

Article

Children's well-being indicator review, UK: 2020

Proposal and methodology for updating our children's well-being indicators to better represent children's lives today.

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Release date:
2 October 2020

Next release:
To be announced

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1 . Overview of children's well-being indicators

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has been [measuring national well-being for 10 years](#), looking at how the UK is performing in 10 broad areas of life that people told us matter most to their well-being. For the past six years, we have also [measured children's well-being](#) using 31 indicators within seven domains. These indicators were developed from the Measuring National Well-being debate and [additional consultation](#).

[The ONS children's well-being measurement framework](#) includes both subjective and objective indicators to shed light on how children feel about their lives and the contexts in which they live. Broad areas covered by the framework include personal well-being; our relationships; health; what we do; where we live; personal finance; and education and skills.

As the indicators were developed six years ago, it is now appropriate to review how well they reflect children's lives today and the things that may affect their well-being. Additionally, as 2020 has brought the unprecedented coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, it is also important to consider how well our proposed indicators may address the new circumstances in which children and young people are living and factors that may affect their future well-being.

To address the need to review the children's indicators, we undertook focus groups with children across the UK during the end of 2019 and start of 2020. These focus groups aimed to give children the opportunity to tell us what they think is important for a child to live a happy life. We used what children told us directly, along with other published research and stakeholder conversations, to review the current 31 indicators that constitute the children's well-being indicator set.

2 . Choosing the indicators

During 2019 and the start of 2020, we carried out 10 focus groups with children aged 10 to 15 years across the UK. The purpose of these focus groups was to identify what children said was needed for them to have a happy life. For more information on the focus groups and what children told us, please see [Children's views on well-being and what makes a happy life, UK: 2020](#).

An audit of available data on children's well-being was also undertaken. Relevant data from this research were mapped onto the emerging themes from the focus groups.

We also carried out a literature review and compared our potential indicators with other available children's well-being indicator sets, for example, the [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's \(OECD's\) children's well-being indicator set](#).

In selecting potential indicators and sources for inclusion in our proposed set, we considered:

- geographic coverage (aspiring for UK-wide coverage)
- timeliness and frequency of reporting
- potential for disaggregation

This process resulted in a proposed indicator set containing 8 domains and 71 measures.

The proposed domains for the children's well-being framework include:

- personal well-being
- our relationships
- health
- what we do
- where we live
- household finances
- schools and skills
- future and voice

We intend to reduce the number of measures in the final indicator set to make it more manageable for users. This final set will be selected after taking on board stakeholder feedback and carrying out further statistical analysis.

3 . What children told us

The findings from our focus groups were broadly consistent with the current Office for National Statistics (ONS) children's well-being indicator set. However, our discussions with children enabled us to identify additional potential contributions to children's well-being that are not currently represented in the indicator set and should not be overlooked. This section contains some examples.

Ability to be themselves

Children talked to us about the importance of feeling confident to be able to be themselves and feel good about who they are. [The Children's Society's children's well-being index development report](#) suggested happiness with appearance is the most influential aspect of children's well-being relating to "self", which according to their most recent [Good Childhood Report \(2020\)](#) has decreased significantly in the past eight years.

Adding to this, [the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children's \(NSPCC's\) 2016 report on bullying](#) described how children said bullying can have an effect on their self-esteem and feelings of self-worth, which in turn negatively affects their well-being. Self-esteem can relate to several aspects contributing to personal well-being such as pride and self-worth. For example, [Kelly et al.'s 2016 report on improving the well-being of children with disabilities](#) found that children commonly expressed feelings of pride in themselves as a result of achievements in sports or personal development.

[Our current framework](#) includes indicators measuring experiences of bullying as well as happiness with appearance. However, happiness with appearance was felt not to sufficiently represent what children told us in the focus groups regarding happiness with themselves as a whole. Therefore, "I like being the way I am" has been added to the proposed indicator set to provide a more holistic approach to measuring the ways and extent to which children may feel good about themselves.

Sleep

Children acknowledged the importance of sleep to their daily mood, ability to concentrate, and ability to engage fully in the things they enjoy, which is not represented in the [current indicator set](#). [The Department for Education's 2019 State of the Nation report for children and young people's well-being](#) stated that sleep can be an important protective factor in positive psychological health, particularly for young girls. We are proposing the inclusion of an indicator to represent sleep within the health domain.

