

Developing a Wellbeing Vision with Children and Young People

Understanding what matters
for a wellbeing vision

About the guidance

Before thinking about actions and policies, we need to **imagine the FUTURE**. How do we want the future to be? What does a future in which wellbeing for all is achieved look like? It is important to have a shared understanding of the future which policymaking is helping to create in order to ensure that actions connect to the reality and goals of different places and cultures. This also helps to **get people on board for the Wellbeing Economy transformation** because it aligns policies with the areas of life most important to them.

However, **the voice of children and young people** is often neglected in the visioning process; even though they are exactly the ones **who will be living in the future that is being envisioned**. Many people assume, wrongly, that they do not have the capacity to really understand what matters for wellbeing, or to take part in visioning processes that look to the future. But experiences in Scotland – like the one that inspires this template, and children’s Parliament – and elsewhere have shown that children and young people have actually a very strong understanding of what truly matters for people and planet to live well.

Their right to participate in decisions that affect them needs to be recognized and actively supported. By discussing new imaginaries with children and young people, you can benefit from their **creativity and enthusiasm**. Their fresh minds and views on what is essential to live well can bring diversity and powerful insights for the consideration of not only current but **long-term wellbeing priorities**.

For this purpose, it is important to create opportunities to engage with children and young people that are appropriate and accessible to them. This guide can help to ensure children and young people’s voices are meaningfully included in the visioning process.

In this guidance document, we present different engagement activities that offer an opportunity for children and young people to share their perspectives and understandings, and this way promote their active participation in **creating a collective vision for living well in their communities**. It has been developed based on the processes and experiences of the Love Letham project team, who carried out a Wellbeing Economy Policy Design pilot project on behalf of WEAll Scotland in Letham, Perth from 2021-22.

Visioning overview

AIM of the process

The engagement activities in this plan aim to involve children and young people in the wellbeing visioning process and to understand what matters to them.

Some of the questions that will be answered are:

- What does wellbeing look like for children and young people?
- What are the important things for young people and children in building an economy that delivers wellbeing?
- What areas of life are important for wellbeing now and in the future?

Wellbeing is a subjective concept that varies from person to person according to their context, culture, habits, past experiences, and future goals. The visioning process offers a unique opportunity to hear from children and young people what wellbeing means to them rather than focusing on what adults have defined for them.

WHO to involve

Children and young people from all ages and backgrounds, and their families

- Parents and carers with infants 0-2
- Children aged 2-5
- Younger primary aged children 5-8
- Older primary aged children 9-12
- Young people 12-18
- Parents and carers
- Teachers and youth workers

You also want to ensure that those lesser heard children and young people have a chance to speak, by reaching out to and supporting the participation of:

- Children and young people in care
- Young carers
- Children and young people with disabilities
- Children and young people from equity-deserving groups such as Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities, Indigenous communities, or areas of deprivation

HOW does the guide work

A number of different engagement activities are proposed in this guide. The activities are designed to enable children and young people to explore and express their perspectives and views.

Below are some tips to help you to pick and conduct the right activity:

1. Pick an activity that works best for your children/young people

It is important that children and young people enjoy the process, and that the activity is fun and meaningful for them. The activity chosen should suit the age and interests of the children and young people you will work with.

2. Move beyond traditional consultation

Remember: you are not looking for opinions in the traditional engagement sense such as what children might want in a playground or what they would like to eat for snack. You are looking to understand what matters to children and young people, what they value, what their perspective is and where possible what their hopes are for themselves and their community in the future.

3. There is no right or wrong answer

There's no one right answer, just as there is no wrong answer, and nothing is too silly. The activities are spaces where children and young people have the freedom to say things that are not led by any adult but express their own interpretation.

4. De-personalise if needed

Some children and young people might not feel comfortable talking about themselves or their lives. In these cases, you can use a fictional child/young person – or even a puppet! – to talk about or ask them to create a fictional story. Stories give people a chance to disclose deeply held feelings and beliefs, without exposing themselves directly.

