

Work, Learning and Wellbeing

A Wellbeing Public Dialogue



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**What Works
Wellbeing**



Cabinet Office

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Executive summary

The public dialogue

This report is one of a series of four reports resultant from a public wellbeing dialogue commissioned by the [What Works Centre for Wellbeing](#) (the Centre) from [Hopkins Van Mil: Creating Connections Ltd](#) (HVM) supported by Sciencewise, Public Health England, the Cabinet Office and the founding stakeholders of the What Works Centre for Wellbeing. This document reports on the findings of the work, learning and wellbeing dialogue strand. The other two strands focused on sport, culture and wellbeing and community wellbeing. In addition HVM has written a fourth report in which the emerging cross-cutting themes from the three dialogue strands are drawn out. This report can be read independently or in conjunction with the other three reports. Each of the wellbeing dialogue reports are supported by a separate Technical Appendix in which all the materials, resources and presentations used for each dialogue are set out. These are key tools for those who wish to understand how the dialogue was planned and executed. Each dialogue followed a similar pattern of a 2 round process with round 2 held four weeks after round 1 to allow time for reflection by participants and stakeholders.

The aims of the wellbeing public dialogue were to:

- Increase the effectiveness of the What Works Centre for Wellbeing by ensuring its design and policy priorities are informed by members of the public.
- Ensure that the knowledge mobilisation strategy for the Centre is informed by how public decision-makers want to receive and use evidence.
- Significantly increase the likelihood of the Centre's success in using effective evidence formats and channels that will be used by the public and thus increasing the percentage of people accessing the Centre's advice and guidance.

The work, learning and wellbeing dialogue strand

The work, learning and wellbeing dialogue strand aimed to answer the question: "How can work and adult learning contribute to wellbeing?"

Participants were recruited using a detailed specification to ensure that they were in line with a broad demographic and had a range of interest in and experience of work, learning and wellbeing. 17 participants were recruited in Cardiff and surrounding rural areas, all of whom were retained for both sessions. 20 people were recruited from Falkirk and surrounding rural areas for sessions at the Falkirk Wheel, 15 of whom were retained for both rounds. An expert team of facilitators guided participants in each location, using a range of reflective dialogic methodologies (see Technical Appendix pp. 10-23 and pp. 31-47) to draw out rich findings.

The following main points were made during the dialogue:

Components of a good job / learning experience and their impact on an individual's wellbeing

Participants in the dialogue identified a number of components which together constitute a good job or learning experience: appropriate pay; job security; relevance to the individual; camaraderie; effective management and communications; opportunities to progress; recognition and positive feedback; flexibility; and a good environment. The wellbeing impacts of having these components in place were perceived to range from increased feelings of self-worth and belonging; to a sense of satisfaction, agency and opportunity; improvements in life outside work; a reduction in stress and anxiety; and higher levels of enjoyment, happiness and fulfilment.

Similarities and differences between wellbeing at work and in learning

The dialogue demonstrated that participants felt that work and learning share many common themes when considered in relation to quality of life and wellbeing. A good environment is relevant to both as is flexibility, the opportunity to advance, a positive environment, recognition of individual needs and strengths, satisfaction, enjoyment, fun, getting on with colleagues and other learners and having a good manager and/ or tutor who communicates well. Work and learning differ when it comes to financial gain, people's attitude to knowledge and the experience of a sense of belonging.

Learning inside/ outside of work delivered on/ off-line

The majority of participants recognised that learning is a good thing to do, whether inside or outside work. Learning inside work was often associated with something compulsory whereas learning outside work was seen as something people do out of choice. The potential wellbeing benefits of learning inside work identified by participants included a more positive outlook on life with a sense of opportunity and increased self-confidence as the key components of personal growth. The wellbeing experienced from learning outside work was mainly associated with the positive effects of having time away from the daily grind and general enjoyment and inspiration. Most participants reported a preference for face-to-face over online learning, although those with young families and a less sociable nature said that online learning fitted better with their requirements. Interaction with the tutor and other learners as well as instant feedback were mentioned as the main benefits of face-to-face learning.

Emerging from difficult times at work/ in learning

Discussions about negative events at work and whilst learning demonstrated that these often happen at transition points in people's lives when they move out of their comfort zone (i.e. from full time education to a first job, returning to work from maternity leave, changing jobs, retiring). What holds people back from making change in difficult times in learning and work ranges from a lack of time, headspace, energy and confidence as a result of busy lives or stressful circumstances. Some participants cited a lack of money and not being able to find the right training. A positive mental attitude, friends and family, adequate support, a positive team spirit and management were viewed as the main mechanisms for increased resilience.

Who should be doing what to improve wellbeing at work/ in learning?

Improving the wellbeing of workers and learners requires the involvement of a range of actors. Participants believed there is scope for individuals to take responsibility for their own actions and wellbeing. This includes being fit and healthy, working reasonable rather than long hours and communicating their needs. Friends and family were seen as essential, as were supportive team members and employers who value their staff, understand their needs, see them as individuals and encourage them to advance. There was a view that learning providers need to better promote opportunities and ensure a broad provision is in place tailored to the needs of today's workplace. Participants saw a role for local, regional and national government in the promotion and funding of lifelong learning for all. They expressed the hope that the What Works Centre for Wellbeing will take the learning from the dialogues to policy makers and translate the benefits of improved employee wellbeing to employers with a focus on low cost measures.

Concluding remarks

The four work, learning and wellbeing dialogue sessions in two locations demonstrated clearly that for work and learning to contribute to wellbeing investment needs to be made by individuals, employers, learning providers and society at large at a local and national level.

Significant factors that enhance wellbeing at work and whilst learning are a good environment; fair policies for remuneration; and occasions to learn. For both work and learning, opportunities to advance are important for wellbeing; as are satisfaction, fun and enjoyment from work or learning experiences. It is equally important to wellbeing that jobs are relevant to individual needs and skills and that learning undertaken in or outside work is relevant to the skills that the learner wishes to acquire.

Participants felt that their wellbeing whilst at work or whilst learning was highly dependent on the quality

of managers and tutors running training courses.

Participants in the dialogue were clear that there is an opportunity for the What Works Centre for Wellbeing to communicate the dialogue findings to employers, learning providers and policy makers so that:

- Employers recognise the importance of outwardly valuing the skills and experience of their staff and their significance to the workforce as human beings, not robots
- Local adult learning provision is relevant for the local population and caters for a range of learning styles
- Policy makers encourage people to continue to learn throughout their lives, providing appropriate support when the barriers outweigh the benefits in participating in learning.

Participants appreciated the What Works Centre's approach to informing their future strategy by listening to the voice of the public. They expressed the hope that this dialogue and ongoing conversations with the public would inform the development of inexpensive measures to inform the work/ learning wellbeing policies of the future.

All participants were encouraged by the dialogic approach and expressed the hope that the Centre will take the findings resultant from their fruitful discussions further as they develop their work programmes.

1. Work, learning and wellbeing: introduction



The following is an introduction to the dialogue on work, learning and wellbeing. Sessions were held in Cardiff and Falkirk on 5 September and 3 October 2015 using the two round / four week cycle described in section 1.

1.1 Scope of the overarching wellbeing dialogue

The overarching dialogue builds on the work of the [2014 public dialogue](#) on wellbeing commissioned from the New Economics Foundation by the Cabinet Office, supported by Sciencewise¹, designed and delivered by HVM. This subsequent dialogue was also co-funded by Sciencewise with support from Public Health England and the Cabinet Office.

The aim of the dialogue commissioned by the What Works Centre for Wellbeing was to:

- Increase the effectiveness of the Centre by ensuring its design and policy priorities are informed by members of the public who:
 - Will be affected by decision making resulting from guidance issued by the Centre;
 - Are potential users of guidance from the Centre.
- Ensure that the knowledge mobilisation strategy for the Centre is informed by how public decision-makers want to receive and use evidence.
- Significantly increase the likelihood of Centre's success in terms of:

Producing evidence in formats and through channels that are most likely to be accepted and used by the public;

Increase the % of people accessing and acting upon advice and guidance issued by the Centre.

This, and each of the other dialogue reports, can be read independently from each other or as a suite of information on all the dialogue findings. A cross-cutting themes report has also been written to highlight recurring points made across the three policy areas. Each report is intended to inform the work of the academic teams commissioned by the What Works Centre for Wellbeing to inform their voice of the user reports ensuring that the views of the public are taken into account as the What Works Centre for Wellbeing develops its work programmes.

1.2 Public dialogue partners

The following organisations worked together on the overarching public dialogue.

The [What Works Centre for Wellbeing](#) aims to improve the wellbeing of the people in the UK by bringing together the best evidence, making it easy to use and easier to make. A new organisation, launched by the Government in October 2014, the What Works Centre for Wellbeing is dedicated to understanding what national and local governments, along with voluntary and business partners, can do to increase wellbeing. The Centre is supported by 16 founding partners², which are, in aggregate, funding a research programme of £3.5m over the next three years beginning from June 2015.

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The Sciencewise programme is funded by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). Sciencewise aims to improve policy-making involving science and emerging technology across government

¹ [Sciencewise](#) is the UK's national centre for public dialogue in policy making involving science and technology issues

² The founding partners are: Economic and Social Research Council, Public Health England, Department for Business Innovation and Skills, Department for Communities and Local Government, Department for Work and Pensions, Department for Health, Cabinet Office, Arts and Humanities Research Council, Food Standards Agency, Local Government Association, Office for National Statistics, Big Lottery Fund, DCMS, Arts Council England, English Heritage, Heritage Lottery Fund.

by increasing the effectiveness with which public dialogue is used, and encouraging its wider use where appropriate to ensure public views are considered as part of the evidence base.

The Cabinet Office supports the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, and ensures the effective running of government. It is also the corporate headquarters for government, in partnership with HM Treasury, and takes the lead in certain critical policy areas such as national security and government efficiency, transparency and accountability.

Hopkins Van Mil: Creating Connections Ltd (HVM) is about engagement to gain insight. As expert dialogue facilitators the team creates safe, neutral and productive spaces in which to access people's views on the content that matters to them. HVM bridges the gap between policy and decision-making and the views of communities and members of the public for whom policies and decisions are made.



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The wellbeing public dialogue was supported by an **Oversight Group** comprising the following members:



- Robin Clarke*, Dialogue and Engagement Specialist, Sciencewise
- Alison Comley, Strategic Director for Neighbourhoods, Bristol City Council
- Professor Kevin Daniels, Evidence Programme Lead (Work and Learning), Professor Organisational Behaviour, University of East Anglia
- Balgit Gill, Department for Communities and Local Government
- Nancy Hey, Director, What Works Centre for Wellbeing
- Dr. Susan Hodgett, Senior Lecturer in the School of Sociology and Applied Social Studies and Deputy Chair of the Research Excellence Framework, University of Ulster
- Alison Humberstone, Mental Health Strategy, Department for Work and Pensions
- Nina James*, Policy Adviser, Wellbeing Programme, Analysis & Insight, The Cabinet Office
- Professor Peter Kinderman, Evidence Programme Lead (Community), Professor of Clinical Psychology, University of Liverpool
- Dr. Paul Litchfield (Oversight Group Chair), Chief Medical Officer and Director of Wellbeing, Inclusion, Safety & Health for BT Group
- Simon McKee, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
- Catherine Mottram, Principal Research Officer, Department for Culture, Media and Sport
- Andrew Mowlah, Senior Manager, Policy and Research, Arts Council England
- Catherine Parker, Health & Wellbeing Programme Lead, North East Public Health England Centre, Public Health England
- Lucy Smith, Public Health Manager, Mental Wellbeing, Lambeth and Southwark Council
- Dr. Dawn Snape*, Head of Evidence and Analysis, What Works Centre for Wellbeing
- Andrew Spiers, Strategic Lead Research, Evaluation and Analysis, Sport England
- Jude Stansfield, National Adviser, Public Mental Health, Public Health England
- Francis Stuart, Research and Policy Adviser, Oxfam Scotland
- Andrew Taylor, Knowledge Manager, BIG Lottery Fund
- Dr. Richard Thurston, Deputy Chief Social Research Officer, Welsh Government
- Dave Wall, Director, Department of Social Development, Northern Ireland Executive
- Jennifer Wallace, Head of Policy, Carnegie UK Trust
- Professor Christine Victor, Evidence Programme Lead (Culture and Sport), Professor of Public Health / Vice-Dean Research, Brunel University London

*Wellbeing Public Dialogue Project Team

The **sub-committee supporting the work of the work, learning and wellbeing strand** of the public dialogue comprised the following members:

- Dan Bristow, Public Policy Institute for Wales
- Professor Kevin Daniels, Professor of Organisational Behaviour Work, University of East Anglia & What Works Centre for Wellbeing Evidence Programme Lead for Work, Learning and Wellbeing
- Gavin Gray, Head of Promoting Fair Work, Scottish Government
- Sam Haskell, Health and Work Policy team, Public Health England
- Alison Humberstone, Department for Work and Pensions
- Stuart King, Researcher, Fair Work, Scottish Government
- Fiona McFarlane, Human Resources Team Leader, Falkirk Council
- Simon McKee, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
- Tom Smith, Department for Work and Pensions
- Francis Stuart, Policy and Research Adviser, Oxfam Scotland
- Dr. Richard Thurston, Deputy Chief Social Research Officer, Welsh Government
- Jennifer Wallace, Head of Policy, Carnegie UK Trust

The **HVM delivery team** for the programme was as follows:

- Anita van Mil, Project Director and Lead Facilitator
- Henrietta Hopkins, Lead Designer and Lead Facilitator
- Hally Ingram, Facilitator
- Mike King, Facilitator
- Jemima Foxtrot, Data Analyst and Event Administrator
- Mamun Madaser, Data Analyst and Event Administrator
- Tisna Westerhof, Event Administrator



The following is an introduction to the dialogue on work, learning and wellbeing.

1.3 Scope of the work, learning and wellbeing dialogue

The following is an introduction to the dialogue on work, learning and wellbeing. Sessions were held in Cardiff and Falkirk on 5 September and 3 October 2015 using the two round / four week cycle described in section 1.

This part of the What Works Centre for Wellbeing's dialogue project aimed to answer the question:

How can work and adult learning contribute to wellbeing?

In round 1 participants were given the opportunity to explore the relationship between work, learning and wellbeing very broadly (see Technical Annex p. 10-23 and p. 31-47). They thought about how they felt about the role work and learning have to play in improving their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of others and considered the following questions:

- What makes a good job?
- What makes a good learning experience?
- What is the impact on wellbeing when those elements are / aren't in place?
- What would you recommend to employers about work, learning and wellbeing?