Social media

The children we spoke to also highlighted both harms and benefits of social media use. The [ONS research into children's social media use](#) found that children who spent more than three hours using social networking websites on a school day were twice as likely to report high or very high scores for mental ill-health. [Public Health England's \(PHE's\) 2019 report on approaches to improving children and young people's mental health and well-being](#) found that young people perceived online spaces, if monitored and moderated, as safe spaces that help them to feel included and not isolated.

Similarly, [our report on children's experiences of loneliness](#) outlined how social media can be used positively by children to connect with others, helping to avoid loneliness, although negative factors such as online bullying and unhelpful social comparisons could contribute to loneliness. [Our current children's well-being framework](#) contains an indicator measuring self-reported time spent online. We are proposing an additional indicator to represent exposure to online harms.

Schools and teachers

During the focus groups, comparisons were made between primary and secondary schools, with primary schools perceived as safer and more inviting than secondary schools. [The ONS report on children's experiences of loneliness](#) also found that transitions linked to schooling and the move from primary to secondary education can trigger loneliness in children.

[PHE reported](#) children's associations with their happiness and their schools, which could be seen as safe spaces but also places of stress and pressure. In addition, PHE stated that school staff including teachers may be important sources of support for children's mental well-being but that staff were not always perceived to have the necessary skills to help. The children we spoke to described experiences of stress at school from extra-curricular activities and school commitments, particularly exams, which had a negative impact on their well-being. They also spoke to us in depth about the impact teachers had on their happiness at school, which could be both positive and negative.

The current ONS children's well-being measures do not include measures on perceptions of, and experiences with, teachers, school pressures or safety. We have therefore added these to the proposed framework.

Future

Children spoke to us about the importance of a happy future and what this would entail. An important aspect of a happy life for children involves having bright future prospects. Children said they wanted to have opportunities to gain the relevant skills and education to be able to live independently and follow their aspired career paths. Similarly, [Selwyn et al. \(2017\) \(PDF, 920KB\)](#) reported that for care-experienced children, perceiving life as "getting better" and having optimistic feelings about the future were important to their well-being. In addition, Selwyn et al. (2017) described how care-experienced children valued being able to express opinions and being included in decision-making, particularly around issues that have an impact on their lives such as movement within the care system.

The children we spoke to often felt their opinions were undervalued and expressed a desire to have more of a voice, including having a say in decisions about their futures. These points raised by children reflect Article 12 of the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), which states: "Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously." We felt these factors relating to children's voices and futures were not well-represented and need to be better represented in the children's well-being indicator set. The current "education" domain focuses on attainment and "happiness with schools" but does not include the acquisition of desired skills or other future prospects.

We are therefore proposing to preserve the current domains but renaming "education and skills" to "skills and schools" to better encompass children's experiences at school, including satisfaction and relationships with teachers. Furthermore, the proposed indicator set includes an additional domain titled "future and voice" to represent what children told us was important to their well-being, which included wanting to have a say in the decision-making that affects their lives as well as prospects for a happy future.

4 . Children at greater risk of disadvantage

In addition to the findings from focus groups with children, we also undertook a literature review.

The aim of this was threefold. First, to explore other indicator sets relating to children's well-being, both nationally and internationally, to identify any gaps in our own coverage. Secondly, to identify research with other groups of children who are at risk of lower well-being to supplement our research. Lastly, we wanted to review evidence of a wide range of factors that impact children's well-being.

This literature review aimed to focus as much as possible on recent research. Some of the findings, as described earlier, further emphasised what children told us and aligned with our current measurement framework including: the importance of good relationships and connecting with others; being active and taking part, including learning and engaging in hobbies and activities; family finances; and the negative impact of experiencing bullying. They are also reflective of the [New Economics Foundation and The Children's Society's five ways to well-being for children](#) (connect, be active, take notice, keep learning and give).

However, we also found that there are specific groups who are particularly at risk of low well-being and whose life circumstances are not well-reflected in the current framework.

For example, [being a young carer](#) may have a significant impact on many aspects of children's lives, including their mental health and participation in leisure activities.