No children or young person has to participate if they don't want to. **It is entirely voluntary.** You should ask for the children and young peoples' permission before starting any activity. Make sure they understand that they can stop at any point even after the activities have started.

OUTCOMES from the activities

The main expected output is the creation of a **shared local wellbeing vision**.

This will be derived from the assessment of the engagement activities' material.

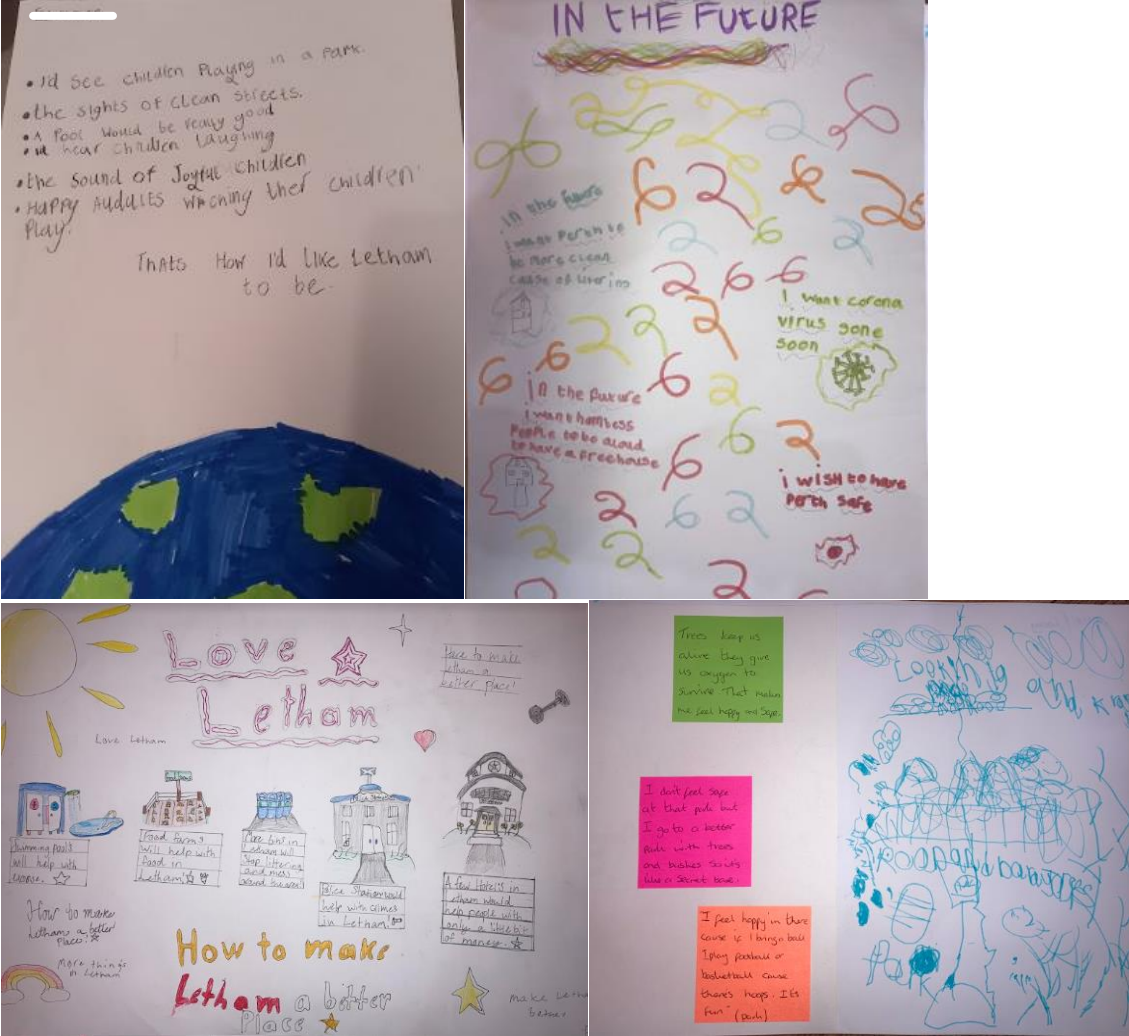
A range of different materials are expected to result from the activities. They all allow children and young people to express their thoughts, ideas, and responses in their own way.