Work was considered in its widest sense:

- Paid / unpaid

- Full-time/ part-time
- Employed/ self-employed/ volunteering

And any learning with a structure:

- In work/ outside work
- Towards a qualification
- To develop new skills
- For fun
- Me-time

The context for the discussions in round 1 was provided by two videos, one in which a range of stakeholders explained their interest in work, learning and wellbeing and one in which Nancy Hey, the Director of the What Works Centre for Wellbeing introduced the Centre (see Technical Appendix p. 25 to access both films). In Cardiff Huw Morris, Welsh Government, provided an overview of relevant work and learning policies for Wales. This was supplemented by a presentation by Cerys Furlong from the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education who explained why lifelong learning is a key policy area in Wales (Technical Appendix p. 28). In Falkirk the HVM Team presented an overview of work and learning policies in Scotland prepared by Gavin Gray, Head of Promoting Fair Work, Scottish Government (Technical Appendix p. 26).

In round 2 contextual information was provided initially by reminding participants of what they said in round 1 in a set of *Headline Findings* slides prepared and presented by HVM (Technical Appendix p. 48). In each location case studies were used to provide a local context for work and learning projects with life changing impacts:

Cardiff

- [The Inspire Awards](#), case studies about inspirational progress in learning which has had a positive impact on wellbeing - Kay Smith, NIACE (Technical Appendix p. 54)
- [Using skills well in the workplace](#), a summary of the Welsh Government's work in the construction and creative media sectors to identify where and why skills were not being used constructively and to identify solutions - Speaker: James Carey, Welsh Government; Presentation prepared by Amanda Madeley, Senior Manager, Skills Policy & Youth Engagement Unit, Department for Education and Skills (DfES), Welsh Government (Technical Appendix p. 53)

Falkirk

- [Galgael](#), highlighting their work to improve the wellbeing of men who have experienced mental health/ isolation through learning to work with wood. (Technical Appendix p. 54)
- [Adnams](#), summarising Adnam's focus on the physical and mental health of its workforce and the impacts this has on employee wellbeing and a positive customer experience, - Case study prepared by Sadie Lofthouse, Head of Human Resources, Adnams plc (Technical Appendix p. 51)

The discussions following the presentations focussed on the barriers people experience in gaining wellbeing benefits from work and learning as well as the opportunities they identified for increased wellbeing. Participants considered what their life experiences say about how to support those who wish to gain benefits from work and learning but have not been able to do so. They also discussed what individuals, employers, the third sector, other organisations, local authorities and governments can do locally, regionally, nationally to ensure people benefit from the potential wellbeing effects of work and learning.

At the end of each dialogue session policymakers and experts in the room reflected on what they had heard and learned from the participants. Fiona McFarlane, Falkirk Council; Francis Stuart of Oxfam Scotland and Mark Bryan from the What Works Centre for Wellbeing work and learning evidence team all gave their reflections in round 1 of the session held in Falkirk; as did Professor Huw Morris, Director of Skills, Higher Education and Life Long Learning for the Welsh Government at the Cardiff session. Dawn Snape, Head of Evidence at the What Works Centre for Wellbeing gave feedback at the final session in Cardiff. Gavin Gray of the Scottish Government reflected back in round 2 in Falkirk.

1.4 Dialogue methodology

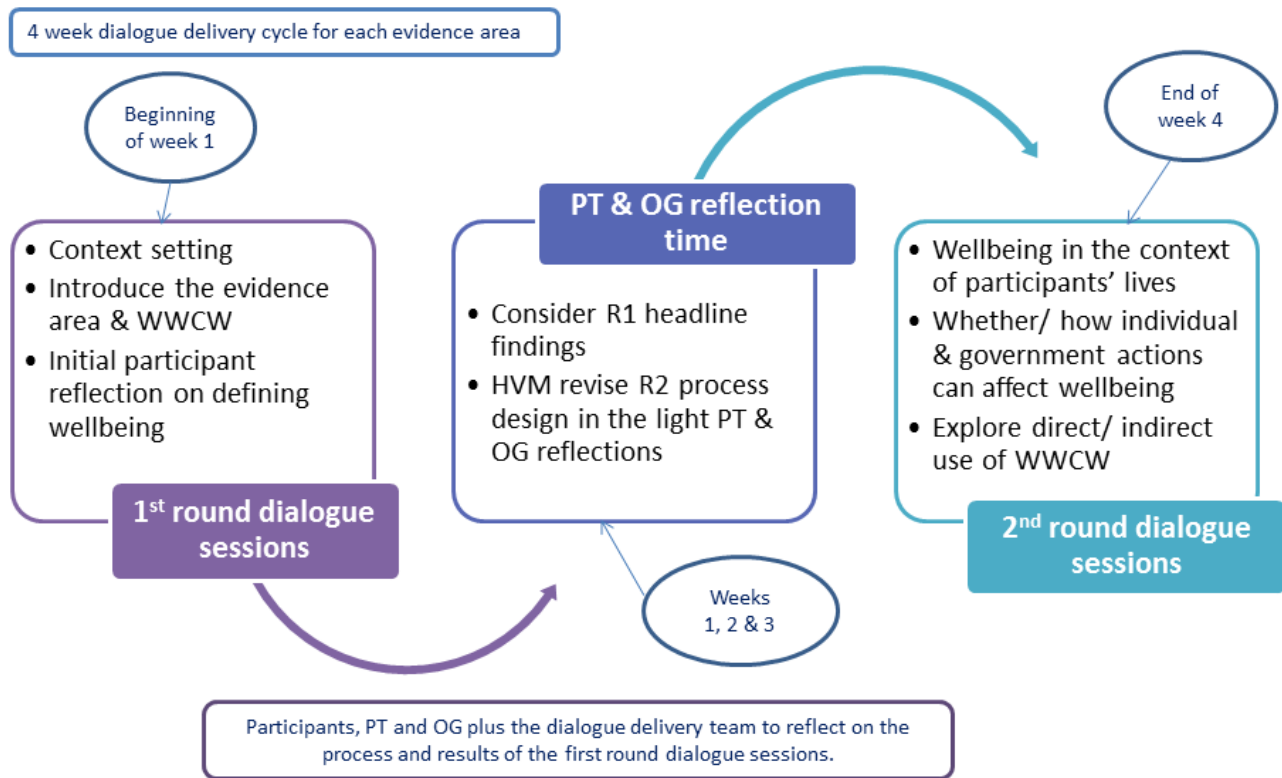
The wellbeing public dialogues were devised using a tailored process based on that initially tested by HVM as the dialogue contractor for the *Embedding Wellbeing Science in Policy Making*³; a public dialogue commissioned by the New Economics Foundation (NEF)/ the Cabinet Office and supported by Sciencewise in 2014. The 2014 dialogues demonstrated that a two round process was effective in considering policies through a wellbeing lens. HVM dialogues follow the best practice set out in the Sciencewise Guiding Principles⁴ and as such consider a two round process to be important. It gives time for all those involved on the dialogue to have a space for reflection enabling richer findings from discussions. It enables trust to be built so that an effective interaction can take place between dialogue participants, policy makers and stakeholders around the wellbeing policy context. In addition this structure allows for:

- Momentum to build in the discussions from the first round focused on context to the second focused on in-depth consideration of wellbeing in response to participants' lived experience
- Time for the Centre and other stakeholders to reflect on participant views in between each round
- Flexibility in workshop design to allow new thinking to emerge in between rounds and for the round 2 process plan to be amended in the light of this period of reflection.

For each of the dialogue workshops participants were allocated to one of two small discussion groups with up to 10 people in each. They stayed with the same group, and the same dedicated HVM facilitator, for rounds 1 and 2. This meant that in each round participants were able to reflect on the issues as individuals, within a smaller group or as a whole group. Sometimes participants discussed the issues with policy or topic specialists where they needed more clarification on a particular aspect of the dialogue, but for the most part the latter were present as observers. The same lead facilitator managed the process for all the dialogue sessions in each location. Consistency in small and whole group facilitation is important to the process. It enables a sense of trust to build up between participants and the facilitation team so that the discussions can tap the rich experience of those taking part. It also means that retention of participants between rounds 1 and 2 is higher than it otherwise might be. The discussions were guided by facilitators using a detailed process plan devised by HVM in collaboration with the Oversight Group and Sub-Committees for each policy area. The dialogue process plans can be found on page 10 and page 31 of the Technical Appendix which supports this report. The flowchart on the next page describes the four week dialogue delivery cycle and explains how the process plans evolved during the design development with input from the sub-committee throughout:

³ Hopkins Van Mil: Creating Connections Ltd – Dialogue Findings report (November 2014) http://bit.ly/HVM_NEF_WellbeingFindings and Technical Appendices (November 2014) http://bit.ly/HVM_NEFTechnicalAppendix

⁴ [http://www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/guiding-principles/Facilitating engagement to gain insight](http://www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/guiding-principles/Facilitating%20engagement%20to%20gain%20insight)
www.hopkinsvanmil.co.uk



At the sessions HVM facilitators, based on their experience and training, knew when to probe further; when to prompt with additional questions; when to challenge the first response given by participants and when to allow the conversation to take its natural course if this was likely to make a richer contribution to the dialogue. The Lead Facilitator managed the session overall, kept everyone to time and dealt with any specific challenges that arose.

The design for the work and learning dialogue was intended to draw out the lived experience of participants. As such it was agreed by the sub-committee that it was unnecessary to provide any wellbeing science pre-materials in advance of the session. Participants were simply emailed a ground rules document, called *Points to help the discussion* and a programme. These documents gave those involved an understanding of what would happen at the session and how it would be run. The *Points to help the discussion* are included on page 7 of the Technical Appendix. The programme for round 1 are on page 9 and for round 2 on page 30.

At the sessions exercises to prompt rich discussion included thinking about the elements of a good job and a good learning experience whether in or outside work. Participants discussed the impact of work and learning experiences on their wellbeing by thinking about them from their first jobs to their current life stage. They created images of their ideal work situation and considered both work and learning by using a hierarchy approach from basic needs to fulfilment.

1.5 Recruitment

Acumen Fieldwork recruited 19 participants in Cardiff and surrounding areas, 17 of whom were retained for the second session. In Falkirk and surrounding areas a sample of 15 was achieved. All participants were retained for round 2. The full recruitment specification is included in the Technical Appendix.

Those who took part in the dialogue met all recruitment criteria. The criteria, set with advice from the work, learning and wellbeing sub-committee of the Oversight Group, specified that the group should be 50% male and female with a good age distribution from 18 year olds to 66 plus. Both locations had participants from a broad range of life stages, from students, young professionals, those raising young children to empty nesters and those who are retired. In addition there was a balance between those living in deprived and affluent areas, those in fulltime/ part-time employment, the self-employed and unemployed.



Participants were asked one test question to ensure coverage from a broad range of learning experiences and on this basis a spread of respondents were recruited as follows:

- 35% would answer 4/5 to the test question
- 35% would answer 1/2 to the test question
- 30% would answer 3 to the test question

The test question was as follows:

To what extent have you taken part in adult learning⁵ in the last 5 years on a scale of 1-5 where 1= I have never taken part in adult learning 5= I regularly take part in adult learning?

This ensured a balance of participants with high and low levels of activity and interest in adult learning.

⁵ Acumen was instructed to take adult learning in its broadest sense from non-formal learning such as evening classes, recreational learning in all its forms and all those activities from which people might acquire skills and knowledge but not a formal qualification.

2. Components of a good job / learning experience and their impact on an individual's wellbeing

Participants in the dialogue identified a number of components which together constitute a good job or learning experience: appropriate pay; job security; relevance to the individual; camaraderie; effective management and communications; opportunities to progress; recognition and positive feedback; flexibility; and a good environment. The wellbeing impacts of having these components in place were perceived to range from increased feelings of self-worth and belonging; a sense of satisfaction, agency and opportunity; improvements in life outside work; a reduction in stress and anxiety; and higher levels of enjoyment, happiness and fulfilment.

In round one of the dialogue on work, learning and wellbeing participants were asked to consider what makes a good job and a good learning experience. A summary of the headline findings is included at figure 1.

Initial thoughts were prioritised and subsequently examined more closely in session in which small groups moved around the plenary area to reflect on each of the components. Each group spent time considering

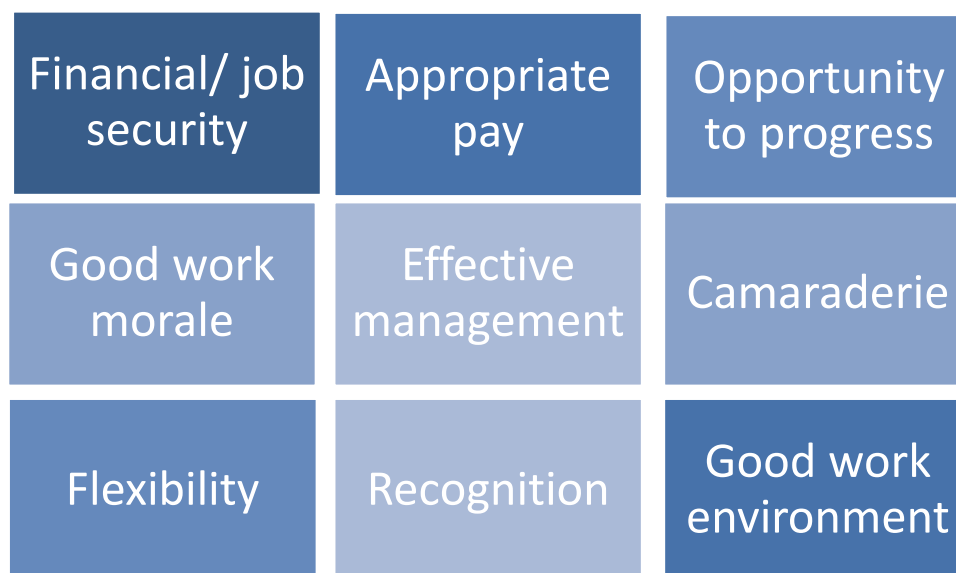


Figure 1: Summary of good job/ learning experience factors

how the key elements of a good job/learning experience would help them achieve what is important in their lives and how not having these elements in place would hold them back from achieving what's important in their lives. The emerging themes were taken forward in an exercise which encouraged participants to draw pictures or describe in words what an ideal working/ learning situation would look like for them.

In this section we describe the views of participants on the key elements of a good job and learning experience.

