

**Short Warwick  
Edinburgh Mental  
Wellbeing Scale  
(SWEMWBS)  
Training Resource**

# Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS) Training Resource

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## Aim of the resource

To equip people with the skills to effectively and robustly collect and analyse data using SWEMWBS to evaluate the effectiveness of their projects, programmes or services in improving mental wellbeing.

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## Who is the resource for?

**This toolkit is for anyone using or commissioning the use of the Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS).**

This toolkit is not designed to be a comprehensive guide covering all ways in which SWEMWBS can be used and analysed. It is designed to be an easy to read and understand toolkit to equip people with the knowledge to correctly use SWEMWBS and analyse the results, within community settings to help ensure that the results are robust and valid. It has been co-produced with third sector partners pulling on expertise and experience to provide valuable insights on how to use the tool confidently and compassionately. Full details and guidelines on use are available on The University of Warwick website.

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## Learning Outcomes

This toolkit will provide people with the knowledge and tools to:

- Compassionately and confidently set-up and administer the SWEMWBS measurement tool with participants
- Understand when and in what circumstances it is most appropriate to implement the tool
- Analyse the data
- Interpret and report the results

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# Introduction to Mental Wellbeing and SWEMWBS

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## What is mental wellbeing?

Mental or Emotional Well-being is about being functionally well and feeling good. It refers to a state of thriving in various aspects of life, such as relationships, work, and personal interests. It includes how we think, handle emotions, and act, in response to life's ups and downs.

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## Key components of mental wellbeing include:

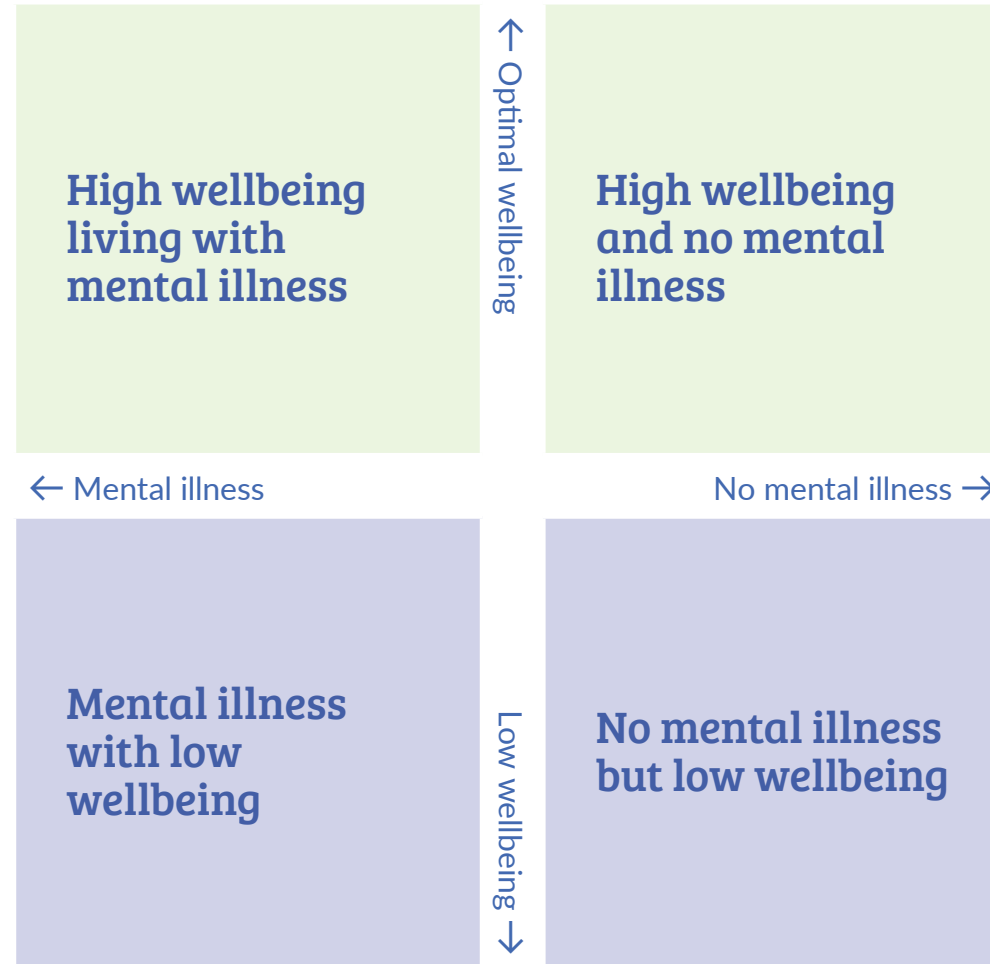
-  Self-acceptance: Recognising and valuing your own worth.
-  Emotional resilience: Thriving despite challenges and adversity.
-  Healthy relationships: Maintaining supportive and positive connections.
-  Optimism: Having a hopeful outlook on life.
-  Purpose: Engaging in activities that bring meaning and fulfilment.