These might be:

- Drawing
- Lego or similar models
- Small play (see activity 5.1)
- Story/poem/letter writing
- Group discussion
- Pictures
- Recording
- Adults' observations and notes

The purpose is that their compilation and analysis will help you to perceive more about children and young people’s understanding of wellbeing, their hopes and how we might get there.

Examples of materials from activities:



Setting things up

You will need to set up a responsible **Commission or similar committed group (ideally composed of local adults and young people)** to carry out the assessment of the material coming from the activities, discuss main topics that have emerged during the process, and synthesise the results.

You will also need to engage with those people and institutions who already have a relationship with the children and young people you aim to involve. They will often be the ones carrying out the engagement activities. **Relationships are key** to ensure a safe and comfortable space for participation.





Tip: You can support the discussion of the volunteer commission by breaking it first into smaller discussion groups, and then coming all together in a plenary. For instance, a debate only with children facilitates their interaction and guarantees they have space to share their point of view.

Documenting

We recommend you to keep the following information for **each group** of children or young people you engage with:

- Number of children/young people who participated
- Ages of the children/young people
- Number of children/young people with additional support needs
- Number of children/young people who are young carers
- Number of children/young people who are care experienced

This information can be used to ensure that there is a wide range of children and young people who are participating so that the vision that comes out of this work includes the views of as many children and young people as possible.

Later on, this can also give you support to do more targeted engagement if there are groups of children and young people who have not been able to participate in the visioning process.

Remember to **document as much as possible**. Write down what children and young people say. Take notes during the engagement activities. Take pictures of the original material produced for future use.

Children and young people's ideas should remain anonymous and no individual personal data such as names or addresses should be collected. The information is only for the use of the volunteer commission in the creation of a shared wellbeing vision.

Engagement activities

Tips for facilitators:

1. There are a range of activities you can choose from so you can find one that best suits the age and interests of the children and young people you work with. The **activities listed below are organised starting from those most suitable for younger children to older young people.**
2. For some children, because of their age or circumstance, imagining the future will be challenging. As a facilitator, you can adapt the exercise and, for example, focus on what their perspective of a good day and a bad day is; what important places, things and people are in their daily life.
3. Be sure to make the children and young people feel comfortable. Explain that notes will be taken and why.
4. It is important that where children and young people produce materials that might be difficult for the volunteer commission to understand later on, you ask children to interpret their picture/story: What is this picture about? What does this mean to you? What's your favourite part of this play?

There are many ways to do number 4. You may want to write what children say on a post-it and add it to the picture/story or allow the child to write their own interpretation. Optionally, it could be a whole group sharing session where everyone says one thing about their picture, song, or story.

Activity 1: Small world observed play

Time: 15-20 minutes

Materials:

- One of the following:
 - Sand tray with people and houses, or
 - Playmobil set, or
 - Anything that allows flexibility in adding people and places
- Camera (if you would like to record the activity)

Facilitators:

- 1 adult to take photos and write down observations after the playtime

Overview

An adult uses a small world set to put together a ‘map’ of some parts of their community and play with children around it, taking them through their day as a timeline and exploring what and which places they like/don’t like.

Set up

1. Create the map. This could be the school/nursery and the child’s home, for example. Don’t make it too set up. Allow the child to help build the map and agree with them on the places of each thing, e.g. “where’s the school?”