2.1 Appropriate pay

For all participants earning a living is an important reason for going to work. However, even though for some it is the main reason, most participants said they would much rather have a job they enjoy and earn a little less than being in a job which doesn't meet their interests. In both locations participants said that job satisfaction is better for wellbeing than high wages,

I would hate to be miserable and be very well paid rather than be comfortable and happy. I think it is a balance. It is certainly why I go to work, but I wouldn't take a job that I absolutely hated just because at the end of the week I had lots of money in the bank. – Falkirk

I need to enjoy my job. Doing something that I love even if the reward is not as great financially. If I'm doing something I love that is what it is all about. – Cardiff

A similar trade-off is made in favour of a better work-life balance. A male participant in his forties who had moved from a job that required long hours and a lot of travelling to a local job for less money said,

I changed jobs to spend more time with my family, my girlfriend got pregnant. I was working all over the UK. I wanted to spend more time at home with her. I had to take a hefty pay cut but it was a positive experience because I got to see my first child being born. – Cardiff

He spoke about the long lasting effect this had on his wellbeing as it had enabled him to see his family growing up,

It is still with me now, because I'm not working far from home and every evening I get to see my kids go up [to bed] which wouldn't have been possible if I'd been with my last job. I'd have been missing out on a lot of things. – Cardiff

He spoke about how he had managed to use some of the time he had gained on getting more qualifications, which enabled him to get back to the same level of pay he used to have, thus demonstrating that prioritising wellbeing over pay had been a positive decision in all respects,

In 2009 I got an apprenticeship and I did a NVQ2 and 3 in engineering. This led me to get a better job and I basically got back to the sort of wages I was getting when I left in 2007 when I took a pay cut. – Cardiff

There was a strong view expressed in both locations that appropriate remuneration is about *having enough* to meet an individual's needs, not necessarily about having a high income,

Although a good salary means different things to different people, it has to meet your needs otherwise it must be a horror to go somewhere and work all day and knowing that it's not even going to meet your needs. I don't mean making lots of money, but enough to survive on. - Falkirk

A participant in Cardiff said he would have happily stayed in a low paid job he loved had it be enough to survive on as his life progressed,

My first job was working with furniture, I loved it. It was brilliant for five years. And then my life changed to get married and move on. I couldn't stay with the job because I couldn't survive on the wages...I would still be there if the money was good enough for me to survive as I really enjoyed working there. - Falkirk

In Cardiff one of the groups discussed that for them appropriate remuneration is about more than an appropriate salary. They said it's about being offered other benefits that can make life better,

I wouldn't say financial reward, it could be access to healthcare, it could be any ways of making your life better. - Cardiff

They cited an insurance company in Cardiff which offers an attractive staff benefits package in addition to a salary,

There is one company in Cardiff, they give a lot of rewards to their staff. They have a lot of...outings, free gym for them. I think it's all those things which make people quite happy. - Cardiff

Across the two locations participants agreed that having an appropriate salary is *good for a sense of wellbeing*. It *enables people to provide for their family comfortably with room for treats*,

If you are financially secure you can afford to treat yourself. That can be better for your wellbeing. - Cardiff

Participants expressed the view that an appropriate salary *reduces stress*,
I think psychologically it's a thing. You have less worries. If you have to watch every penny the worry and the stress of that is very difficult. It can affect your wellbeing and your health. - Cardiff

And makes people *more motivated to do their job well*,
It can help you achieve by giving you a reason to be promoted, if you want to achieve at work. It is encouragement, it's a reason to progress and do better in your job. – Cardiff

Someone in Falkirk said that appropriate pay motivates people to do better at work because it *improves their life outside work*,
This improves your life. That part of your life when you are not working, the important part of me is better. Therefore you will be motivated to do the work part. – Falkirk

It provides a *sense of agency and autonomy*,
You can make your own decisions. - Cardiff

There was also view that receiving a decent salary makes people *feel appreciated*. As someone in Cardiff said,
Financial rewards are the most quantifiable way of realising how much you are appreciated. - Cardiff

Participants with experience of living on the minimum wage spoke about how financial struggle often leads to low wellbeing,
It can put you in a state of panic if you haven't got enough money to pay your mortgage. - Cardiff

They also referred to the impact that low wages can have on their own and other people's health and wellbeing,
Your health will suffer as well, your physical and mental health. It does go wider than just the individual. It could be your parents if they worry to death because you've got nowhere to live or whatever. Or your children. [There is an impact on] the wider family, it is not just the individual that is affected. - Cardiff

Everybody sacrifices things. That means your kids suffer and that's really difficult. - Falkirk

Ultimately it can lead to depression or as someone in Cardiff said,
You would be in a negative mind set as well. – Cardiff

For many inadequate remuneration is a reflection of what an employer feels the individual employee is worth, with a subsequent knock-on effect on peoples' confidence,

A financial reward is like someone else telling you how much your work is worth. If you have a minimum wage job that is someone telling you that you are worth the minimum. This could be a spur to do better but it could also make you think you don't deserve more. - Cardiff

It might take on mental health issues well. You will have a lot to prove. You can lose your confidence. – Falkirk

Not having a wage that enables people to provide more than the basics was seen as a barrier to creating a fulfilling life,

You wouldn't get access to a lot of things, even if you had dreams. - Cardiff

With a subsequent loss of motivation to do a job well,

If you have no money coming in, you think why do I even bother doing anything? - Cardiff

2.2 Job security

Discussions about the relevance of job security for wellbeing demonstrated that participants in work feel that job security is a thing of the past,

For my dad say, different generation, he wants to know, "Will you have the same job in 10 or 20 years?". That gave him a sense of security and continuity. For me, I'm different. - Cardiff

The younger generation simply doesn't believe job security is there anymore,

We were saying that 10 or 20 years ago you used to have job security. You just don't get that now. You just don't get looked after by a company. Those times have changed, whether for the good or bad. I don't think I'll be in a job until I retire. - Cardiff

However, that doesn't mean that job security wouldn't increase a sense of wellbeing for younger workers. As someone in Cardiff said,

Sometimes when you do get that [job security] as well it is definitely refreshing. - Cardiff

It allows people to feel *more confident* and enables them to *plan for the future*. A participant in Falkirk spoke about his delight of having been awarded a permanent contract,

I know for me that I left college a good few years ago. All of my jobs were temporary and I've just become permanent in the last month or so. That is a massive thing for me, now I can plan and save for a house and go on holiday. – Falkirk

There was recognition that without job security planning for the future is a lot harder, particularly in the context of finding appropriate housing,

You cannot get a mortgage if you do not have a secure job. The bank will not give you one. - Cardiff

Someone else in Falkirk said that that job security *makes people feel comfortable and secure*,

For anybody, the self-employed, but even those with long established employers, to know that there is a continuum is always going to make you feel relaxed and more ready to move forward. For lots of people now I think there's always, since the last seven or eight years, always the threat that perhaps your life as you are living it could stop tomorrow, especially work life. If your company has a big contract you personally have a big contract, it gives a bit of comfort. – Falkirk

Some participants reported that in the absence of job security every other aspect of life lacks *stability* as a result,

If your free time is what you are working for, and all of a sudden you can't stop building around that security, everything else is lacking stability. - Cardiff

Which impacts negatively on people's wellbeing. As someone else in Cardiff said,

You would be anxious and concerned and you would be in more of a negative frame of mind, wouldn't you? If you have the security you would feel that your wellbeing was better. - Cardiff

There was a view that job security makes people *more motivated to do well* at work as it takes away fear of losing a job,

You're more likely to give 110%. – Cardiff

Participants believed that a lack of job security *lowers productivity*,

It may make people think if I'm not going to be able to reap the benefits I'm not going to give all my time and effort in developing something within my job. I will do just enough. I wouldn't go the extra mile. - Cardiff

Most self-employed participants had no experience of job security. They discussed that the insecurity and unpredictability of their situation is always in the back of their mind. It became clear that this has a different impact on different people, depending on their general outlook on life. A male participant in his fifties who had had a range of negative experiences in his work and private life said,

It makes you feel a bit wary, doesn't it? You've got to try make the right decision all the time, don't you? - Cardiff

Whereas a younger female participant who loved her job had a more positive outlook. She compared working as a freelance actor to gambling,

Because you can take this, or you can wait till something better comes up. – Cardiff

In the same breath she mentioned that for her wellbeing through job security is less important than having flexibility, variety and doing something she really loves,

Just the fact that it's different every time.... Also I do something which, when I'm doing it, I really love it. The worst part of my job is when I'm not in the job. That's quite a luxury really. - Cardiff

For some job security is not only related to a regular income. In Falkirk participants discussed that having qualifications in a particular areas provides a sense of job security as well,

A skilled job is a secure job because you have set skills and you can get a job in a specific area. – Falkirk

They spoke about professions for which there is always a demand in society,

If you've got a qualified job or a skilled job, like a doctor or nurse, with that qualification you've got that security. - Falkirk

Police have a skilled job, firemen too, because you always have firemen. - Falkirk

2.3 Relevance to the individual

Many participants in the dialogue had experience of being sent to training by an employer without having the desire to take part,

Lots of us end up being asked to go on professional training and development courses which we don't want to do. – Falkirk

They stressed that this impacts negatively on their sense of wellbeing as they feel their individual needs are not being taken into account. As a result they reflected that they generally benefit more from a learning experience they have chosen to take part in,

Something I wasn't so interested in I wouldn't have been keen to go. I wouldn't have participated as much, I wouldn't have applied myself so much because I was forced to go. But if it was actually something I really wanted to do.... – Falkirk

At the other end of the scale is learning something that fits one's interests and is enjoyable. As a participant in Falkirk said this provides a *sense of satisfaction*,

Well, if you enjoy doing it, then you are into it more, if you don't like it you will not want to learn. If it is something that you enjoy and find interesting then you will want to keep going back. Plus you get a sense of satisfaction. – Falkirk

Some said that good employers ask what learning an employee is interested in rather than sending them to courses without consultation,

If...someone in your company is asking, gaining an insight into where you're at, what you want to achieve from that experience and don't just hammer people into learning experiences. – Falkirk

For participants this *boosts people's confidence and sense of wellbeing* as their *voice is being heard*,

I think an employer whether it's a humongous company or a small sort of business or company, [it's about] getting to know the individual. I've seen a course which I really think you would like. It means that they've actually listened to what I've said. – Falkirk

Participants felt that good learning is meaningful to an individual's life and can lead to *personal growth*,

If you could utilise some of the things you are learning, how you can use them later in your life, either for yourself or for other people. - Cardiff

Likewise, being in a job that fits people's aspirations and interests was seen as hugely beneficial to people's lives with participants citing *happiness* and *fulfilment* as the key impacts,

It would make you happy if it were interesting. - Cardiff

Job satisfaction obviously comes first, you've got to be happy doing your job. If you go to work feeling happy and confident, you will have enjoyment. - Cardiff

You would have a more fulfilled life. – Cardiff

If it's making you happy then obviously you will get more out of it. It will inspire you to want more. - Cardiff

There was also a view that learning that meets the needs of individuals is more likely to have a positive impact on other areas of people's life as they will enjoy applying the learning in other contexts. A participant in Falkirk for example, spoke about the positive impact of learning about autism on her relationship with her brother who is on the autism spectrum,

Everything about the course has given me a better relationship with my brother. One of his ticks is a need to keep moving all the time. Now I know that he has to do that I won't say anything to him, I won't try and restrain him. Just learning about the condition has helped me to have a much better relationship with him. - Falkirk

There was general agreement that people are *more motivated to take a challenge* in work or learning environment that is of interest to them,

You will get much more out of it as you would really be giving it your all. - Cardiff

Whilst not being satisfied with a job or in learning was seen as a demotivating factor, which impacts negatively on someone's confidence and wellbeing. The following views of a participant in Cardiff chimed with those of other participants,

Your self-worth can really be affected if you're not enjoying your job. - Cardiff

If you're not happy, interested, satisfied...you can become stagnant and fed up. You lose your motivation. - Cardiff

They said that being in work or learning that is not satisfying is more likely to lead to increased sick leave,

You're more likely to take a Monday and Friday off if you're not satisfied with the job. – Cardiff

Whilst happiness at work and in learning has a *positive effect on other areas of life,*

I feel like if you have work that makes you happy you don't bring work things home. - Cardiff

2.4 Camaraderie

In both locations comradeship at work and while learning was viewed as very positive for wellbeing. A participant in Cardiff used the following description of happiness at work demonstrating the value to wellbeing in going to work,

Actually wanting to be there. And everyone else wanting to be there as well. – Cardiff

In both locations participants said that working or learning with people you like *raises aspirations* and makes work and learning *more enjoyable,*

If I am going on a course, I know exactly which colleagues I want to go with. I know the ones which are open to learning things, I know the ones that just go to work and then go home again and don't actually want to learn more. They bring it down, they think about how boring it is, all they think about is lunch. You want people around you who are as interested and excited as you are, so you can all learn together. – Falkirk

So for both work and learning, wellbeing is improved if you are with people who feel as passionately as you do about what is being achieved.

Interaction with other students and a positive teaching force, people who are there because they want to learn. They help you to enjoy the whole experience. - Cardiff

Some said they felt they were *more likely to be innovative and creative* with a good team around them. They felt that working or learning with people one doesn't get on with stifles innovation,

Nobody likes to open up their ideas with people who they think are not interested in their ideas or would try and shoot them down. – Cardiff

You would be less vocal I think, given your ideas and things like that. You would want to keep things to yourself. – Cardiff

Participants recognised that getting on with the people they work or learn with is a *motivation to make an effort,*

You want to do more work because you don't want to be the person who's lagging behind. - Cardiff

Having a strong bond with colleagues was viewed as good for mental health as it means people can *share their experiences,*

In my work I have long shifts, and it's a really hard and stressful job. Even having a wee debrief with everybody, a catch up is really good. Not everyone gets on all the time, that's never going to happen, but if you're a smaller group that is quite strong it's a thing that needs to be done. - Falkirk

A participant in Falkirk compared an ideal situation with the bond between family members who look at for each other and *understand each other's needs*,

A family atmosphere that allows for flexibility and understanding. – Falkirk

If there is an atmosphere of camaraderie participants felt it is less likely that staff will experience isolation or loneliness in the workplace. There was a view that it's easier to resolve disputes if team members get on well with each other and experience a sense of belonging. In both locations participants mentioned that sick leave rates are higher if people don't experience camaraderie at work,

You would not want to be there, so you're more likely to feign illness and have lots of doctors' appointments and that kind of thing. - Cardiff

2.5 Effective management and communication

In both locations participants pointed out that in a good work environment managers value their staff and communicate well.