[Looked after children](#) are much more likely to be classified as persistently absent from school, with much lower average Key Stage 4 attainment than non-looked after children, which can reduce their future opportunities.

[Experiences of homelessness](#) in early life can also impact children's life chances, and the longer they experience homelessness, the more likely their health and well-being will be at risk.

[Children who stated they were attracted to the same gender or to both males and females](#) had significantly lower subjective well-being than those who stated they were attracted to the opposite gender or neither. In addition, [parental rejection of children who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender \(LGBT\)](#) can negatively affect their identity and overall health.

We also explored other children's well-being indicator sets, namely the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) children's well-being indicator set, the newly developed indicator set for child well-being in New Zealand, the relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) measures, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. After careful consideration, we concluded that our indicator set could be more representative of children who are at greater risk of disadvantage and low well-being. Ideally, this would involve disaggregation of the relevant indicators to measure how those at greater risk are faring in each area of life compared with other children. However, disaggregation is not always possible for all groups of children at greater risk of disadvantage because of lack of data or small sample sizes, for example. Therefore, we are proposing the inclusion of several indicators for children at greater risk of disadvantage, within the relevant domains, to ensure they are represented within the well-being framework. However, we could not capture all of these groups within the proposed indicator set because of lack of data availability.

Some children at greater risk of disadvantage as identified in the literature review are:

- children of parents with poor mental health ([Clark et al., 2017](#); [Chowdry and McBride, 2017, \(PDF, 353KB\)](#))
- children who are homeless and living in temporary accommodation ([Reynolds and Dzalto, 2019](#); [Local Government Association, 2017](#))
- looked after children including adoption([Oakley et al., 2018](#); [Ryder et al., 2017](#); [Selwyn et al., 2017 \(PDF, 920KB\)](#))
- young parents and teenage pregnancies ([Local Government Association, 2018](#))
- children who have experienced child abuse, including sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect ([Romanou and Belton, 2020](#))
- children who are a member of a street gang or know a member of a street gang ([Clarke, 2019](#))
- children accommodated in secure children's homes ([Williams et al., 2019](#); [Barron and Tracey, 2017](#))
- children with a disability or long-term limiting illness ([Kelly et al., 2016](#); [Hagell and Shah, 2019](#))
- children with special educational needs ([Barnes and Harrison, 2017](#))
- children who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender (LGBT) ([Katz-Wise et al., 2017](#))
- children living in poverty and material deprivation ([Pople et al., 2013](#); [Weightman et al., 2012](#))
- children who are carers ([The Children's Society, 2018](#))
- children who have experienced a bereavement ([Child Bereavement UK, 2018](#))
- children with a low birth weight ([Public Health England, 2016](#))
- children with symptoms of mental ill-health ([Apland et al., 2017b](#))
- children in immigration detention centres ([Apland et al., 2017c](#))

To measure experiences of bereavement, we were only able to find figures relating to [children who have experienced the death of their mother](#). This was a single publication, using the data from [the Office for National Statistics \(ONS\) Longitudinal Study](#), reporting estimates of the number of children born in England and Wales between 1971 and 2000 who had experienced the death of their mother before they reach the age of 16 years.

[Our current framework](#) includes an indicator representing children who have been a victim of a crime including violence within the previous year. However, this does not encompass experiences of child abuse. The ONS publishes [data on experiences of child abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect](#) from the Crime Survey for England and Wales. However, these data are collected retrospectively from 18- to 74-year-olds and therefore do not provide a timely illustration of children's experiences today.

[The Millennium Cohort Study](#) asks participants to indicate whether they have felt sexually attracted to males, females, both or have never felt sexually attracted to anyone at all. However, in the most recent wave (wave 7) participants were approximately 17 years old.

As we were unable to locate any other indicators for children who may have experienced abuse, experienced a bereavement or who identify as LGBT, these have not been included in the proposed indicator set, but we would welcome comments and suggestions on this.