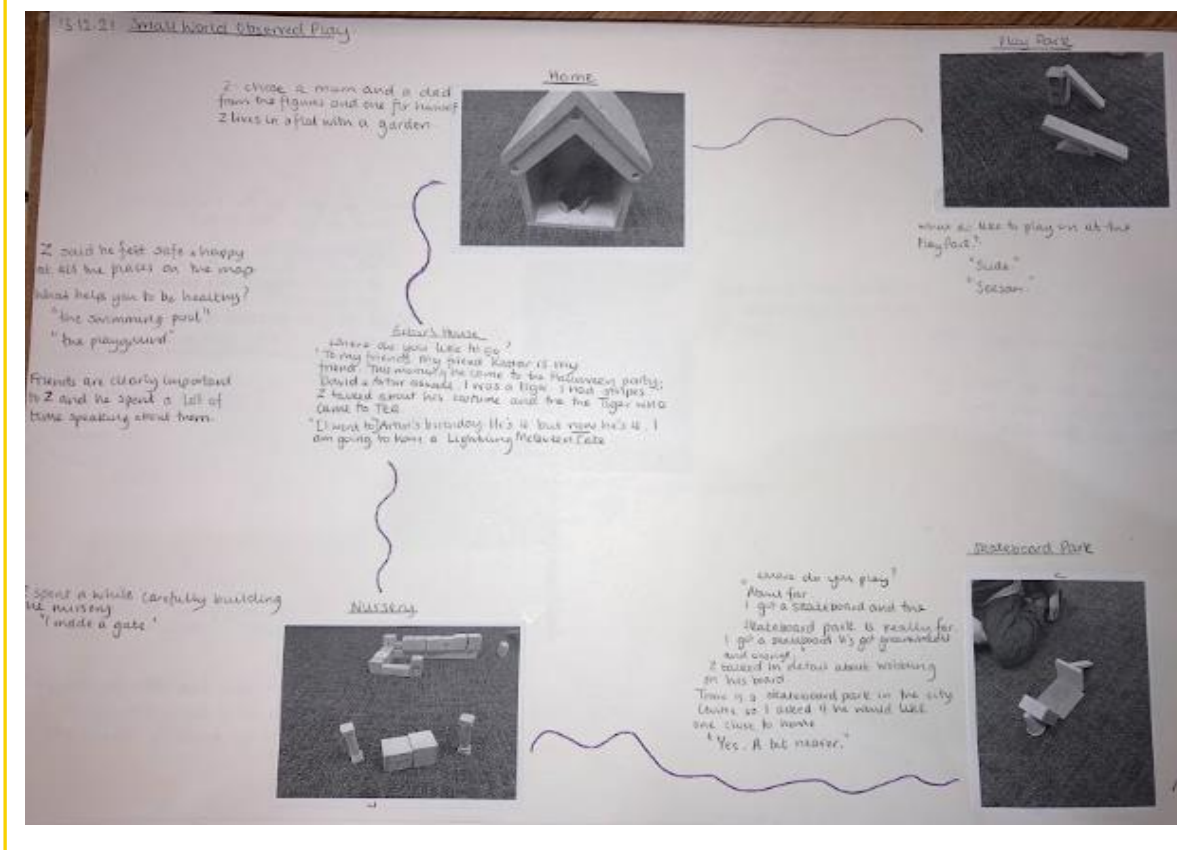
2. Invite the **child to come and play** with them about their home and their school. Invite the child to choose a figure that is themselves and their caregiver. Ask them to choose which is their home. And then take them through their day as a timeline.

3. Afterwards spend some time **writing down what you saw in the play**, what seemed important to the child and how you interpret that – together with your view of the context that makes sense of what the child was saying.

