

October 2025 Meeting Notes

Topic: *Wellbeing, Growth and the Public Finances*

Time and Date: 4:30-5:30pm, Wednesday 22nd October 2025

Room: Room B, 1 Parliament Street

Attendance

In attendance: Lord Gus O'Donnell, Peter Lamb MP, Lord Richard Layard, Baroness Claire Tyler, Adrian Ramsay MP, Andy MacNae MP, Matt Gaffar (Peter Lamb's Office), Dr Maria Cotofan (King's College London), Adam Lang (Carnegie UK), Peter Brietbart (Bloom Wellbeing Fund), Sarah Cunningham (World Wellbeing Movement), Jonathan Whitney (World Wellbeing Movement), Ben Wealthy (World Wellbeing Movement).

Apologies received from APPG members: Jeremy Hunt MP, Lord Geoff Filkin and Ellie Chowns MP.

Welcome and Introductions

The Co-Chairs, Lord Gus O'Donnell and Peter Lamb MP, opened the meeting:

- Welcomed colleagues to the first formal meeting of the newly revived APPG, which exists to share the latest in wellbeing science with Parliamentarians and convene experts and evidence to inform policies that improve wellbeing in the UK.
- Noted and thanked the [World Wellbeing Movement](#), who will be providing the secretariat.
- Attendees introduced themselves.

Presentations

Professor Lord Richard Layard – Wellbeing as the goal

- Prof Lord Richard Layard, Programme Co-Director for Wellbeing at the Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics and Co-Founder of the World Wellbeing Movement gave a presentation on delivering value for money in terms of wellbeing.
- The aim of government spending decisions should be to maximise wellbeing by prioritising projects with higher benefit/cost ratios.
- When analysed for their impact on wellbeing, the following policies save more to the government than they cost:

- NHS Talking Therapies (2 years)
- Psychological therapy service for addiction (2 years)
- Mental health support teams in schools (2 years)
- Employment support for mild-moderate mental illness (5 years)
- Apprenticeship guarantee (16 years)
- Relaxing green belt near stations
- The APPG has a key role in making the case for wellbeing central to the next spending review.
- **Sources:**
 - [*Value for money: How to improve wellbeing and reduce misery*](#) by David Frayman, Christian Krekel, Richard Layard, Sara MacLennan and Isaac Parkes (September 2024)

Sarah Cunningham – Wellbeing at work

Sarah Cunningham, Managing Director of the World Wellbeing Movement, outlined evidence from colleagues Professor Jan-Emmanuel De Neve and Dr George Ward (the Wellbeing Research Centre, University of Oxford), demonstrating the link between employee wellbeing and economic growth:

- A happier employee is a more productive employee.
 - A large-scale field study of almost 1,800 BT call centre workers highlighted a causal link: a one-point increase in happiness (on a scale of 0 to 10) was associated with a 12% increase in their productivity, as measured by weekly sales data.
- Businesses that value wellbeing, increase their value.
 - In the world's largest study of work wellbeing, conducted in partnership with the University of Oxford's Wellbeing Research Centre, Indeed's Work Wellbeing 100 revealed that public companies with higher work wellbeing outperform the market.
- The World Wellbeing Movement believes all organisations should measure employee wellbeing and has published [guidance](#) on how employees can do this.
- The [Work Wellbeing Playbook](#), produced by the World Wellbeing Movement, provides a rigorously curated collection of evidence-informed interventions that improve workplace wellbeing.

Sources:

- Bellet, C.S., De Neve, J-E., & Ward, G. (2023). *Does employee happiness have an impact on productivity?* *Management Science*.
<https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.2023.4766>
- De Neve, J-E., Kaats, M., Ward, G. (2023). *Workplace Wellbeing and Firm Performance*. University of Oxford Wellbeing Research Centre Working Paper 2304. <https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:8652ce7e-7bde-449f-a5e7-6b0d0bcc3605>
- Neve, J. D., & Ward, G. (2025). *Why workplace wellbeing matters: The science behind employee happiness and organizational performance*. Harvard Business Review Press.

Dr Maria Cotofan – The evidence on wellbeing and voting

Dr Maria Cotofan, Lecturer in Economics and Policy at King's College and Research Associate in the Centre for Economics Performance at the London School of Economics, outlined evidence about the relationship between wellbeing and voting.

- Several studies find that happier people seem to be more likely to vote for the incumbent government, in European countries and in the UK specifically.
- Unhappy voters are more likely to support populist parties and anti-establishment candidates in European countries and in the United States.
- Wellbeing seems to matter even once we take economic variables into account and is sometimes more predicative of voting than unemployment.
- Wellbeing in the UK has dropped since its pre-pandemic peak and more people are living with low levels of happiness, across all four countries.
- Using three decades worth of representative survey data from the UK, we track the correlation between:
 - 1) People's wellbeing and support for the incumbent party;
 - 2) Experiences of unemployment and support for the incumbent party.
- At the local authority level, we can calculate how current support for the incumbent party is explained by average wellbeing, and compare how wellbeing performs in predicting support the incumbent, compared with average unemployment:
 - Life satisfaction explains 3.8% of the variation in support for the incumbent;
 - Unemployment explains 3.3% of the variation.
- Currently work is being undertaken to understand voting behaviour in the last general election and its link with wellbeing, economic indicators and local amenities.

Sources:

- Ward, G., De Neve, J.-E., Ungar, L. H., & Eichstaedt, J. C. (2020). *(Un)Happiness and Voting in US Presidential Elections. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*

Q&A and Discussion

Here is a summary of the points raised:

- Given that public money is limited, it is crucial to be as clear as possible about what interventions have a positive impact on wellbeing, and which policies should be prioritised.
- It was stressed that the APPG needs to take a cross-party approach and policy platform to drive wider support for wellbeing.
- Those involved in campaigning on wellbeing need to use concise language that will resonate with the public and generate more awareness (e.g., that wellbeing is about how people feel, and wellbeing public policy is about building better lives).
- It was stressed that wellbeing is a science, and levels of wellbeing can be measured and are being measured by the ONS and in businesses.
- There are also a range of publications which focus on levels of wellbeing in the UK - including Life in the UK published by Carnegie UK. The report analyses the collective wellbeing of UK citizens, looking at social, economic, environmental, and democratic aspects of their lives.
- It was suggested that the APPG consider the role of Mayors and other forms of regional and local government in promoting wellbeing, e.g., tracking more closely, and in real-time, the wellbeing of staff and residents.
- Some media and Parliamentary tools were mentioned for advancing wellbeing and the Secretariat will seek to support and facilitate practical steps.

Next meeting

- The Co-Chairs thanked attendees and noted that meetings were being planned for 2026 on social media and the relationship between wellbeing and voting patterns. More information will be communicated in due course.

Please contact info@worldwellbeingmovement.org with any comments or questions.