5 . Proposed ONS children's well-being indicator set

Personal well-being

Proposed indicators, source, coverage and frequency

- High or very high level of satisfaction with their lives overall (0 to 10) - from the Children's Society Household Survey, Great Britain (UK going forwards), annual.
- High or very high level of how worthwhile the things they do are (0 to 10) - from the Children's Society Household Survey, Great Britain (UK going forwards), annual.
- High or very high level of happiness (0 to 10) - from the Children's Society Household Survey, Great Britain (UK going forwards), annual.
- Agree or strongly agree "I like being the way I am" - from the [Children's World Survey](#), England, Wales, three waves since 2012.
- High or very high level of happiness with appearance (one to seven) - from [Understanding Society - The UK Household Longitudinal Study - youth questionnaire](#), UK, annual.
- Often or always feel lonely - from the [Active Lives Survey \(Sports England\)](#), England, annual from 2020.
- Average deaths by suicide per 100,000 of the population aged 10 to 15 years in the UK - from [Office for National Statistics \(ONS\) death registrations for the UK](#), annual.

Our relationships

Proposed indicators, source, coverage and frequency

- Quarrel with a parent more than once a week (mother, father) - from [Understanding Society - The UK Household Longitudinal Study - youth questionnaire](#), UK, every two years.
- Talk to a parent about things that matter to you more than once a week (mother, father) - from [Understanding Society - The UK Household Longitudinal Study - youth questionnaire](#), UK, every two years.
- High or very high level of happiness with your relationships with your family (0 to 10) - from The Children's Society Household Survey, Great Britain (UK going forwards), annual.
- How often do you and your family usually have meals together? (Every day; most days; about once a week; less often; or never) - from [Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children](#), England, Scotland, every four years.
- Bullied at school physically, in other ways, or both at least four times in the last six months - from [Understanding Society - The UK Household Longitudinal Study - youth questionnaire](#), UK, every two years.
- High or very high level of happiness with your relationships with your friends (0 to 10) - from The Children's Society Household Survey, Great Britain (UK going forwards), annual.
- How often do you see your friends (not including when you are at school)? (Never; less than once a week; once or twice a week; three or four days a week; five or six days a week; or every day) - from the [Children's Worlds Survey](#), England, Wales, three waves since 2012.
- How many close friends do you have - friends you could talk to if you were in some kind of trouble? - from [Understanding Society - The UK Household Longitudinal Study - youth questionnaire](#), UK, every two years.

Health

Proposed indicators, source, coverage and frequency

- Age-standardised avoidable, treatable and preventable mortality rates in children and young people (aged 0 to 19 years) by sex - from [ONS death registrations](#), UK, annual.
- Percentage of term babies with low birth weight (under 2.5 kg) - from [ONS birth characteristics](#), England and Wales, annual.
- High or very high level of happiness with health (0 to 10) - from The Children's Society Household Survey, Great Britain (UK going forwards), annual.
- Percentage of children with a disability or long-term limiting illness - from the [Family Resources Survey \(Department for Work and Pensions \(DWP\)\)](#), UK, annual.
- Has symptoms of mental ill-health (SDQ-12) - from [Understanding Society - The UK Household Longitudinal Study - youth questionnaire](#), UK, every two years.
- Percentage of children who are overweight, including obese - from [Health Survey England \(NHS Digital\)](#), England, annual.
- Number of children accessing NHS funded community mental health services - from [NHS-Digital](#), England, annual.
- Agree that there is support at their schools for students who feel unhappy, worried or unable to cope - from [Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children](#), Wales, every four years.
- Do you have enough food to eat each day? (Never; sometimes; often; or always) - from the [Children's Worlds Survey](#) (Wave 3 only), England, Wales, three waves since 2012.
- Is the amount of sleep you normally get enough for you to feel awake and concentrate on your school work? (Yes or no) - from [Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children](#), England, every four years.
- Under 16 conception rate in England and Wales - from [ONS conceptions](#), England and Wales, annual.
- Average mental well-being score of parents (Swemwbs) - from [Understanding Society - The UK Household Longitudinal Study - main survey](#), UK, every three years.
- Percentage of children who report having to look after someone in their home because they are disabled, sick or "can't do things" - from [Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children](#), England, Wales, every four years.

