**Paper Abstract: Understanding wellbeing amongst young people: engaging young people through ‘contemporary science debate’**

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There is growing interest in wellbeing both nationally and internationally in the context of broader critiques of economic measures as adequate measures of societal progress. These debates have reached centre-stage with the recent economic crisis. Wellbeing is being positioned as an alternative that provides a more rounded view of people’s lives; capturing how they think and feel; the values of society and how people experience life. With this has come a parallel interest in both measuring and understanding wellbeing amongst younger people (UNICEF, 2007; ‘Good Childhood Inquiry’, 2009). For example, it is increasingly recognised that service initiatives targeting younger people and children will be ineffective unless they incorporate the experiences of children and young people from their own perspectives (nef, 2009). To date, there is agreement that there is a need for a more sustained effort to ask young people and children *directly* about what contributes to their wellbeing. This raises important questions about *how* young people and children should be engaged in discussions about what wellbeing means to them.

This paper provides an initial assessment of an innovative approach to eliciting young people’s views on wellbeing in Wales using the vehicle of ‘contemporary science debates’ (CSD) used by Techniquest in partnership with the Office of National Statistics (ONS) and Cardiff University. CSD is designed to engage young people in innovative and participative discussions on social and ethical issues associated with contemporary science. Here, it is used to provide young people with a chance to debate the relevance of wellbeing to their every-day lives and gives them an opportunity to make their opinions heard. The paper explores the value of using this approach as a methodology for gathering information on what young people understand about wellbeing, which aspects of wellbeing are important and their views on how wellbeing should be measured.

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