A participant in Cardiff spoke about her 36 years as a NHS nurse. When she retired she didn't get a thank you letter which had been hugely disappointing to her. She said that her experience as a ward nurse had shown her how appreciative management can *increase work morale*,

When I was a ward sister I always made sure that I thanked every member of my staff at the end of the shift, tell them they had done a good job and that they were appreciated. Even just that made a difference to them and it made a difference to me. Because my staff knew that I value them and they would work 200% for me if I needed them to swap shifts, if I needed them to stay on a little bit. To me that was important and we worked better as a team. - Cardiff

There was a view that *saying thank you* to staff is particularly important for people in low paid jobs,

Especially for low paid jobs, it really changes your approach. I used to work in JD sports... When you send your staff home, they are not being paid much, they do not want to be there on Saturday anyway... To be thanked for giving their time meant a lot more to them than it actually did to give this [the thank you]. - Cardiff

A simple thank you was associated with *feeling recognised, rewarded and appreciated as an individual*. As someone in Cardiff,

It is a sign of not being disposable, that you are actually an individual, a person, not a number, you are contributing. – Cardiff

A view shared in Falkirk,

If I know that I'm going to be rewarded, even just a thank you for doing it...that's an achievement and as such a reward in itself. – Falkirk

And this makes people feel good. As a participant in Cardiff said,

It made me feel really good because that was the first time someone had actually seen how much work I actually do. And I don't do it because I want recognition really. I don't do it because I want extra money at the end of the month in my pay packet. - Cardiff

For this person manners are invaluable in the work place,

I treat people the way I would expect to be treated. I was always taught that manners cost nothing but they are worth a fortune. – Cardiff

A civil servant in Cardiff warned against a tokenistic approach in saying thank you. She mentioned the introduction of a 'simply thanks' scheme in her work place through which staff receive shopping vouchers as an expression of gratitude. It had created a culture of political correctness, which she said is not conducive to staff wellbeing as they may feel they can't express themselves anymore,

One of the dangers I think you get is sometimes it almost becomes so politically correct and you can't say anything or offend anyone anymore. You drive the personality out of being sometimes. It becomes a little bit sterile. In terms of your wellbeing at work there then isn't much character or personality because political correctness is sort of stomped into you. There is a balance to be hit. You have got to allow people to be people in the workplace, and sometimes you offend one another.
- Cardiff

Participants noted that in a good job managers *appreciate a diversity of views,*

We all have something to offer even though [we're] from very different age groups and different places. That happens in the workplace. Everyone should be valued...People have different ideas and they put them together and they decide what's good. - Cardiff

Stories about negative experiences demonstrated that some participants have difficulty getting their voices heard, particularly in larger organisations,

They like you to be a yes person in big organisations. Being another person, even if you're saying to the benefit of the company, this is working very well, they say no we're all on the same p. and we are all yes people. - Cardiff

When probed about how this made them feel, they said that it impacted negatively on their wellbeing as they didn't feel valued as individuals,

You can't put your ideas forward and you can't say that you disagree. You don't have a voice. - Cardiff

There was a view that *encouraging employees to take initiative* provides workers with a sense of agency that benefits their wellbeing, particularly when,

They're ready to implement and act on my ideas. – Cardiff

In situations where managers don't appreciate the independence and talents of their workers, participants felt that this could well provoke lower productivity as a result of a demotivated work force. They saw this as a key risk as it impacts on employees' confidence,

If you're treated like you're not working with someone, but you're working for them, then it could create this kind of mental condition where your self-worth drops and you become less productive and less motivated. - Cardiff

People with low self-worth rarely achieve things. - Cardiff

Good communication was seen as an essential management skill for an effective organisation and for good employee wellbeing. As someone in Cardiff said,

Communication is a big thing I think. Within the workplace and with your management, and within management. If you have good communication with everybody, it's like a well-oiled wheel that keeps on turning. – Cardiff

There was a view that good communication within an organisation *increases a sense of self-worth*, particularly if an employer listens and demonstrates that they've taken concerns on board,

If you can chat to your bosses and say you're not happy about something. Your wellbeing goes up if they do something about it. What makes that go up is an opportunity for you to express your feelings, you feel respected. – Cardiff

If you feel kept in the loop it makes you feel part of the team, which is important and increases your self-worth. - Cardiff

Good managers *encourage staff to progress* and *provides access to knowledge about how to advance*, for example by signposting to training opportunities. This was seen as tremendously positive for employee wellbeing,

You feel safer if you know that you are in good hands and will be led along your desired path. If I want to progress to a certain position, I can speak to my line manager and tell them what I would like to do. I would feel confident they would be able to help me do it through courses, giving me the additional experience I need to get there. You need a line manager there to help you on your way otherwise you will get stuck in your position. – Cardiff

It's about being connected to knowledge. - Cardiff

In both locations *fairness* was an equally important element of a good management structure. It increases the work morale which impacts positively on the wellbeing of all team members and *improves work relationships*,

I feel that the employer has got to treat everybody fairly, one rule for all. Not everybody should have all the opportunities, it should be split in equal parts. I have had experience of it. Sometimes if you're friends with the boss you get first pick. That's what brings staff morale down. – Cardiff

This view was echoed by Falkirk participants,

Just like treating everybody fairly. Some people are really friendly with management, you know that kind of thing. They get treated differently. - Falkirk

2.6 Opportunities to advance

Work and learning that enables people to progress and develop new skills was considered by most participants as essential for wellbeing. This stems from having a *sense of opportunity* and *optimism* about the future and a feeling that it's possible to *follow dreams* and *achieve goals*,

The opportunity to advance is not just financially, but the sense of hope for your future. It's about personal growth. – Cardiff

There was an underlying sense that learning is a vehicle to facilitate progress,

It is adding strings to your bow, the more you learn. Maybe something will lead you in a different direction, you'll be equipped for it. - Cardiff

Those with experience of being offered opportunities to advance in work, including through learning, reported a *positive effect on their self-confidence*, which *encourages them to keep improving and learning*,

You can be inspired to do more. You want to keep on pushing yourself to learn more. - Cardiff

Others pointed out that a higher self-confidence as a result of having opportunities to advance spills over in other areas of life, including *feeling better about their position in the work place, in society in general and amongst friends,*

You can feel [more] valuable in your place in society and the workforce. - Cardiff

It would increase your confidence and your self-esteem. It will also increase your way of socialising and your social standing. You could become somebody in inverted commas. - Cardiff

Some made reference to an *increased desire to do well* at work as a result of being offered opportunities to advance. As a participant in Cardiff said,

It causes an interest in the job, you want to go to work because you don't have to be stuck at the till example, you want to be able to advance. - Cardiff

There was a view that opportunities to advance through learning can lead to *more influence in the work place*, which makes people feel good,

I think it could be tied self-worth again. The more things you're trusted with, the more responsibilities that increases your desire to work. It is another sort of reward. – Cardiff

A participant in Falkirk spoke about how having been offered opportunities to gain qualifications by her employer at a young age had changed her position in the organisation she worked for,

I am the youngest person to work and I was trained do something which no one else could do in the office. I get kind of looks of anger because I have more training and have an extra skill set than that of some of the nurses that have been there 30 years. - Falkirk

When probed how this made her feel she said the training had boosted her *self-confidence*,

It's a good feeling having come from the bottom, some of the nurses are a bit funny about it though. - Falkirk

There was also a view that progressing in work through training *helps people understand others better* as they have first-hand experience of having been in lower paid roles,

I think maybe it helps you understand other people better. So if you are in a job where you have to do your time at the bottom to get to the next step. Then when you are at the next step up you actually have a real understanding of the people beneath you because you've been in their shoes. You have more empathy. - Cardiff

When discussing how not having opportunities to advance holds people back from achieving what they want to achieve a participant in Falkirk mentioned she had started doubting herself and that she was aware that she was underachieving as a result,

You can kind of get yourself into a rut and just say this is what life is. Then you feel trapped and you stagnate. - Falkirk

The discussion that unfolded demonstrated that other participants could identify with this,

You just feel a bit useless. - Falkirk

It would reduce your quality of life. - Falkirk

They said that people are more likely to look for other opportunities and leave their place of work if their employer doesn't offer opportunities to advance,

Ultimately you don't believe in that organisation. It doesn't help you, you'd spend your time looking for new work. – Falkirk

Although most participants recognised that opportunities to advance matter to them, it is important to recognise that some people have no aspiration to advance and feel happy and fulfilled. Their wellbeing is not affected if there are no opportunities to progress at work or in training because their self-confidence is intact and they enjoy what they're doing. This was partly a reflection of the different generations. A participant in his 70s said a sense of opportunity had never been important in his working life, all that mattered was having job security to be able to provide for his family,

For me this is where the generation gap comes in. We were brought up thinking you were courted, you got engaged, and got married, and you got children. That's in my brain, you worked and you provided for your family. Now you have youngsters talking about gap years and what they're going to be doing in 10 years' time. Your life was in steps if you understand what I mean, you just wanted a secure job so you could work and provide for your family. - Cardiff

A young female participant in his group epitomised this generation for him. Having opportunities to develop herself had contributed greatly to her quality of life,

For me it's about being able to look forward and almost have a sense of adventure, the unknown. It's exciting for me to think I don't know what I'm going to be doing, I don't think that in 10 years' time I'm going to be doing exactly what I do now because for me the sense of wellbeing is strongly linked to a sense of hope and growth. - Cardiff

The older participant expressed appreciation for the way society had changed though. He noted that there is more support available for young people, which enables them to progress across boundaries of class and income,

[Young people] have got a lot more career minded than I was at their age because of their upbringing. I think the working class didn't have half as much chance as they have got today. It's definitely a good thing. If you are being guided and helped along by the government or whatever, I think you have got a much better chance of going to college or university and taking up a career that you may like. With me it was just a matter of getting a job and having a pay packet at the end of the week. – Cardiff

2.7 Recognition

Feeling valued and recognition for what you do at work and in learning was identified as another important element of a good job and a good learning provision. A person in Cardiff expressed the view that positive feedback *enhances a feeling of self-worth*,

A lot of people want to know that their lives have some sort of impact in the greatest sense of everything...Somebody saying that you are doing well, makes you realise your actions in your life are not going unnoticed. - Cardiff

Participants said that positive feedback in work and learning leads to *higher motivation, higher job satisfaction* and *improved performance* because it *boosts someone's self-confidence*,

Job satisfaction whilst your input is valued and things like that. It is recognition for what you are doing and you know that you kind of want to go to work because your opinion matters. – Falkirk

If you get positive feedback that you were going in the right direction, then I suppose you know what you are doing is appreciated, that helps you and it makes you feel good. Your morale is better, you might feel a bit riskier to try a bit more. You might feel more active like you want to challenge yourself. - Cardiff

There was agreement that recognition and positive feedback lead to *increased individual wellbeing*,

I think you just feel a lot happier as well. If the employers or customers are giving you that feedback, you would rather be there than not. - Falkirk

Having confidence in your job and knowing you're appreciated can really affect the way your day feels. – Falkirk

It increases a feeling of self-belief and pride. As someone in Falkirk said in relation to learning,
I think if you know that when you learn you're going to be, once you use the skills, you will be rewarded for it, and I don't mean with money. I just mean that sense of pride. Just to know that you have done a good thing. - Falkirk

A participant working for Cardiff University said that one of the reasons why work makes her happy is that she has a sense of agency,

I actually have a really good employer. I have a lot of training opportunities, not only am I allowed to do what I want but I get to tell my manager what I want to do. – Cardiff

Participants with experience of unappreciative employers and tutors said that the lack of recognition had lowered their self-confidence,

It can be stressful because you start doubting yourself and thinking you're not up for the job. – Cardiff



They mentioned that this impacted negatively on their home life as they struggled to switch off,
You can't really switch off because you're so hell bent on achieving these things at work that you're not getting any recognition for. – Falkirk

They made a link to performing less well, being less productive, taking more sick leave and ultimately leaving organisations,

You doubt yourself, you are less likely to make suggestions. - Cardiff

You become uninterested. This means you do not push yourself to progress. - Cardiff

And your customers will suffer as well if you offer a poor service. -Falkirk

Workers are more likely to jump ship if they don't like the conditions. – Falkirk

2.8 Flexibility

For most participants in the dialogue there is a link between appreciation of employees and learners and consideration for the flexibility that is required to ensure people can meet their aspirations both in work and in their personal lives.

Many participants complained about a lack of flexibility in the work place, for example when people have caring responsibilities or want to support family members or friends who are ill. A participant in Falkirk shared the following experience,

Sometimes they're ridiculous. Years ago I worked in the North. One of our colleagues had to go in for an emergency hysterectomy and they were really bad at letting us go and visit her and they were very bad about people who were off work too. - Falkirk

There was general agreement that a lack of flexibility from both employers and training providers means that employers and learning providers *don't get the best out of people,*

It can become a chore rather than something that you enjoy. You may struggle with the pressure. – Cardiff

A focus on work only stops you from living. If work is no longer an enjoyable thing you are just surviving. – Cardiff

Whereas sensitivity for the individual needs of staff and learners was seen as something that *enhances a sense of agency,*

Flexibility gives you this feeling that you are still in control of your life. - Cardiff

Participants said that flexibility in terms of working hours provides people with *the breathing space* they need to lead a fulfilling life outside of work,

Just the sort of breathing space. If you have flexibility you will not try to constantly work. If you don't see any chance to have your own time, you won't plan anything other than work, so you become tied down. - Cardiff

It enables them to attend training and to do other things alongside work. There was a sense that flexibility *increases productivity* and has the potential to be a *deterrent for conflict between employers and employees,*

It might make you less productive because there are only so many hours in a day, you cannot timetable things to work around each other. It is the equivalent of having less time in the day, it could work the other way round you would be more productive if you are more flexible. - Cardiff

If your employer is not flexible towards you it is like they don't respect you as well. I think if you don't feel respected it makes you resentful and then you become less productive. - Cardiff

A lack of flexibility at work was seen as something that has the potential to affect the wellbeing of families, *Employers taking consideration of your individual needs can impact on both the employee and the whole family. – Falkirk*



A participant in Cardiff reported that working long hours in the construction industry and a lack of flexibility had impacted on his health,

If you were to say, "I am willing to work 17 hours and then take a Tuesday off". Then you could take your children out on Tuesday when it's quieter. Or a day off to go and study maybe. It would be Nirvana, wouldn't it? Altogether I have not experienced this in my life, not in my working career. I haven't had a lot of flexibility in my career, I have not been able to say

yea or nay. It has impacted on my health. – Cardiff

And someone else in Cardiff working in the same sector said,

Chelsea Football Club has costed me my marriage. I was working long hours [in London whilst living in Cardiff] and had little flexibility, it had an impact on my marriage. - Cardiff