Mental wellbeing is not just the absence of mental health conditions. It is being aware of your emotional and mental states and recognising how you feel and why you feel that way. Enjoying happy moments and when things are tough, being gentle and understanding with yourself and working to change things you do or think that make you feel bad.

Mental health is not an all or nothing concept – it can change frequently. Mental health is affected by lots of things such as our work, home life, relationships, physical health and more. Sometimes things that others perceive as positive for our mental health can have negative impacts, for example getting a new job, moving house or starting a family.

We will all experience difficulties at some point during our life. Depending on what's going on in our lives, our psychological and emotional state is always changing. We can't conveniently slot people into boxes. The Mental Health and Mental Wellbeing Continuum is a helpful way to understand how mental health and wellbeing are different but connected. It shows how they affect each other and helps us see the whole picture of our mental state.

## Mental Health and Mental Wellbeing Continuum



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## Mental wellbeing is also a key determinant of physical health. For example:

- **Heart Health:** Chronic stress and anxiety can lead to increased heart rate and blood pressure, which over time can contribute to heart disease.
- **Sleep Quality:** Mental health issues like anxiety and depression can lead to sleep disturbances, which in turn affect physical health. Quality sleep is essential for overall well-being.
- **Weight and Metabolism:** Mental health and wellbeing can influence eating habits and physical activity levels. Stress and emotional distress can lead to overeating or undereating, affecting body weight and metabolism.
- **Musculoskeletal:** Mental wellbeing significantly impacts musculoskeletal health, particularly back pain, through factors like stress, mental health, physical activity, and posture.

## Why measure wellbeing?

### Measuring wellbeing at a population level is important and has multiple benefits:

#### It can establish a baseline in a specific population:

- **Tracking Progress:** By having a starting point, it becomes possible to measure changes over time. This is essential for evaluating the impact of programmes, services or interventions aimed at improving wellbeing.
- **Identifying Needs:** A baseline helps to identify the current state of wellbeing within the group. This can highlight areas where interventions are needed most, ensuring that resources are allocated effectively.
- **Evidence-Based Decision Making:** Data from baseline measurements can inform policymakers and practitioners, leading to more informed and effective decisions. This ensures that actions taken are based on actual needs and evidence.

### To help identify where to target interventions or investments:

- **Maximising Impact:** By focusing on areas with the greatest need or potential for improvement, resources can be allocated where they are needed most. This ensures that interventions have the maximum possible impact on the target population.
- **Addressing Inequalities:** Targeted interventions can help address disparities and inequalities within a population. By identifying and focusing on underserved or vulnerable groups, interventions can promote greater social equity and inclusion.

### To measure the impact of interventions or programmes:

- **Assessing Effectiveness:** measuring the impact helps determine whether the intervention is achieving its intended outcomes. This assessment is crucial for understanding what works and what doesn't, allowing for adjustments and improvements.

- **Building Support:** Demonstrating the positive impact of a programme or service can help build support among stakeholders, including funders, policymakers, and the community. This support is crucial for the sustainability and expansion of successful programmes.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Regularly measuring impact fosters a culture of continuous improvement. It encourages ongoing evaluation and adaptation, leading to more effective and responsive programmes and services.