Example

Who	Question / answer
Adult	When you get up in the morning, where do you like to go?
Child	I like to go to the park
Adult	Ah, so you like to go to the park! I wonder what you like to play on at the park?
Child	I like the slide
Adult	Oh, so you like the slide. What else do you like to play on at the park?
Child	I like to play in the sand
Adult	Yes, that's nice! And what makes the park a cool place to be?
Child	I like to play with others and I can run
Adult	Ah, so you like to play together and run! I wonder where you like to go after the park?
Child	To my house
Adult	And when you are back home, how do you feel?
Child	Happy
Adult	Oh, so you feel happy at home. What makes you feel happy at home?
Child	My mom

Illustrative example of adult's observation:



Tips

- Follow what they know of their area and broaden questions by asking what they like, and what's not so good and how it makes them feel.
- We're interested in the places and people that they know, and what matters to them in their daily routine.
- As they introduce new places, get them to choose a house or object to represent each place, and ask them where each place should go in the small world.
- If the child is engaged then you could also ask them where on their map they feel:

- Safe
- Happy
- Healthy
- Well

Activity 2: Magic carpet

Time: 40 minutes

Materials:

- Paper
- Pens / pencils

Infrastructure:

- Space where children/young people can gather to sit on their imaginary magic carpets
- Space for children/young people to draw and write

Facilitators:

- 1 adult to facilitate the session
- 1 adult to take observations and notes

Overview

Children or young people sit on the space in the floor designed to be their imaginary magic carpets and take a ride to the future. This exercise is about imagining the places around the community and how they will/could look like in the future.

Agenda

Time	Label	Description	Some tips
5	Introduction	Present the visioning process and the magic carpet activity	In order to make it easier to visualise, you might want to use an example (see below)
5 -10	Take a ride	Children/young people sit on their magic carpet and take a silent ride to the future	You can either do a guided exercise or allow children/young people to close their eyes and imagine it on their own
5	Pair discussion	Children/young people talk to the one next to them about what they saw on their ride	Focus on places that are the same as now but also on what is different in the future they imagined
5-10	Group discussion	Ask pairs to share their ideas with the whole group	Touch on how the future makes them feel and why

15	Drawing	Ask them to draw a picture of what they've seen on their magic carpet ride	You can be flexible here, and allow children/young people to express their view in different ways; this can be individually, in pairs or even groups
5	Closing	Final remarks. Thank the children/young people for their work	Ask children to show their pictures to the group and describe them

Variations: For older children and young people you can remove the reference to the flying carpet but still include a guided meditation about thinking into the future. You might have a longer group discussion or choose an alternative way of documenting their thoughts if they don't want to draw.

Example

Label	Guiding Line
Get started	We're going to imagine we're taking a magic carpet ride to the future. Sit on the floor on your magic carpet. Close your eyes – we're going to zoom up high and because it's magic, we can fly into the future.
Take a ride	In the future you are still you, you're safe on your magic carpet, but you're visiting this place in the future. You're up so high that you're above the clouds and then you swoop down, and you can look down and see the school, the playground, the shops, the houses.
Take a look at the future	You're flying above your way from school to home. Looks like the children have just come out from school at lunchtime, it must be the last day of term. Fly your magic carpet, where can you see the children going? What are their favourite places to go? How are they getting about? Which ones are walking, is anyone on bikes, is anyone getting the bus? Where do they like to go and who else is there? How do they feel about where they live?
Imagine the future	Because this is the future, maybe some things have changed in comparison to today. Maybe the children have got different places to play. What do you think you might see if you swooped down and saw some children? Now what do you think is different in what you see? Are there new buildings, new parks, new places? Are there new fun things to do? What can they do now that they've got time after school? Are there some places that have stayed the same – which places are still there in future? Who's with the children? What adults are around them?
Open your eyes	Now open your eyes. We're going to talk about what you're seeing on your magic carpet ride. Talk to your talking partner next to you

Activity 3: Photowalk

Time: 1 hour and 15 minutes

- This can be split across 2 or 3 sessions

Materials:

- Cameras
 - 1 per pair of children/young people
 - In case of less cameras available you can also divide them in larger groups
- Flip chart paper
 - 4 sheets taped together to draw a map
- Post it notes / postcards and blue tax
- Pens

Infrastructure:

- If possible, a printer to print the photos taken
 - If there is no printer available, a big screen to display them

Facilitators:

- 1 adult to facilitate the session and led the discussion
- 1 adult to take observations and notes

Overview

Small groups of children/young people walking around their community taking photos of places that are important to them – these might be places they feel safe, healthy, happy, or included.