Risk behaviours, for example:

- Percentage of children who have ever smoked a cigarette at all - from [Understanding Society - The UK Household Longitudinal Study - youth questionnaire](#), UK, annual.
- Percentage of children who have ever smoked an e-cigarette - from [Understanding Society - The UK Household Longitudinal Study - youth questionnaire](#), UK, annual.
- Percentage of children who have ever had an alcoholic drink (that is a whole drink, not just a sip) - from [Understanding Society - The UK Household Longitudinal Study - youth questionnaire](#), UK, annual.
- Percentage of children who drink alcohol regularly - from [Understanding Society - The UK Household Longitudinal Study - youth questionnaire](#), UK, every two years.
- Percentage of children who, over the last four weeks, have had five or more drinks one occasion - from [Understanding Society - The UK Household Longitudinal Study - youth questionnaire](#), UK, every two years.
- Percentage of children who have ever tried cannabis, glue, solvent, sniffing or any other illegal drug - from [Understanding Society - The UK Household Longitudinal Study - youth questionnaire](#), UK, every two years.

What we do

Proposed indicators, source, coverage and frequency

- Children (aged 12 to 15 years) who have had at least one potentially harmful experience online in the past 12 months - from [Office of Communications \(Ofcom\) survey](#), UK, annual.
- Visited the natural environment at least once a week in the last year - from the [Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment survey \(Natural England\)](#), England, annual.
- Spends four or more hours on a social networking website on a normal school day - from [Understanding Society - The UK Household Longitudinal Study - youth questionnaire](#), UK, annual.
- Average minutes of physical activity per day (Active, fairly active, less active) - from the [Active Lives Survey \(Sports England\)](#), England, annual.
- Engaged with, or participated in, arts or cultural activities at least three times in the last year - from the [Taking Part Survey \(Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport \(DCMS\)\)](#), England, annual.
- High or very high level of happiness with their time use (0 to 10) - from The Children's Society Household Survey, Great Britain (UK going forwards), annual.
- Agree or highly agree with "I have enough choice about how I spend my time" - from the [Children's Worlds Survey](#), England, Wales, three waves since 2012.

Where we live

Proposed indicators, source, coverage and frequency

- To develop: metric monitoring children's exposure to air pollution - from the ONS and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), UK.
- To develop: metric monitoring children's risk of household flooding - from the ONS and [Environment Agency](#), Great Britain.
- High or very high level of happiness with the home you live in - from The Children's Society Household Survey, Great Britain (UK going forwards), annual.
- Percentage of families with dependents aged under 16 years living in overcrowded accommodation - from the [English Housing Survey \(Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government \(MHCLG\)\)](#), England, annual.
- Overall, I like living in this neighbourhood (yes or no) - from [Understanding Society - The UK Household Longitudinal Study - youth questionnaire](#), UK, every two years.
- Agree or strongly agree that I feel safe in the area where I live - from [Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children](#), England, Scotland, every four years.
- Number of children who are homeless and living in temporary accommodation - from official homelessness statistics, England ([MHCLG](#)), Scotland ([Scottish Government](#)), and Wales ([Stats Wales](#)).
- Was a victim of crime in the last year - from the [Crime Survey for England and Wales \(ONS\)](#), England and Wales, annual.
- Estimates of children aged 10 to 15 years who are a member of a street gang or know a member of a street gang - from the [Crime Survey for England and Wales](#), England and Wales, annual.
- Number of children in immigration detention - from the [Home Office, Immigration Statistics](#), UK, annual.
- Number of children accommodated in secure children's homes - from [Department for Education \(DfE\)](#), England and Wales, annual.
- Number of looked after children including adoption - from the government statistics on children looked after, England ([DfE](#)), Wales ([Stats Wales](#)), annual.
- In my area, there are enough places to play and have a good time (I do not agree; I agree a little; I agree somewhat; I agree a lot; or I totally agree) - from the [Children's Worlds Survey](#), England, Wales, three waves since 2012.

