also asked where they felt would be the most appropriate place to answer a survey or interview. The majority of the participants indicated that either **home or school** would be suitable places. Yet, some respondents expressed concerns about having researchers enter their home. Those concerns are mostly based on trust issues and apprehension of strangers pretending to be researchers to enter homes. Some young people also felt reluctant about researchers entering their home, as they would feel the researcher is being intrusive:

“And coming to the house is basically your private life. If you want to know about my family you can talk about it. If I want to tell you something I'll tell you. If I don't then I'll not tell

you. But once you come in that's like observing. That could be used for terrorism, because the wrong people could come in and they know what your house looks like so if they want to rob you it doesn't take up to a minute to take everything because they know where a room is, where this is, where that is." (Luke, 18)

Young people expressed different views when asked about **incentives**. Overall, there was an agreement that incentives are not compulsory. Young people would engage in research in order to express their opinions and contribute to societal betterment. Yet, incentives are viewed as an element that could encourage participation:

"That helps, but I would happily do it if I wasn't getting paid, receiving anything from it."
(Interview, Alice, female, 18 years old)

However, other participants had strong views about incentives being essential to engaging with young people. In Samia's opinion, incentives ensure a reciprocal relationship between the researcher and the participant. Without any compensation, the research process is only benefiting the research team:

"I think that people can feel quite reluctant going into it because, you know, you're taking up my time and you're not giving me anything for it. It's all for you anyway, it's all your research, even though their voice is being heard, it's still your research like and if you give them something back then it's, kind of, like, you're on the same ground, you know, it's, kind of, fair." (Interview, Samia, female, 18 years old)

This section outlined the key findings about research engagement gathered through interviews with children and young people. Overall, children and young people indicated that well-being was an important topic worth researching. They indicated that meeting and talking to a researcher was an important part of the process, which could take place at home or in the school. Children noted that a school context could provide better confidentiality. Both children and young people suggested that researchers should also consider their broader context (i.e. school and neighbourhood). The majority of CYP involved in this research thought incentives were not necessary to engage CYPs, but were enjoyable.

6. Other recommendations informing MYWEB project

Considering the results exposed in this report, the research team recommends the following:

- **Not to use the term 'well-being' with children aged 10 to 12 years old.** The concept is abstract and does not allow them to understand the research topic. It would be interesting

to get an indication of when children start understanding the concept. The majority of young people (15-18 years old) were familiar with it.

- **Clearly identify how the survey will be used / have impact.** If young people doubt that the results will be used they will be less willing to engage in the research project.
- **Include 'feeling safe' as a central aspect to children and young people's well-being.** This theme appeared numerous times in interviews in relation to a number of topics such as family, school, and the neighbourhood.
- **Consider other topics that have spontaneously emerged during the interviews.**
- **Clarify the border between happiness and life-satisfaction** and making this distinction accessible to children aged 10 to 12 years old.
- **Examine the broader context of children and young people's well-being.** Interview findings suggest that researchers should observe settings that are important to the children and young people in order to have a holistic view of their well-being and what is important to them.
- **Talk with the children and young people involved in the research.** This research indicates that children enjoy sharing their opinions and views with researchers. It is an important part of their research experience. Consequently, a longitudinal survey should probably include open-ended questions and be completed in presence of a researcher or fieldworker.