There was a view that more flexibility around working hours leads to *increased staff loyalty,*

Trying to work round people's needs, because eventually they'll stay loyal and come back to work. - Falkirk

In the context of learning, flexibility is about a learning offer that is delivered at different times as well as in different formats to suit a variety of needs. This was explained by two participants in Cardiff,

Everybody wants to learn, but it's how they go around scheduling whether you can actually fit it in. A lot of people think that everyone works 9 to 5, but not everybody does, people don't even work Monday to Friday. - Cardiff

You have to have a flexible approach and look at different types of learning because some people have special education needs and some people have disabilities... There are lots of different learning needs. - Cardiff

2.9 A good work/ learning environment

A work and learning environment which is safe, clean, well-maintained and equipped with the resources to enable people to work or learn well was identified as another important element of a good job and learning experience. As someone in Cardiff said,

Without the tools and resources you need you can't do your job properly. They can have a real impact on your work and make it harder. - Cardiff

A work or learning environment with all these elements in place was viewed as a *sign of appreciation and respect*. As someone said about work,

A safe environment with all the right resources shows that your employer cares. - Cardiff

Health and safety was a basic requirement for all,

You are really not wanting to go to your work if you think that your health is at risk. The better the conditions you are under, the more likely you want to go into work. - Falkirk

This includes making the *right level of demands* on the work force to ensure staff remain healthy both physically and mentally rather than unrealistic demands. As two participants in Cardiff said,

The ideal situation is to be in a job which doesn't have a serious health impact on you. It's also not being pushed to your limits. - Cardiff

If you're on a production line and your boss says they want more production, the stress you get mentally, you get yourself worked up. It's about the right level of demands. - Cardiff

There was consensus amongst participants that a comfortable work and learning environments means that employers and learning providers *get the best out of them*. Participants in Falkirk used the right temperature and sufficient facilities as an example,

It helps them to get the best out of us, to give us the conditions to do that. So if I go into work and they won't put the heating on I'm not going to work hard because I'm freezing cold. - Falkirk

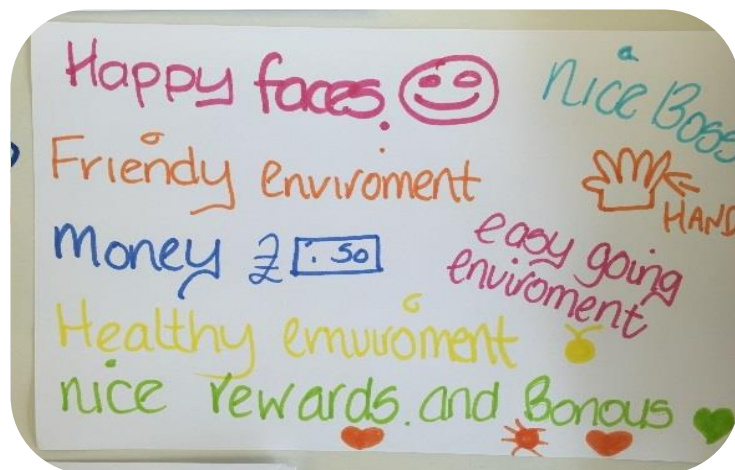


Just having good working conditions like running water, enough toilets for everyone, it's about simple things but they certainly make a difference. - Falkirk

When probed further it became clear that as well as the actual impact of the work or learning environment it is the *lack of control* over it which *impacts negatively* on people's sense of wellbeing,

Maybe having some control over your working environment. If your boss chooses everything for you, you can feel very uninvolved in your own life. So that would upset me. Not being hot or cold is not the problem it is not having a choice.

- Falkirk



In a good work environment there is *counselling or practical support* available should employees face physical or mental health challenges. In Falkirk one of the groups discussed that it makes a substantial difference to an individual's wellbeing if this kind of support is in place,

If you work for a company which has a department that can deal with your health issues, that can have a major effect on your wellbeing. - Falkirk

In learning, participants recognised the importance of *having fun and being inspired* whilst learning. For many this happens when *training is delivered in an interactive way*,

They were really good, it was really interactive you know, like hold up things like true or false. Because obviously if you sit and listen to anyone, whether or not they are interesting, you do drift. They were having a laugh. Even though the topic was serious it was much easier to relate to it. -

Falkirk

They said that learning has to *cater for a range of learning styles*,

Having those little bits within the course which are a bit hands-on because I'm quite a visual person. I like to be involved in things rather than just listen. The theory behind everything is interesting but I like to actually do it. - Falkirk

Tying in with the benefits of having a sense of control are comments made by participants in both locations about the importance of a *well-structured learning experience*,

It has to be structured so that you feel safe and you know what you have to do when. - Cardiff

Equally, a *tutor who is experienced and enthusiastic* was identified as essential for a good learning environment,

If somebody is passionate and motivated and interested in the subject and teach that in a dynamic way and pass that passion and enthusiasm onto the people that are there, I think that makes a huge difference. - Cardiff

High quality training enables progress, said a participant in Cardiff,

If you want to leave the organisation, and you've been taught very, very well, you can go and join another company with that knowledge. - Cardiff

Whereas working for a company that delivers high quality products provides a *sense of pride in the company* with a resultant *feeling of self-worth*,

It gives you a sense of pride in your employer. If the people you work for are known for the quality of the service then you feel like you are part of, it makes you feel proud that you're speaking to other people and you know that they are working for a company which is not producing such a quality product. It gives you a real sense of worth. - Falkirk

2.10 Summary of wellbeing benefits

The table below shows a summary of the wellbeing benefits identified by participants in the work, learning and wellbeing dialogue when they discussed the components of a good job and a good learning experience. All elements discussed lead to feelings of enjoyment, happiness and fulfilment and increased feelings of self-worth. All components with the exception of effective management and communications were seen as having an impact on other areas of life, whereas feeling comfortable and secure was only linked to job security.



Figure 2: summary of wellbeing benefits

	Appropriate pay	Job security	Camaraderie	Effective management & communication	Opportunity to advance	Recognition	Relevant to individual	Good environment	Flexibility
Enjoyment, happiness, fulfilment	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Sense of agency	√			√	√	√			√
Sense of belonging/loyalty			√		√				√
Sense of opportunity and optimism					√				
Feeling comfortable and secure		√							
Increased confidence/self-worth	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Personal growth					√		√		
Reduction of stress/ anxiety	√		√	√					√
Improves life outside work	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√

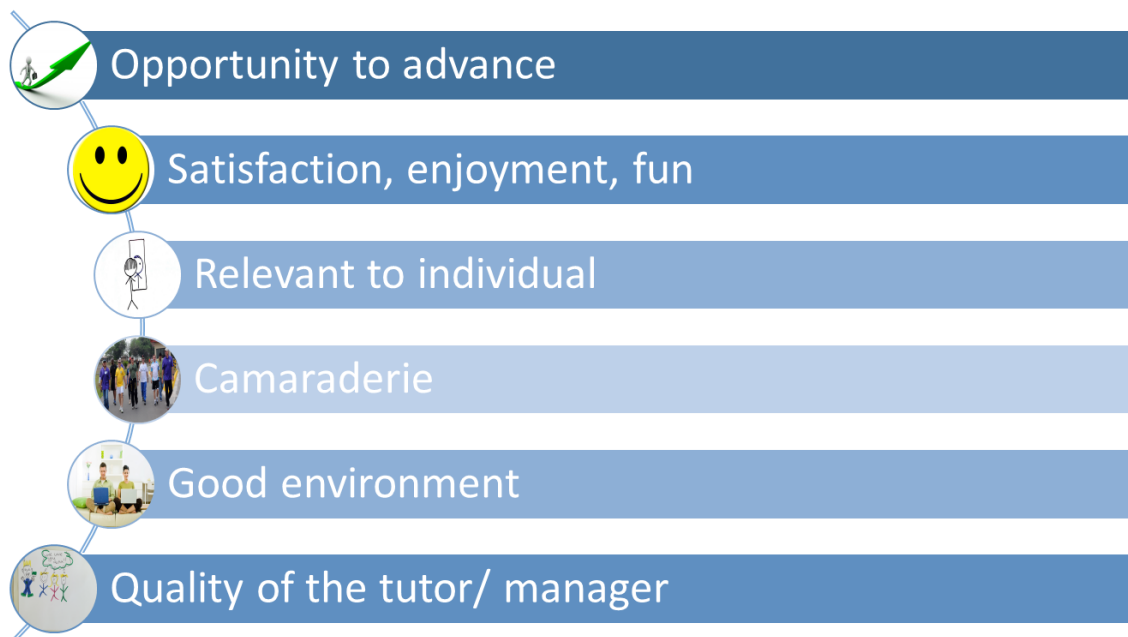
3. Similarities and differences between wellbeing at work and in learning

The dialogue demonstrated that participants felt that work and learning share many common themes when considered in relation to quality of life and wellbeing. A good environment is relevant to both as is flexibility, the opportunity to advance, a positive environment, recognition of individual needs and strengths, satisfaction, enjoyment, fun, getting on with colleagues and other learners and having a good manager and/ or tutor who communicates well. Work and learning differ when it comes to financial gain, people's attitude to knowledge and the experience of a sense of belonging.

During the final session of the dialogue the facilitators provided the participants with a set of all the cards drawn in round one in both Cardiff and Falkirk through which people illustrated their 'ideal work situation'. Following a review of which components of a good job or learning experience are distinct and which components are the same they were asked to put the drawings in priority order and consider what should be or could be in place to make sure make people can flourish and have a really good quality of life through their work and learning. These elements were subsequently categorised by the participants using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs triangle⁶ to enable an analysis of participants' views on basic and higher needs in the context of work and learning.

3.1 Similarities and differences between good work and good learning

Participants in the dialogue identified the following overlap between components of a good job and a good learning experience as summarised in figure 3:



Although *financial gain* and *job security* were considered as specific to the work place by most participants

Figure 3: Summary of similarities between good work and learning

a small minority felt that job security stems from having good qualifications and continuous learning as well (see section 2.2). There was a general view though, that the difference between financial gain as a result of work and learning is the time factor,

There is a more immediate reward financially through work. With learning things it is a very long-term future thing. – Cardiff

⁶ Abraham Maslow, A Theory of Human Motivation, 1943

Participants identified a significant overlap between the *qualities of a good tutor and good manager*. In their view good tutors are clear about expectations, highly interactive, sensitive to the needs of individual learners. They provide positive feedback and create a positive and enjoyable atmosphere in a well-maintained learning environment with the tools and resources in place to get the best out of their learners. Equally good managers were seen as good communicators who take their workers seriously, treat them fairly, recognise individual qualities, offer opportunities to advance, and are transparent about the direction of travel of the organisation (see section 2.5).

Although social interaction and getting on with team members and other learners were seen to be equally important to work and learning, some participants identified a difference. Due to the short-term nature of most training courses, they held the view that people are more likely to experience a *sense of belonging* in work than they would in learning,

What really is distinct is a sense of belonging. You get more out of that at work than you do in a course. - Cardiff

The same group also noted there is a significant difference between work and learning when it comes to people's *attitude to knowledge*. They said that at work people often feel they need to pretend they know everything, whereas people attend training courses because they accept that they don't know everything,

*When you go into a learning course, you go in having accepted that you don't know everything.
When you are in a job you kind of have to put on a front that you do know it all....That seems to be something that seems to be distinct between the two.* – Cardiff

3.2 Hierarchy of elements that lead to wellbeing in work and learning

A review of the components of work and learning that lead to higher wellbeing using an adaptation of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, offered participants the opportunity to consider what basic needs must be fulfilled before they can really flourish and lead a fulfilling life through work and learning. Having been provided with information on each of the categories⁷, participants grouped those elements under the headings shown in figure 4 (over the page).

⁷ Basic = air/ food/ drink/ shelter/ warmth/ enough sleep

Safety= protection/security/ law/ limits/ rules/ stability

Belonging=family/ colleagues/ friends/ affection/ people to relate to

Self-esteem=achievement/ status/ responsibility/ reputation/ recognition

Fulfilment=personal growth/ a situation in which a person can be everything they are capable of being.

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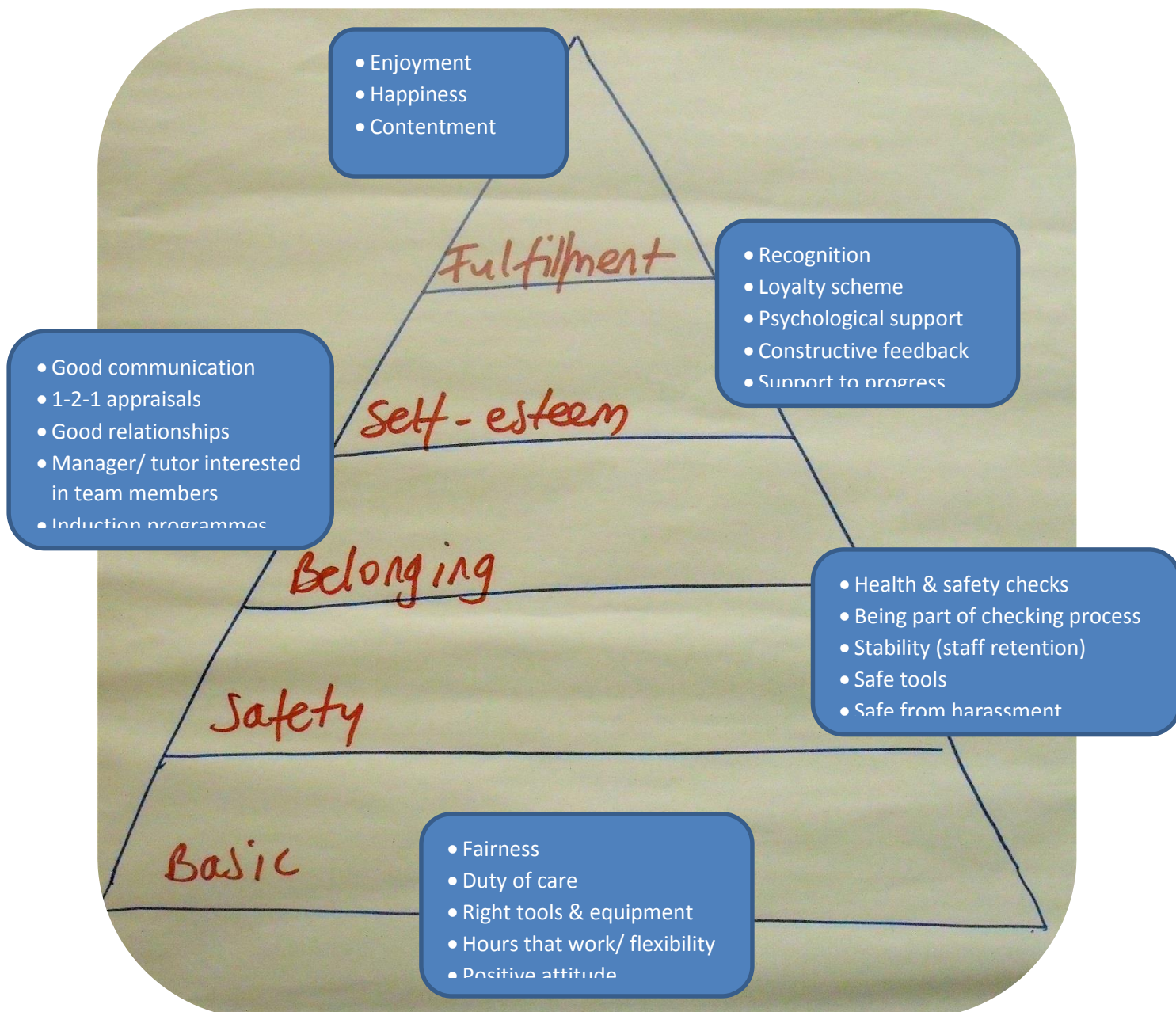


Figure 4: Hierarchy of needs in work and learning

In addition to the headlines summarised in figure 2 participants in Cardiff wrote on post-it notes that it is a basic need not to feel like a,

Disposable commodity. – Cardiff

In addition to having a fair working environment they felt that the environment should provide opportunities so that people didn't feel they were in a,

Dead-end job. – Cardiff

Participants in Falkirk added that being in a dead-end job was better than having no job at all. One person expressed the views of many,

I was thinking of the very basic level. If you don't have a job this is all irrelevant. So that has to be first. – Falkirk

In terms of safety participants felt that this should include ensuring that those staff that wanted to could be retained. They equally felt this was the place for important health and safety checks to be included and an excellent induction programme. A participant said,

Well obviously it is part of safety, you need to know how to use fire escapes etc. I know it is basic health and safety, but I put belonging as well because it's about an induction into the team as well.