Household finances

Proposed indicators, source, coverage and frequency

- Percentage of children living in households with capacity to face unexpected financial expenses - from the [EU-SILC](#), UK, annual.
- Percentage of children in households with less than 60% of median income - from [Households Below Average Income \(DWP\)](#), UK, annual.
- Percentage of children in workless households - from the [Labour Force Survey \(ONS\)](#), UK, quarterly.
- Percentage of children in households with combined low income and material deprivation - from [Households Below Average Income \(DWP\)](#), UK, annual.
- Percentage of children living in households with home broadband access - from the [Opinions and Lifestyle Survey \(ONS\)](#), Great Britain, annual.
- High or very high happiness with the things you have (like money and things you own) - from The Children's Society Household Survey, Great Britain (UK going forwards), annual.
- Percentage of children who have a family holiday away from home for at least one week a year (Child(ren) has; have it; cannot afford it now; or do not need it now) - from [Understanding Society - The UK Household Longitudinal Study - main study](#), UK, every two years.

Schools and skills

Proposed indicators, source, coverage and frequency

- Number of 3- and 4-year-olds participating in funded early years education - from government statistics, England ([DfE](#)), Scotland ([Scottish Government](#)), Wales ([Care Inspectorate Wales](#)) and Northern Ireland ([Department of Health, NI](#)), annual.
- Key Stage 4 performance (five or more GCSEs or equivalent A* to C) - from government statistics, England ([DfE](#)), Scotland ([Scottish Government](#)), Wales ([Stats Wales](#)) and Northern Ireland ([Department for Education, NI](#)), annual.
- Pupil absence rates - from government statistics, England ([DfE](#)), Scotland ([Scottish Government](#)), Wales ([Stats Wales](#)) and Northern Ireland ([Department of Education, NI](#)), annual.
- Permanent and fixed-period exclusions, from government statistics, England ([DfE](#)), Scotland ([Scottish Government](#)), Wales ([Stats Wales](#)) and Northern Ireland ([Department of Education, NI](#)), annual.
- Percentage of children with special education needs, from government statistics, England ([DfE](#)), Scotland ([Scottish Government](#)), Wales ([Stats Wales](#)) and Northern Ireland ([Northern Ireland Audit Office](#)), annual.
- How happy are you with the things you have learned at school (0 to 10) - from the [Children's Worlds Survey](#), England, Wales, three waves since 2012.
- High or very high level of happiness with the school they go to (one to seven) - from [Understanding Society - The UK Household Longitudinal Study - youth questionnaire](#), UK, annual.
- Agree or strongly agree that I feel safe in this school - from [Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children](#), England, every four years.
- How pressured do you feel by the schoolwork you have to do? (Not at all; a little; some; or a lot) - from [Health Behaviours in School-Aged Children](#), England, Scotland, Wales, every four years.
- Agree or strongly agree that there is at least one teacher or other member of staff I can go to if I have a problem - from [Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children](#) England, Wales, every four years.
- My teachers listen to me and take what I say into account (I do not agree; I agree a little; I agree somewhat; I agree a lot; or I totally agree) - from the [Children's Worlds Survey](#), England, Wales, three waves since 2012.

Future and voice

Proposed indicators, source, coverage and frequency

- High or very high happiness with what may happen to you later in your life (in the future)? (0 to 10) - from The Children's Society Household Survey, Great Britain (UK going forwards), annual.
- High or very high level of happiness with how much choice they have in life (0 to 10) - from The Children's Society Household Survey, Great Britain (UK going forwards), annual.
- How happy are you with how you are listened to by adults in general (0 to 10) - from the [Children's Worlds Survey](#), England, Wales, three waves since 2012
- Believe that people in the UK will be affected by climate change in the future (yes or no) - from [Understanding Society - The UK Household Longitudinal Study - youth questionnaire](#), UK, every two years.

6 . Data sources and quality

During our data source audit, we encountered excellent sources of data about children's well-being within the devolved nations, but our stated aim is to recommend measures available on a UK-wide basis. Therefore, some country-specific surveys without comparable measures in other countries have been omitted for this reason.

Several challenges with potential sources of data for children were identified in trying to populate the indicator set. These include: varying geographic coverage and granularity; infrequent data collection; and small sample sizes that do not allow for disaggregation by groups or areas. This section contains some examples.