## What is SWEMWBS?

The Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (SWEMWBS) is a validated measure of mental wellbeing that has been used nationally, regionally and locally. It is a concise tool designed to measure mental wellbeing.

It is a shortened version of Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) a 14-item questionnaire that produces a single score. It consists of 7 positively worded statements that focus on aspects of mental functioning, such as feeling useful, relaxed, and optimistic about the future.

1. **Statements and Responses:** The seven statements are rated on a 5-point scale, from “none of the time” to “all of the time.” This helps capture the frequency of positive mental states. Participants are asked to think about how they felt over the previous two weeks when completing the scales and not how they are feeling in that moment.
2. **Scoring:** The scores for each item are summed to create a total raw score, which is then transformed into a metric score using a conversion table. This ensures consistency and comparability across different studies.
3. **Focus on Functioning:** Unlike some other scales that might focus more on emotional states, SWEMWBS emphasises mental functioning, providing a slightly different perspective on mental wellbeing.
4. **Validation:** The scale has been validated for various populations, including minority ethnic groups, young people and the general population, ensuring its reliability and accuracy in measuring mental wellbeing.

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## The Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (SWEMWBS)\*

Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts. Please tick the box that best describes your experience of each over the last 2 weeks.

Task: Have a go at completing the SWEMWBS survey yourself. What did you think about this? How did it make you feel?

Statements	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling useful	1	2	3	4	5
I've been thinking clearly	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling relaxed	1	2	3	4	5
I've been dealing with problems well	1	2	3	4	5

\* The Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (SWEMWBS) ©NHS Health Scotland, University of Warwick and University of Edinburgh, 2008, all rights reserved.

Statements	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
I've been feeling close to other people	1	2	3	4	5
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	1	2	3	4	5

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## Why use SWEMWBS?

Across Leeds, multiple organisations use SWEMWBS to measure mental health and wellbeing and functioning. This ensures the best possible robustness in collecting, analysing and interpretation of the data.

### It is a validated tool for measuring wellbeing.

Validated tools provide accurate and reliable results. This ensures that the data collected is trustworthy and can be used to make informed decisions. Validation ensures that the tool produces consistent results across different populations and settings. This consistency is essential for comparing data and tracking changes over time.

### SWEMWBS allows you to measure changes over time.

Being able to see the change in someone's scores between two points in time makes it an ideal tool to evaluate the impact of an intervention or project.

### Can be used as the starting point of a conversation about mental wellbeing.

Starting conversations about mental health can promote overall wellbeing by encouraging healthy coping strategies

and resilience. Open discussions help break down the stigma associated with mental health issues. This encourages more people to seek help without feeling ashamed or judged. Talking about mental health helps people understand how important it is to feel good mentally. It also shows that many people face mental health challenges, which can make communities more understanding and caring.

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## What interventions can be measured with SWEMWBS?

SWEMWBS has been shown to be a valid tool to measure changes in wellbeing with a variety of types of programmes and interventions in the UK and globally. For example:

1. Public health – for monitoring population mental wellbeing and evaluating mental health improvement programmes
2. Workplaces (including in occupational health), schools and local authorities
3. Communities particularly in evaluating work of charities and third sector organisations
4. Clinical settings particularly where promotion of strengths, assets and recovery are important
5. Governments and businesses

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## When is using SWEMWBS not appropriate?

SWEMWBS is a versatile tool, but there are certain situations where it might not be suitable. Using SWEMWBS in the right context ensures that the data collected is accurate and meaningful, leading to better insights and outcomes.

- **As a diagnostic tool:** SWEMWBS is not designed to be an individual diagnostic tool it should not be used to “diagnose” a person’s poor mental health.
- **Children Under 11:** SWEMWBS is not recommended for use with children under the age of 11. For younger children, other scales like the Stirling Children’s Wellbeing Scale or the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire are more appropriate.
- **People who do not speak a language that SWEMWBS has been translated:** If the respondents are not proficient in English and there are no validated translations available, the results may not be reliable. It’s important to use validated translations to ensure accuracy. Translations are available on [The University of Warwick](#) website. If you require a translation that is not already validated and available to download, but you are able to produce a version via a native language speaker, this can be submitted to The University of Warwick for approval and validation.
- **Very Short-Term Interventions:** SWEMWBS measures wellbeing over the past two weeks. For interventions shorter than this period, it might not capture the immediate changes effectively.