- Falkirk

For belonging participants in Cardiff focused on the importance of,
Regular two-way communication with managers. – Cardiff

This extended to a consideration of self-esteem where participants felt there should be some sort of programme to support staff who perform well and are loyal to the company. They wanted to see a,
Loyalty recognition scheme. – Cardiff

They also stated the need for
Staff updates. – Cardiff

And,

Regular appraisals. – Cardiff

Beyond appraisals Falkirk participants also included *meaningful training.*

Yes, I think I meant when I see real opportunities, real training opportunities as opposed to something which has been parachuted in to fulfil a need which has no real purpose. I would suspect that in the public sector that maybe happens more often than in the private sector... In the private sector they tend not to parachute in constant training for no reason. - Falkirk

By the time participants in Cardiff focused on reaching *fulfilment* at work they were considering having concrete incentives. For example one participant explained,

My friend did a competition for the nicest employee and she won and it was a holiday to Morocco. It wasn't just a Tesco voucher! – Cardiff

A participant in Falkirk expressed the view, being himself the owner of a small business, that it was only possible to find fulfilment at work,

If you are your own boss. – Falkirk

He had been running his own business for 45 years. He felt he had all the skills and experience he needed, had a perfect work-life balance and had as near fulfilment as he felt it was possible to reach. On reflection he added that actually being content in your life over-all is even better than being the boss.

You can be the best that you can. You're so content that you can probably be the boss. Contentment fits in there, if you are content with what your life is, if you are content with what you are earning. That's just better than even being the boss. I would say content is better than that. - Falkirk

4. Learning inside/ outside work delivered on/ off-line

The majority of participants recognised that learning is a good thing to do, whether inside or outside work. Learning inside work was often associated with something compulsory whereas learning outside of work was seen as something people do out of choice. The potential wellbeing benefits of learning inside work identified by participants included a more positive outlook on life with a sense of opportunity and increased self-confidence as the key components of personal growth. The wellbeing experienced from learning outside work was mainly associated with the positive effects of having time away from the daily grind and general enjoyment and inspiration. Most participants reported a preference for face-to-face over online learning, although those with young families and a less sociable nature said that online learning fitted better with their requirements. Interaction with the tutor and other learners as well as instant feedback were mentioned as the main benefits of face-to-face learning.



In round one of the dialogue participants navigated towards discussing learning in the context of work. To assess their views on learning outside work they were asked in round 2 to rank the importance for them personally of learning outside of work and discuss their motivations in taking part. This was followed by a discussion about what encourages and discourages people from taking part in learning outside work.

4.1 What encourages people to take up learning outside of work?

For the majority of participants learning outside of work was fairly important. There was recognition that learning is a good thing to do to *keep the mind engaged and flexible*, particularly in later life. As two older participants in Cardiff said,

I like to keep learning. It keeps your mind fresh, even if it's nothing to do with anything useful, it might just be a whim. - Cardiff

You're never too old to learn if you want to. – Cardiff

However, this was balanced with the view of some older participants in Falkirk who felt that learning outside work is more relevant for younger people,

I'm not sure that I need to learn a lot more at my stage! - Falkirk

Participants who said that learning outside of work was neither important nor important to them often mentioned a lack of time to seek out and engage in learning opportunities. A participant in Falkirk said she would only consider signing up to a course if she happened to come across something that was really *enjoyable*.

For some it is important that courses are somehow *useful to their lives*. A participant in Cardiff enjoyed taking part in languages courses for this reason,

Because I like to travel a lot, I go to Spain and they talk to me in Spanish and they think I'm Spanish.
- Cardiff

A freelance actor spoke about how a range of courses are relevant to her work, even though all of those courses are delivered outside work,

I would always choose something which was to do with my work. Just because there's so much I could do. – Cardiff

She continued,

It's a bit like a sort of a double whammy. I do learning, I'm enjoying it and it is helping me with my work in some way. – Cardiff

For others learning outside of working is a *source of inspiration* which might or might not lead to *new opportunities*. Two participants in Cardiff said,

I can't imagine not learning, life would be boring. – Cardiff

I need my wing mirrors. - Cardiff

And someone in Falkirk,

I think personally if I don't learn than I might miss something in life. If I learn something new it will open doors for me. - Falkirk

A participant in Cardiff talked about how it might broaden his horizons regarding career pathways,

It's important to me because you could change direction couldn't you, you can change your career. – Cardiff

This was confirmed by a participant in Falkirk who said that learning outside of work has the potential to contribute to promotion at work,

If you find a new skill which you can bring into work and do a wee workshop or whatever you might get the sort of extra benefit from that. – Falkirk

Being able to *help others* as a result of taking a course outside of learning was an important motivation for participants in the dialogue. Parents spoke about having taken up courses to support their children or being able to keep up with their children, including language and computer classes,

I did a Welsh course because my children learned Welsh at school. – Cardiff

It's a big challenge, but we realise that we can be totally left behind. We are like Downton Abbey! Our kids' homework is all online. – Cardiff

Parents of young children are more likely to take up training opportunities outside work if the provision is *flexible* or if there *is free childcare* available,

I think if it was a bit flexible and it was possible to do a bit of the course online. I can't always commit to a regular appointment because of childcare. If it was a mixture of actual classes and online, that would suit me as I could do it at home at 10 pm at night. – Cardiff

For some in Cardiff *low cost or free provision* was mentioned as an encouraging factor. One of the groups discussed how *access to information* about training opportunities is essential. Having *someone to go with* was cited as a motivation too, as was the *opportunity to meet others*,

I think if I had a friend who was going on it and it was going to be our social thing as well. That'll be a good reason. Sometimes you think you'd like to go to something but you can't be bothered. – Cardiff

Meeting with others was discussed as something that might increase an individual's confidence,

That is a bit confidence building as well. Because some people are shy, and this may bring people out of their shell. - Cardiff

This is linked to what participants in both locations said about how a *lack of confidence* discourages some people to sign up to courses outside of work. A participant in Cardiff spoke about feeling out of place as a reason for not taking part in learning that is not compulsory,

Some people might not feel confident enough to just go to something on their own. Maybe if you felt like everyone was a lot younger than you or a lot older than you. School level as well, if you feel like you are much worse than everyone else in the class you might feel quite awkward about it. If you felt like you were kind of a loner. – Cardiff

Whereas a participant in Falkirk said,

If you feel inadequate and that you were not capable of doing it that would discourage you. You might feel like a failure. - Falkirk

Parents of young children and those who are working spoke about a *lack of time* as the main reason why they don't engage with learning opportunities outside work,

For me it is a time thing, I go to work and have family commitments I don't have the time to learn. I would love to go. – Falkirk



I think just living too much in a fast paced world, you don't have the time or you don't take the time because you just have so much to do. - Falkirk

Too many students to a tutor with a resultant lack of *one-to-one tuition* and the *length of course sessions* were mentioned as other things that put people off learning outside work. There was a preference for shorter rather than longer sessions,

I've been in courses at work where it's been all day and by the end of the day you feel really sleepy and tired. Whereas if you just gone in for a few hours and learn something it would be better. – Cardiff

4.2 Views about the impact of learning inside and outside work

When probed to consider the difference between what people get out of learning inside and outside work, most participants identified with the notion that learning at work is often compulsory whereas learning outside work depends on an individual's motivation and is done out of choice,

At work you have to go on courses, it forces you to learn which is good. Outside work it relies on your motivation, which means it doesn't always happen. - Cardiff

One of the groups in Falkirk discussed that the *skills learned for work can carry over into other areas of life*,

For instance learning first aid as a paramedic...There have been a couple times I've had to use it outside of work. You know how to put someone into the recovery position or things like that. The two of them can be useful. – Falkirk

Participants didn't make a link between increased wellbeing from learning at work in other areas of their lives other than the positive effect of a potential increase in earnings as a result of undertaking training at work on an individual's confidence,

Learning in work, you are expected to do it and you might be gaining more money. Obviously that will have a good impact on your life as well as a personal thing. It might make you feel better about your confidence. I think it's a kind of different impact. - Falkirk

There was a view though, that the benefits gained from learning outside work transfer over to the work situation. *Time away from the daily grind* and a *focus on something else* were seen as good for wellbeing in and outside work,

That concentration on something different on a different level that does have an impact on your life as well. – Falkirk

Most participants associated learning outside work with something that is *not stressful*. When probed further it became clear that they associated stress with not having control over participation,

The thing outside work maybe you've kind of chosen to do it because you want to do it. Those in work you're kind of expected to do it. - Falkirk

They said that learning outside work is more likely to impact positively on an individual's wellbeing because there is an *element of control* and as a result an increased likelihood of having *fun*,

I think even if you're doing ballet or fitness or something like that. You've got control over it. You can shut out as much as possible. So it can take you away from work in that short space of time. It is something that you chose. – Falkirk

The learning you do in work might be quite stressful, whereas the learning you do outside work probably wouldn't be. - Falkirk



4.3 Views on the difference between on- and off-line learning

There was a range of views amongst participants about the value of online learning as opposed to face-to-face learning. In Cardiff one of the groups rated online learning as very important, whereas in the other group the predominant view was that the availability of online learning opportunities was not very important. In Falkirk the majority view was that online learning is not very important.

For those in favour of online learning the *flexibility* of being able to learn remotely at a time that fits with other commitments is what the deciding factor. A young mother in Cardiff said,

Coming back to flexibility to me, online I can do it when I have the time, rather than having to go somewhere and sit down every week. – Cardiff

Online learning also alleviated some issues around *confidence* for her,

I don't think I'd like to go into a room not knowing anyone who is there, I'd rather just do it on my own at home....I'm just a bit shy, you know worrying about talking to people and stuff. Online is a bit more anonymous. – Cardiff

This view was shared by someone in Falkirk who said,

That is not down to how I view learning, that's just a personal thing. I don't do social interaction. I don't like face-to-face things! - Falkirk

There was a view that it depends on *how sociable* an individual is,

We are all totally different. If you're social you prefer to be out learning, but if you like to just do your job and go home. It is very individual. - Falkirk

Participants for whom online learning was not important argued that a *lack of face-to-face interaction* meant they don't enjoy their learning as much. As someone in Cardiff said,

It's quite faceless, you don't really feel you've come away with anything. – Cardiff

For this individual it's the personal touch that's missing from online learning, a *sense of connection*. With reference to the dialogue session she explained,

If you [facilitator] are on a computer screen, it wouldn't mean much. The fact that you're here, we can interact with you, and see that you are really interested in us and want to know what we think, that makes a big difference. - Cardiff

Online learning was rated lower than learning in a face-to-face setting by those looking to learn a practical skill. As someone in Cardiff said,

My sewing I can't do that online. There are things you need to be shown physically. – Cardiff

Probed why an online tutorial is not as satisfying as a physical demonstration it became clear that it is the *lack of instant feedback* and the *lack of social interaction* that makes online learning less attractive,

*You don't get the feedback when you do things online. It's about instant feedback. - Cardiff
I'm looking to share the experience. – Cardiff*

This was illustrated by a participant in Cardiff who spoke about a computer-based induction programme for new employees at a tax office,

If anyone came to work in the tax office tomorrow, you will be put in front of a computer for 6 weeks for something called e-learning which is just power points that teach you how to do the job. I never met anybody who said it was of any use to them. It's a really bad example of learning. Then you get buddied up and you get that with me and I'll actually show you how to do the job. - Cardiff

Online learning requires a level of *self-discipline and self-motivation* which not everyone has. As a participant in Cardiff said,

You need to be motivated to do something on line, you need to be a self-starter. If you're not going anywhere, you have got to get excited and motivate yourself. If I was doing it online I would do other stuff simultaneously, look after the kids that kind of thing but if you go somewhere you can just be in the zone, you can't get distracted. – Cardiff

There was also a perception amongst some participants that online learning is *not as exciting* as face-to-face learning,

I just think it's boring online, I think it's dull, I can't be bothered to read all the information. – Falkirk



5. Emerging from difficult times at work/ in learning

Discussions about negative events in work and whilst learning demonstrated that these often happen at transition points in people's lives when they move out of their comfort zone (i.e. from full time education to a first job, returning to work from maternity leave, changing jobs, retiring). The elements that hold people back from making change in difficult times in learning and work ranges from a lack of time, headspace, energy and confidence as a result of busy lives or stressful circumstances. Some participants cited a lack of money and not being able to find the right training. A positive mental attitude, friends and family, adequate support, a positive team spirit and management were viewed as the main mechanisms for increased resilience.