This is best done in pairs or threes so they have a chance to talk to one another about what is important to take photos of.

Following the walk, you'd need time back inside to view photos and talk about them.

As a group, you will put together a map with the important places captured.

Agenda

Time	Label	Description	Some tips
5	Introduction	Present the visioning process and the photo walk activity	Remind the children/young people that they need to explain what they are doing and ask permission first, when taking pictures of other people
30	Walk around	Taking a walk outside with cameras	Let the children/young people guide the walk to important places Chat as you go along about what's important to show other people about the places round here.
15	Choosing photos	Go back inside. Ask the children/young people in pairs to choose 5 photos they want to share.	Start by deleting photos that are duplicates; then choose a few photos each that you'd want to show everyone else and think why you've chosen that photo
25	Map making	Pairs show photos to the whole group, and talk about why these pictures are important and their meaning. As a group, put together a map of the important places	Create the map using large sheets of paper to stick the chosen photos of their relative spots As the group discusses the map, one adult writes down the comments the children/young people say on post-its and stick them next to the photos, as captions for the map. Older children/young people might do this themselves
5	Closing	Final remarks. Thank the children/young people for their work	You could also hang up the map in a public area of the school/community centre and ask other people what they think about it, and what they would add to it

Variations: If taking children and young people out and about in their community is not an option you can still run the activity. Ask children and young people to use post its or small postcards to write or draw what is important to them from memory. They could look at real maps to help them.

Activity 4: Small group discussion

Time: 15 minutes to 1 hour

- Depending on participants

Materials:

- Device for recording discussions
 - Mobile phones usually have good recording apps

Infrastructure:

- Space to accommodate all participants
 - To make sure everyone has opportunity to speak, keep the group to 8 or less people

Facilitators:

- 1 adult to ask questions and manage the discussion
- 1 adult to take notes or engage with younger children

Overview

This activity is like a traditional focus group but can be made longer or shorter depending on how much time is available. It can be used with one family or a few families with young children, a group of parents, children or young people. Depending on the group, you will follow different instructions.

Explain that the recording is only to help the adult remember what's been said, and will be deleted once the words have been written down. The written words will be treated anonymously: people won't use your real name. The conversation will only be used for the wellbeing visioning process.

Agenda

Label	Description
Introduction & explanation of activity	We want to understand what matters to children/young people in their day to day lives, so that local adults and children can discuss how to enhance wellbeing in their community
Discussion with families	See option A
Discussion with children/young people	See option B

A – discussion with families

Turn on the recording, set the children up and settle the adults!

For each question, ask the question to adults and also repeat them addressing each child present.

It's fine if they don't want to answer, just move to the next one.

Some guiding questions:

What does your baby/your child like doing when you are out and about around here?

What do you like doing when you are out and about after school?

What does your child not like doing when you are out and about?

Where is your child's favourite place to go? Why?

What place around here would your child avoid? Why?

What's a good day for your child like?

What's a bad day for your child like?

What does wellbeing look like for children/young people in the community?

What might young people think/feel/do?

What does your child need to live well in this community?



Tip: provide a space in the centre of the group for children to play, with age-appropriate toys such as a sandbox, or other static but engaging equipment. The aim is to keep the children in the centre so they can join in the conversation where they want to and at the same time allow adults to carry the conversation

B – discussion with children/young people

Ask children/young people to interview each other. Turn on the recording, and give them some guiding questions to facilitate the activity.

Some guiding questions

What do children and young people need to live well in your community?

What makes you or other children/young people feel happy in your community (people, places, or things)? What would make you feel happy?

What makes you or other children/young people feel safe in your community? What would make you feel safe?

What makes you or other children/young people healthy in your community? What would make you healthy?

What makes you or other children/young people feel part of and included in your community? What would make you feel included?



Tip: You could share the questions beforehand with the group or allow for some brainstorming time in the beginning. This gives children and young people some time to think about their responses.