For information on alternative ways to measure wellbeing visit the [Wellbeing Measures Bank](#) website.

# How To Use SWEMWBS

This section will cover your preparation for using SWEMWBS to get the best out of the tool and the most robust and reliable data.

## Gaining permission

**SWEMWBS is free to use by public and third sector organisations. Private businesses are required to pay for their licence, even if they are providing services to public and third sector organisations.**

Both free and paid for users **MUST** register for a licence\*\* to use SWEMWBS by completing an online registration form on the WEMWBS website: <https://warwick.ac.uk/services/innovations/wemwbs>

\*\* Registration is only required once per organisation and is not required to be done by individuals within the organisation. Please check with your manager if you are unsure if this registration has taken place.

The scales and questions must not be altered in any way. This includes:

- The wording and phrasing of the SWEMWBS introductory paragraph and instructions for people completing the scale;
- The wording and phrasing of all questions within SWEMWBS including the translation into other languages;
- Removal, replacement or changes to the order of the questions within SWEMWBS;
- The coding or scoring of question responses within SWEMWBS;
- The method of calculation of scores and interpretation of results.

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## Planning

It is useful to think ahead before using the tool. Here are some useful pointers to consider in advance of using:

- Group numbers. Studies need to include at least 30 people with data collected at two points in time, but the more participants the more precise and robust the measurement will be. If a programme or service is made up of smaller groups, data and results are more robust if data is analysed together across the service. Practically, this means all SWEMWBS completed would be inputted on one spreadsheet and analysed together.
- Depending on the type of group or activity, to gather the data, you may wish to print copies of the SWEMWBS for people to complete by hand. For some groups, a digital version may be more suitable than a paper version, for example a walking or gardening group may find paper versions difficult.
- You will need to consider the space and time for completion and if there is anyone requiring additional help/support, including time for participants consider their answers and to ask questions about the tool and how it will be used.
- Ideally, creating a quiet space, where people have space to sit without being overlooked by others will ensure the best environment for completion. However, this is not always possible, depending on the type of group and the activity. Take advantage of “natural breaks” for example at the beginning or end of an activity, during a tea break or rest/ water break if it is an activity-based group.
- Consider if your group members would appreciate being able to read and/or talk through SWEMWBS before being asked to complete it.
- Consider if your participants read and understand a different language to English. SWEMWBS is translated into various languages, for example Urdu and simplified Chinese. There are also validated versions for people with learning difficulties and one for people who are deaf. These can all be accessed on the University of Warwick website after registration.
- If a person is unable to read, the questions can be read out as long as the answers are self-completed confidentially. SWEMWBS has not been tested for interviewer completion (with the interviewer reading the statements out and filling in the responses for them). This is therefore not recommended unless necessary for helping people with visual impairments or reading difficulties.

- Consider advising the group that you intend measuring any group benefits both at the beginning of the group and at the group end. There needs to be a minimum of 2 weeks between measurements, if the group is ongoing then agree a time frame for measurement, generally the longer the time between collecting the first survey and the second survey, the better, for example every 8-10 weeks as you are more likely to see any beneficial impact from the group.
- As every situation and group will be different and have different needs, try to use yours and colleagues experience and understanding of the group to decide the best way to use. Ideally allow time for people to settle into the group and feel comfortable.
- You may wish to consider combining any end of group celebration with completing the evaluation if your group is time limited.

## Introducing SWEMWBS

**The more people completing SWEMWBS, the more precise the findings, ideally 50% of a group should complete a questionnaire to give you an indication of the mental wellbeing of the group.** Use your experience and knowledge to judge whether it may be best for a particular person to complete a form or not.