[Children's Worlds, the International Survey of Children's Well-Being \(ISCWeB\)](#), contains several useful subjective measures that were identified by children as being important to their well-being. These include having enough food to eat, places to have a good time, enough choice about how their time is spent, and being listened to by adults including teachers. However, data for the ISCWeB are collected infrequently, with only two waves released in the past seven years, and they only cover England and Wales within the UK. Furthermore, some of the survey items have changed between waves, making it difficult to track changes. Although the most recent wave includes 128,000 respondents aged 8 to 12 years from 35 countries, [England had a sample of 717 children](#) aged 10 years only because of issues relating to recruiting respondents in schools. Unfortunately, we have been unable to locate comparable questions on other UK surveys.

[Understanding Society - The UK Household Longitudinal Study](#) (UKHLS) includes a youth survey for young people aged 10 to 15 years living in the UK and contains several relevant items relating to relationships with parents, friends, bullying, school, safety and risk behaviour. However, useful items, such as arguing with and talking to parents and liking and feeling safe in their neighbourhood, are only included in alternate waves, so every other year.

[The Children's Society's Good Childhood Report](#) publishes findings from their annual household survey, which includes principal measures of subjective personal well-being (life satisfaction, happiness and worthwhile), with the 2019 survey containing questions relating to worry, such as worry about the environment, finding a job and having a place to live. These worry-related measures reflect important issues raised by the children we spoke to. However, they were not included in the 2020 survey, and there are currently no plans for these items to be repeated. For this reason, these specific questions have not been included in the proposed indicator set.

From the [Health Behaviour in School-aged Children \(HBSC\)](#) survey, which is used in Wales, England and Scotland, eight new measures have been proposed for inclusion in the indicator set. These include questions around mental health support at school, being able to talk to friends and teachers, experiences with health professionals, and feeling safe at school. However, the survey questions are not always consistent across the devolved nations, making comparisons complicated or impossible. Furthermore, these data are only collected every four years.

We were unable to identify any adequate measures relating to pets, perceptions of government, or inclusion or discrimination. However, we aim to investigate inclusion by disaggregating, when possible, by protected characteristics, including sex, disability and ethnicity.

7 . Future developments

Based on our research and review of the current children's well-being indicators, we are proposing an indicator set of 71 measures within eight domains (see [Section 5: Proposed ONS children's well-being indicator set](#)). We believe that the proposed indicator set would provide a more in-depth picture of the lives of children in the UK than the current framework.

Give us your feedback

We would now like to invite stakeholders to review the proposed framework for children's well-being and provide feedback. We would like you to consider:

- satisfaction with topics covered
- satisfaction with the number of indicators
- satisfaction with proposed sources, providing suggestions on other, more representative sources where possible
- highlighting where sources for comparable indicators may be available in a devolved nation that has not been highlighted by our research
- how children at greater risk of disadvantage have been represented within the proposed indicator set

We would like to hear your views about whether the proposed sources will provide new and improved insights into children's well-being in the UK. Based on the feedback received, we aim to finalise a new indicator set for children's well-being and update it annually to provide a more timely picture of the lives of children in the UK.

To provide feedback on our proposals, please use [our online survey](#).

This survey will be open for two months and will close on 2 December 2020.

8 . Related links

[Personal well-being in the UK: April 2019 to March 2020](#)

Bulletin | Released 30 July 2020

Estimates of life satisfaction, feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile, happiness and anxiety at the UK, country, regional, county and local authority level.

[Children's well-being and social relationships, UK: 2018](#)

Article | Released 26 March 2018

A picture of how children aged 10 to 15 years in the UK are coping in a range of areas that matter to their quality of life.

[Children's and young people's experiences of loneliness: 2018](#)

Article | Released 5 December 2018

Analysis of children's and young people's views, experiences and suggestions to overcome loneliness.

[The Good Childhood Report 2020](#)

Report | Released August 2020

The Children's Society's ninth annual report on the well-being of children in the UK.

[State of the Nation 2019: Children and Young People's Well-being](#)

Report | Released October 2019

Department for Education's (DfE's) report to integrate the available evidence on the state of children and young people's well-being and to provide an accessible narrative on current evidence to guide discourse and action.

[Universal approaches to improving children and young people's mental health and well-being - report of the findings of a Special Interest Group](#)

Report | Released October 2019

Public Health England's summarised findings from a mixed-methods approach to understanding evidence about universal approaches to improving the mental health and well-being of children and young people age 4 to 18 years.