In round two participants *were* encouraged to think about all the events that had happened in their lives that have contributed to how they feel about work and learning now. Each group developed a timeline of events which helped to draw out the views of those who had a longer career experience as well as those with less experience. In this section of the report we focus on the effect of negative events in work and learning on people's lives or the lives of others and what is needed to emerge from difficult times.

5.1 Effect of negative events on other parts of life

Participants discussed a wide range of work and learning experiences which had impacted on their lives. They told us that negative events often happened at transition points or signalled transition points. For some of the younger participants transitioning from training to their first job was a difficult moment as was leaving home to go to university due to a perceived lack of support. Being made redundant was often described as a life changing moment, as was a bereavement at work, going from being employed to self-employed or entering parenthood and returning to work as a new mum. As someone in Falkirk said,

I think a lot of that probably is just about moving out of your comfort zone. Unknown company, unknown people. Are you going to be up to do the job, or will you just be out of your comfort zone? - Falkirk

Participants said that negative experiences in learning include being forced to do training at work that is not relevant to the job or doesn't meet the individual's area of interest; making the wrong training choices and as a result feeling trapped in a career that is not fulfilling; and badly structured, uninspiring, long courses that put people off learning.

In general participants agreed that hindsight is a wonderful thing. Although people spoke about feeling worried and having lost sleep over negative events in work and learning, the predominant feeling was that negative events provide an opportunity to learn and grow. With reference to having lost a job a participant in Cardiff said,

It opened an opportunity to do something else as result of evaluating what had happened. - Cardiff

Many negative experiences didn't have the long lasting effect participants had expected when they happened. As someone in Cardiff said,

When I first got the message that I was made redundant there was regret at first but not anymore on leaving the job. - Cardiff

Across the locations participants described a movement from naivety in the early years to wisdom as they developed their experience,

We do not know this when we are young but we do when we are older – this wisdom/ confidence perhaps helps us deal with the negative? – Cardiff



One participant's mantra chimed with the feelings of many in her group,

Live, learn and adjust. - Cardiff

5.2 Effect of negative events on people's confidence

Even though the effect was often not viewed as severe in the long term, negative events in work and learning have the potential to affect people's confidence, particularly at transition stages. As a participant in Falkirk said,

Losing my job has raised doubts with me, shaken my confidence. – Falkirk

A young participant in Falkirk talked about how he felt demotivated when he had been denied the opportunity to progress at work due to his age,

I worked in a youth group and we were looking to assign new positions and I wanted to be one of the top members of the group. I was put down to be an assistant because they felt it would be weird if I was 17 and being asked to tell 20 or 21-year-old's to do things....It did affect my general outlook....I look at the general situation and I think, "is it worth me joining this group or whatever if I'm just going to an entry-level position". It makes me very cautious about whatever I take on. -

Falkirk

There was consensus though that the experience gained as a result of negative events in work or learning can help to build confidence in the long term. In one of the groups in Cardiff two male participants spoke about their experiences in the construction industry. One had made the decision to change career because he felt he couldn't spend enough time with his family as he was working long hours. The other participant had not been able to do this and felt this had led to the breakup of his marriage. He said that it was due to this experience that he is now more capable of exerting control and better at spotting signs of working too many hours. This, he believes, enables him to help others,

If I look back on it now, you do gain some experience. There are positives and negatives. It's hard to see the signs of people who are getting pushed too hard, you know...I've seen what happens, it causes a lot of damage. As I said it gives you experience, whether it is good or bad. I am bit wiser hopefully. - Cardiff

Others said they felt stronger and more confident to stand up for themselves or others as a result of negative experiences at work,

I would stand up for someone else now, but I wouldn't have before. - Falkirk

Some of the retired participants reported that their confidence in relation to work and learning was affected by age,

When you are younger you have more confidence. I am retired. As you go through life, age has an effect on your confidence. You go through your 20s and 30s and you have that confidence to do things. I am looking back on my own life and can see I had the confidence to do things. Once you get married and have a family and get a mortgage, you've got to stop and think. - Cardiff

Others discussed how the impact of earning less than others or taking a pay cut had affected their confidence. The former was said to lead to feelings of inferiority in relation to those earning higher wages. The latter was illustrated by a self-employed participant who felt forced to accept a lower fee as a result of shrinking budgets,

Because I'm self-employed I go from one job to another reasonably quickly sometimes. There is a certain level of pay you get and then when you go to another job where the pay is lower you feel a bit like you are going backwards. You've got the same skills and experience but you're purely getting paid less for it. That doesn't feel great. – Cardiff

She said this impacted negatively on her performance at work as well,

You feel partly like you've got low self-esteem but also there's a temptation to give less to the job because you feel like you're not being appreciated to the level that you should. - Cardiff

5.3 What holds people back from improving their work/ learning in difficult times?

Most participants could relate to situations in which they had not been able to make change in work or learning. Parents of young children cited their *busy lives* and a *lack of time*,

After a long day if I come home and I want to do learning in the house, I have got two young kids in the house. There is no point. – Cardiff

Others said that when there is a lot happening at work it is a *lack of headspace* which hinders learning,

It's about finding that block of time. If your head is full of work, it's hard to learn. Being in the right headspace to learn is tricky. – Cardiff

There was a view that learning is not a priority when people experience stress,

If you are stressed out and you have got stuff going on in your private life. Your top priority is not going to be learning, is it? – Cardiff

Equally participants said that as a result of stress at work they often lack the energy to welcome other opportunities,

You are not going to want to take on new responsibilities. - Cardiff

Some participants cited a *lack of confidence* as a barrier to making change,

Thinking that you can't [make change]. So you want to go for promotion or go for a particular job but you just feel like there is no point because you won't get it....Something inside of you says you're not good enough, or you feel overwhelmed by the competition maybe. - Cardiff

For some a lack of confidence is related to the school grades they achieved,

[Perhaps you don't feel you can improve] if you didn't do well at school and didn't get the grades. - Falkirk

Not being able to find the right training opportunity was cited as a barrier to improvement as well,

I want to be a nursery teacher, but I just did hairdressing. Then I fell pregnant and I was going to go to college. I had to do either four years university doing a stupid course which I didn't even get into or three years at college doing another stupid course. - Falkirk

In both locations participants said that a *lack of money and low wages* often impact on the ability to make change. Very few people are in the position to reduce their working hours or give up their work altogether to start a course which would improve their lives,

It could be financial reasons, if I wanted to change my career I couldn't give up work to do a full-time college or university course because I need to work. – Cardiff

And some people work too many hours a week to earn a decent living and have *no time or energy* to explore other options. This was a view shared in particular by participants working in the construction industry,

In the construction related industries it's not uncommon for people to work seven days a week for months on end and of course they are relatively well off. When you look at what they're actually earning for the amount of hours and the time they are investing in it, it's not a good balance at all. Although they are not in working poverty. If you looked at their earnings on proper 37 1/2 hours or 35 hours, they are likely to be working two working weeks in order to bring home a decent wage. - Falkirk

In Falkirk one of the groups discussed how *overbearing, controlling manager* can cause anxiety and apathy in employees, particularly when they are young,

It happened to me when I worked for a bank, it was fine until the manager changed. She was just out of university and thought she could come in and because I was just a school leaver, she thought she could apply pressure on me. It made me feel stressed and it was upsetting me. She was continuously doing this and I had to report her. Eventually I left the bank because of it. If it was me now I wouldn't have stood for it. – Falkirk

5.4 Emerging from difficult times

Most participants could relate to what helped them emerge from difficult situation at work or in learning. The mechanisms by which people said they had bounced back demonstrated a fair degree of similarity between what helps people emerge from difficult situations as a result of transitions (school to college/ university; school to work; parenthood/ returning to work; changing jobs; retirement) or difficult events whilst in a stable situation.



Having a *positive mental attitude* and *adequate support* were viewed as the most important factors needed to emerge from difficult times in learning and at work,

A positive mental attitude. If you just continue to think positively you will be happier the long run. – Falkirk

In Cardiff both groups discussed how participants regained their balance after negative events by trying to see the positive in the negative. One person who opened her own florist shop after completing a floristry course illustrated this approach as follows,

I was so happy when I had my shop. I named it myself, it was mine. I worked every day, the contract was I had to open every day of the year, I had help. That feeling when it closed..., it lasted years. Six years, I loved it, I loved going to work every day. I had to leave because a supermarket opened really close by and they were selling flowers cheaper than I could buy them. I met my husband there though, he came in to buy flowers! - Cardiff

Some said that resilience is linked to *personality*,

It's your personality, I think the kind of person you are, if you think I can do that and then you go and do it then it's probably possible for you. - Cardiff

and *life experience*,

You can be in the wrong now but knowing that there is light at the end of the tunnel. - Falkirk

A participant in Falkirk said it's all about having a coping strategy and having the opportunity to *learn about coping strategies*,

Quite often you don't have that strategy or you wouldn't be in a difficult time. Just strategy training and education. – Falkirk

Others simply said that work is a necessity and that not working is no option so their *sense of responsibility* tells them to get on with it whatever happens,

For me is just big necessity more than anything. My job, I've had days when I wanted to walk out and never come back. Then I just thought I've got to, because I've got responsibilities. Gone are the days that I could just chuck out my job. - Cardiff

This related to comments made in Falkirk about the financial implications of learning. They said that money is essential for people who are transitioning into work or from one job to another,

You will need money. I think the transition as well if you're looking for a job and you've maybe saved some money when you've been learning or whatever. Having a wee cushion so you don't feel as much pressure. - Falkirk

Friends, family and support networks were cited by all as essential when experiencing difficult times, *Friends are important. When I became a widow friends were essential. They were always at the end of the phone, the line was always engaged and that helped me in difficult times.* – Cardiff

A *positive team spirit* and a *supportive manager* were cited as important factors too. Some participants said they would look for *role models at work*, people in the same company or in another organisation who got through a similar situation. A self-employed actress in Cardiff said she would connect to other actors for inspiration,

If you speak to people that are in the same job as you, you find they have had the same problems and they have worked past it and inspire you. Then you think it is not impossible because they have done it. - Cardiff

A participant in Cardiff spoke about how *access to a counsellor* at work contributed positively to the mental health of staff experiencing difficult times when working with young children,

I work for a training provider for children and we had a counsellor and I was in with her all the time...The kids were a nightmare! We were just able to go and hide in the office with her for half an hour. If you couldn't bear the kids you could just go and escape. She would just calm you down. - Cardiff



6. Who should be doing what to improve wellbeing at work/ in learning?

Improving the wellbeing of workers and learners requires the involvement of a range of actors. Participants believed there is scope for individuals to take responsibility for their own actions and wellbeing. This includes being fit and healthy, working reasonable rather than long hours and communicating their needs. Friends and family were seen as essential, as were supportive team members and employers who value their staff, understand their needs, see them as individuals and encourage them to advance. There was a view that learning providers need to better promote opportunities and ensure a broad provision is in place tailored to the needs of today's workplace. Participants saw a role for local, regional and national government in the promotion and funding of lifelong learning for all. They expressed the hope that the What Works Centre for Wellbeing will take the learning from the dialogues to policy makers and translate the benefits of improved employee wellbeing to employers with a focus on low cost measures.

In round one of the dialogue participants considered the role of employers in improving the quality of life. They discussed what employers could or should be doing to encourage people to have the best experiences at work. To identify what this is they discussed their ideal work situation for maintaining a good quality of life and illustrated their thinking on cards using drawings or words. In round two this was taken further in a discussion about who should be doing what to make sure people can flourish and have a really good quality of life through their work and learning. This section summarises the findings from all exercises in relation to participants' views on who should be doing what to improve wellbeing in work and learning.

6.1 Individuals

Participants in both locations felt strongly they have to *take initiative* themselves if they want to improve their lives through work and learning. In Cardiff participants said,

Perhaps when you finish work go to university, go to the courses on your own back to learn something. My cousin went welding on his own because he wanted to be a welder. - Cardiff

It is the effort to find out. Whether that's going to places and asking people or just deciding that you're going to have to find out what is out there. – Cardiff

Which chimed with the view of participants in Falkirk,

I think you've just got to take responsibility for your work or your learning. You can't just say my manager never told me that, you've really got to be able to take responsibility. – Falkirk

And not procrastinate,

We all know what we want and think about it a lot and sometimes plan, but never actually do it...It's interesting what we're talking about learning earlier, not just looking at a cupcake recipe. I certainly do that and over periods of time my ideas of what I'd like to do or achieve or learn, change. Until you act on them you're just learning cupcake recipes. - Falkirk

When probed if there was anything in particular that would encourage them to find out information about learning opportunities or take action, discussions in both locations demonstrated that for participants it is *self-belief* that drives an individual to embrace learning or improve their work and get the support needed to achieve that,

A desire to better oneself, I guess. – Cardiff

Participants said this is linked to *taking responsibility for their own actions* rather than blaming others,

Have a better attitude. Some people are quick to blame circumstances, blame employers. Actually it is the attitude that holds them back. - Falkirk

And trying to become more confident by *thinking positively*,

Be confident. Just think positively about things. That's our message today. You can do it. - Falkirk

There was a view that positive thinking techniques including mindfulness training and cognitive behavioural therapy might help those with low self-esteem make change,

There are positive thinking techniques, aren't there? I've seen people have had amazing results using a positive mental attitude. - Cardiff

A participant in Falkirk took the concept of taking responsibility even further and said that individuals need to learn how to *look after their own wellbeing* at work, for example by delegating jobs to ensure they're not getting overwhelmed,

Delegate instead of taking all on by yourself, I just think from my own work point of view we had a large restructure and there's been a lot of new people coming in...They might as well just do it rather than me, you know I could just pass the buck to someone else, and not take on everything myself. – Falkirk

Her group added to this that *being fit and healthy* helps having a positive outlook on work and life. They said that it is important to have regular breaks and *work reasonable hours* rather than taking on extra work. As someone said,

Allowing yourself that break and not feeling guilty for actually leaving on time. – Falkirk

Looking after one's own wellbeing includes being brave enough to *quit a job when it's not fulfilling*. A participant in Falkirk said,

Also knowing when to quit. If you're working and you don't enjoy it, after a while it affects your mental health and you are 20 years down the line and you regret not quitting. - Falkirk

For many *communicating individual needs* is core to improving one's wellbeing at work,

I think communication in general seems to have been a massive thing. You might think that someone is holding you back and they [the employer] don't even know who you are, and they are not psychic. – Cardiff

This was picked up in both locations, with participants in Falkirk linking a lack of communication to a lack of confidence,

People don't go and ask. How do you get that confidence when most of us are hoping to fake it till you make it? - Falkirk

One of the groups in Falkirk said that there is probably a role for education to teach young people before they go into the work place that it is important to be open about their needs. This would ensure people don't put up with things that affect their wellbeing negatively,

I think if you're asked as well don't just say 'I'm fine'. – Falkirk

6.2 Friends and family

Participants viewed family and friends as essential catalysts for change,

Sometimes it's your family or friends who say to you why don't you do these things to get on? Or your partner saying why don't you go and do so and so. They're the ones to egg you on and give you encouragement. – Cardiff

6.3 Colleagues

According to participants in Falkirk organisations should be structured in such a way that *supporting team members* is the norm rather than the exception,

It will be nice to have the organisational ethos that would help you. That's exactly what it is. - Falkirk

They firmly believed that teams can help people flourish at work,

Working as a team, to get results. – Falkirk

One participant spoke about a *buddy system* with people allocated to new employees to help them navigate the organisation and offer a helping hand or a listening ear when needed.

Participants in Cardiff said that Gandhi's 'Be the change you want to see' rings true for work situations.

There was a view that if you *treat people the way you want to be treated* the atmosphere at work will change with a subsequent positive impact on everyone's wellbeing,

Create a nice atmosphere, if you treat people with respect they will probably treat you with respect as well, it turns into a group vibe, taking on its own life kind of thing. – Cardiff

Others in Cardiff felt there is scope for colleagues to work together better to maintain a healthy work-life balance, for example being considerate when taking leave,

I was saying earlier that where I worked there are only five engineers. The whole six weeks holiday we are booked up this year, I can't take any of it at all. Some of the guys haven't even got kids and still took the time off. That's not good cooperation between workmates. – Cardiff

They said,

Having better cooperation between colleagues and working together to achieve that work-life balance for all. – Cardiff

In Falkirk one of the groups discussed that colleagues should be willing to learn for the benefit of the company they work for,

Being part of a team and wanting to learn for the business. – Falkirk

6.4 Employers

In both locations participants shared the view that employers need to *value staff* first of all and *put people before profit*,

Listen to employees, think of them as people not robots. - Falkirk

Just appreciate your employees. If you treat your employees well they will want to work hard. You want to work hard to someone who appreciates you. - Falkirk

It is important that they [employers] remember that people are more important than profit. – Falkirk

There was recognition of an immediate link to higher employee wellbeing when employers respect their staff, *treat them as individuals* and *communicate well*,

The wellbeing of your workforce is much easier to control if you treat them as people and not just as numbers. – Falkirk

This means that employers should have a structure in place which enables managers to get to know staff, which includes *being aware of their lives outside of work*,

It's also about understanding people's lives beyond work. - Falkirk

And offering *flexible solutions* to ensure a good work-life balance for staff,

Employers taking consideration of your individual needs can impact both the employee and the whole family. Trying to work round people's needs, because eventually they'll stay loyal and come back to work. - Falkirk

One of the groups in Cardiff discussed that managers should have brief catch up meetings with all their staff on a regular basis,

Maybe every month sitting down with your manager and seeing if there's anything you want. Like a one-to-one five minutes or something like that. Months can go by without seeing your manager for two or three or four months. Especially in my job. Out of sight out of mind. At this meeting they would ask you if you have any issues and if you are happy. - Cardiff

Participants in Falkirk said that managers should put themselves in their employees' shoes and treat people the way they would like to be treated themselves,

Put yourself in their shoes. How they feel if they had a boss like you. - Falkirk

Fairness was a recurring theme throughout the two dialogue days, in relation to both equality of opportunity and fair pay,

I think they [employers] should just try and be fair. You need to give everyone the same opportunities to progress, if people want to. The elderly, if they don't want to, they won't. As long as it's fair. – Falkirk

Low wages were seen as a negative for employee wellbeing and ultimately negative for organisational health. As a group in Falkirk said,

Buy cheap, pay dear. The cheaper you buy someone for you'll pay for it later. – Falkirk

If you pay someone a minimum wage, they may not be happy about it. You may get disgruntled if you are not being paid well, they could start causing trouble. Falkirk

Participants in Falkirk felt there is scope for employers to *facilitate a greater understanding in the organisation of people's career pathways*. One participant made reference to a programme where the boss was asked to speak and tell everyone where he came from. This demonstrated to staff he had been at the bottom of the organisation too which increased their respect for him,

It's like a community business type thing. You take that issue away, it takes away the bad attitude [because] sometimes you look to the top as well and resent them. - Falkirk

The group said that a programme like this would foster respect. For them a key message for employers is, *Remember where you come from. - Falkirk*

And a message for employers and employees alike,

Do not demean a job until you know what's involved in it. – Falkirk

Someone working for the fire service in Falkirk said that managers who started out at the bottom of the organisation are often better managers because they respect their staff,

They start off at the bottom and they work their way up to be like that, but that doesn't stop them from coming down and talking to everyone. I think it is down to respect. There is a lot of respect between people there. - Falkirk

Recognising that *everyone's got a role to play* was seen as an important message for employers as well,

You need every piece in a cart or it can't move. So in a company every single person is important and plays a function. – Falkirk

Participants said that this starts with employers understanding the work of their workforce,

They should understand that not all of the tasks are equal and some of the tasks are truly onerous. I think some people at that end of the workforce feel isolated. They are not appreciated within their organisation. - Falkirk

In terms of learning the most important message was that employers need to *offer learning opportunities to all employees,*

The company I was with took me on a special course to help me with my career. They have me time to go off on a course. You have to be offered those opportunities. - Cardiff

This will enable employers to create a virtuous wellbeing-productivity circle described by one of the groups in Cardiff as,

Across the locations participants believed firmly that employers need to have a better understanding that a *happy workforce is a more productive workforce,*

They need to hear that if you increase your workforce's wellbeing there is less time off sick and it is more cost-effective. Increasing productivity. - Cardiff

Participants in Cardiff therefore called for wellbeing policies for the workplace, in particular a wellbeing policy around work-life balance which applies to all employees.

6.5 Learning providers

According to participants in Cardiff employers and learning providers have to work together to *ensure a wide ranging provision of learning opportunities is available which caters for different learning styles,*

A different range of stuff, courses and things like that. I myself are not very good at sitting in a classroom. I'm more of a hands-on sort of person. - Cardiff

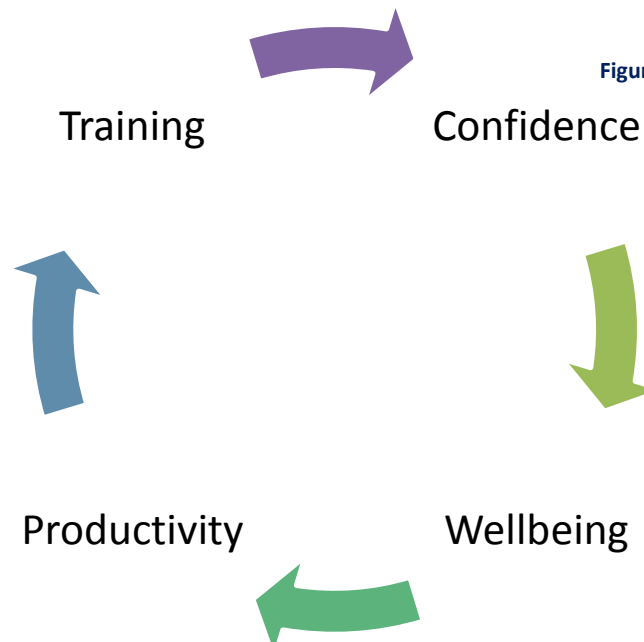


Figure 3: wellbeing productivity cycle

For participants in both locations *better promotion of learning opportunities* was a key message for learning providers,

I think learning providers need to be more visual. I probably couldn't name one that I would go to, and see the courses they had on offer. More targeted promotions. – Cardiff

If they don't advertise then people won't know about them. I don't know about half of them. - Cardiff

I was also thinking that the tutor or facilitator is there to encourage you. Practical and being specific. You have to know what you are working on what will make you happy through learning. – Cardiff

For one of the groups in Cardiff *accessibility of learning opportunities* was a key message. They said that flexibility is required to ensure people have the opportunity to take up learning,

Accessibility. That's what we want them to know, when does it suits our needs. There's no point having it on in the daytime. It needs to be on at a time to suit the public. – Cardiff

With reference to Scottish Vocational Qualifications there was a view in Falkirk that *learning has to be tailored and relevant to the needs of today's workplace,*

We've got something in Scotland called SVQs, they are quite important as they get you on the first ladder they are a basic starting point. I think a message to tell them is that they should tailor SVQs around the real world. Basically what they're doing is a lot of those SVQs are not relevant to the workplace. A lot of them are tailored around certain jobs which no longer exist. - Falkirk

6.6 Local, regional and national government

Participants felt that government has a big role to play when it comes to *encouraging people to continue learning*. With reference to the Inspire Awards case studies presented by NIACE someone in Cardiff said,

What struck me from watching those videos was how a lot of those people were not people who think to themselves without any prompting 'I'm going to take a course'. It was actually so good that they did because one of them who was homeless now has got a new life. I would say to reach out to the people that wouldn't think of it themselves. – Cardiff

There was a view that the cost of funding and *promoting learning opportunities* such as those offered through NIACE in Wales is money well spent,

It's so good that they do that because otherwise that woman probably would not have thought about it. Then actually the government might have thought that it is money to spend, but it's less money than she might have been drawing out using benefits. – Cardiff

Participants said that it is essential for the wellbeing of learners that *programmes continue to receive funding once they've started,*

If you are going to offer a service make sure you follow it through. Don't pull the plug on it after two years. – Cardiff

Participants in Cardiff also spoke about how it would be helpful if *participation was unrelated to a learner's geographic location*, particularly for those who live near the border of Wales and England. As someone said,

If I hadn't said I worked on the other side of the Severn Bridge I wouldn't have been able to do my NVQ 2 and 3 [in Engineering] because the government would not have paid for it. If you say you work in England then they will pay for it. A few years before it was available in Wales, but when I came to do it they said they don't pay for it in Wales. – Cardiff

In Falkirk some of the discussions focused on learners with special educational needs. It was felt to be important that local authorities around the country should *take people's learning difficulties into consideration and help disadvantaged people get into work.*

Not just the able-bodied people. The local authority should work as a united front to give learning difficulties sufferers an advantage. – Falkirk

There was a view that people with special needs are disadvantaged in Scotland and that there is a role for local authorities to ensure *continuous support* even when people have succeeded in finding a job,

Scottish people are disadvantaged if they have educational disabilities, the government pulled the plug on it [a tailored employment programme] because there was no funding, and suddenly you got lots of people, disadvantaged people, who can't understand what's going on. That had a massive mental health impact on them. – Falkirk

You may support them to get the job but you can't ignore the fact that they need continual support. Then can't wake up in the morning suddenly be able-bodied. – Falkirk

6.7 What Works Centre for Wellbeing

According to participants the What Works Centre for Wellbeing has a clear role to play in taking the learning from the dialogues to policy makers and employers. They urged the Centre to *translate the benefits of improved employee wellbeing to employers* and focus on inexpensive measures,

Could pick out things which don't cost any money that people could do. Because it seems like quite a few of them wouldn't cost any money to actually put in place it is just a different attitude. It could make such a massive difference. – Cardiff

Show it to employers something they can do to improve their wellbeing of their workers which will cost them nothing. – Cardiff

For one of the groups in Falkirk a key message for the What Works Centre for Wellbeing was,

Promote yourself. – Falkirk

This groups said that it is essential that the Centre's is clear about its role and who it is trying to reach with its work,

Quite often organisations of this type can have a bit of overreach and can't ever promote themselves because they don't really know who the client is. It's about understanding themselves and see who they wish to reach and it can't be everyone. - Falkirk

7. Concluding remarks

The four work, learning and wellbeing dialogue sessions in two locations demonstrated clearly that for work and learning to contribute to wellbeing investment needs to be made by individuals, employers, learning providers and society at large at a local and national level.

Significant factors that enhance wellbeing at work and whilst learning are a good environment; fair policies for remuneration; and occasions to learn. For both work and learning, opportunities to advance are important for wellbeing; as are satisfaction, fun and enjoyment from work or learning experiences. It is equally important to wellbeing that jobs are relevant to individual needs and skills and that learning undertaken in or outside work is relevant to the skills that the learner wishes to acquire.

Participants felt that their wellbeing whilst at work or whilst learning was highly dependent on the quality of managers and tutors running training courses.

Learning outside work was an area that participants were keen to explore, whether they had or had not done so as yet. This needs to be balanced with other pressures in their lives so that it contributes to wellbeing rather than having an adverse impact when it becomes another task to complete, rather than just being fun or inspiring.

Participants in the dialogue were clear that there is an opportunity for the What Works Centre for Wellbeing to communicate the dialogue findings to employers, learning providers and policy makers so that:

- Employers recognise the importance of outwardly valuing the skills and experience of their staff and their significance to the workforce as human beings, not robots
- Local adult learning provision is relevant for the local population and caters for a range of learning styles
- Policy makers encourage people to continue to learn throughout their lives, providing appropriate support when the barriers outweigh the benefits in participating in learning.

Participants appreciated the What Works Centre's approach to informing their future strategy by listening to the voice of the public. They expressed the hope that this dialogue and ongoing conversations with the public would inform the development of inexpensive measures to inform the work/ learning wellbeing policies of the future.

All participants were encouraged by the dialogic approach and expressed the hope that the Centre will take the findings resultant from their fruitful discussions further as they develop their work programmes.

8. Acknowledgements

HVM is enormously grateful to the public dialogue participants in Cardiff and Falkirk. They made a great contribution to the programme in honestly and openly sharing their life-long experiences in work and whilst experiencing learning inside and outside work. All participants were engaging and committed to giving up their Saturdays to take part. Some of their voices can be heard, talking about their experience of the process, in the short film *Sharing work and learning* available here:

http://bit.ly/SharingWorklearning_HVM

The specialist contributors to the programme who gave their time and knowledge to both the delivery team and the participants helped us all reflect meaningfully on sport, culture and wellbeing. We acknowledge the support of those who attended sessions giving presentations and providing information in response to participant questions: Professor Huw Davies, Dr. Richard Thurston and James Carey from the Welsh Government; Cerys Furlong and Kay Smith from NIACE Wales; Fiona McFarlane from Falkirk Council; Francis Stuart from Oxfam Scotland; Professor Kevin Daniels, University of East Anglia (work and learning evidence team lead) and Mark Bryan, University of Sheffield (work and learning evidence team member). We are also grateful to Galgael for sharing their film.

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What Works | Wellbeing



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