## Explanation of what SWEMWBS is and why it is being used

**Before you start you must explain what SWEMWBS is, why you are asking them to complete it and gain consent. Your judgement of the situation and person is important, and you may feel it's not the right time for someone to be completing SWEMWBS. Always thank people for their time regardless.**

SWEMWBS can be described to participants as 'statements about their thoughts and feelings in the past two weeks'. Explain that you would like to ask them about these statements now and again at a later date, to help you follow the effects of this project/service, as it is important to know how the project/service/group is affecting people's wellbeing, with an understanding that our wellbeing can go up and down during daily, weekly and monthly periods.

It is important to let participants know that their responses are collected without judgement, it is not a “personal score”, everyone’s scores will be added together therefore no-one’s individual score will be identified. So, people can be confident in knowing they can answer truthfully without judgement.

Participants might find it useful to know that SWEMWBS has been specifically designed and tested for measuring the impact of projects such as this one and is widely used across many services. However, participants should be made aware that SWEMWBS is not part of the intervention/ service, that they do not have to complete the questionnaire if they don’t want to, and their decision will not affect the service offered to them.

It may also be useful to let participants know that this is an opportunity for you to “check in” on their wellbeing and offer support if needed. SWEMWBS can often be the gateway to conversations about mental health that may otherwise not happen. Please see next section (Risks to participants and additional support).

Provide space for people to ask any questions and be prepared to answer them.

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## Risks to participants and additional support

Completing SWEMWBS may be triggering for some people. For some, having the space and time to consider how they are feeling is not normal practise for them. Even realising that a person’s mental wellbeing is low, isn’t a bad thing. Knowing is the first step towards taking action.

If someone scores a low score, indicating low level of mental wellbeing, or becomes upset regardless of score, be prepared with what extra support you can offer, this could be time to chat through or signposting to onward services.

If you are aware of any particularly vulnerable people within your group, if possible, it is worth considering if you can do their SWEMWBS on a 1:1 basis where support can be more easily offered if needed or use your judgement whether it is appropriate to ask at all.

Having signposting resources such as the ‘How Are You Feeling?’ leaflets or ‘Feel Like You’ve Had Enough?’ cards somewhere for people to access either when handing out or handing back in the completed forms, would be useful for people who may not feel comfortable discussing their feelings but would like to access to further support. Please visit the [Mindwell](#) website for more resources.

For further local training opportunities on positive conversations, see [Making Every Contact Count \(MECC\)](#) and [Better Conversations](#).

# Collecting the Data

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## Assigning identifiers

Each person completing a SWEMWBS questionnaire needs a unique code (not their full name) to compare their responses over time. This code can be an initial, number, or other identifier. Record this code so staff can refer to it during the analysis if required. Assign the code at registration and store it in a password-protected file. Keep this information separate from the SWEMWBS data. Within services it is often easiest to use the persons number/code which was assigned when they registered with the service.

Depending on the service or programme it may be helpful to include demographic information on the questionnaire. This is usually not needed when part of a service as this information is collected at registration into the service.

## Storing completed forms

Once you receive completed questionnaires back, it is best to check them and to make notes on the front sheet if, for example, there are any missing sections and ensuring the unique identifying code is there. The paper questionnaires and digital data should be stored in line with your organisations data protection policies.

## Additional information

If copying the questionnaire for use within a booklet or any other material, please ensure you add the below copyright statement.

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# Analysing and Interpreting the Data

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## Inputting data

### Analysing the data will help you understand your results.

Data must be inputted into the **official template spreadsheet** for it to be correctly analysed. The spreadsheet will use a matrix to convert raw data and numbers into scores. It is important that the scores are calculated properly, and the raw or original scores from the questionnaire are not used in any analysis.

This spreadsheet is available to download after registering on the Warwick Medical School website. Registering only needs to be done once by the organisation using SWEMWBS, the downloaded spreadsheet can then be shared with all those within the organisation using SWEMWBS for data input.

**Please check with your manager for procedures on inputting data and keeping personal information safe.**

The spreadsheet provides descriptive statistics and statistics that measure any change.

Input your data by recording data for each individual on a separate row. The spreadsheet contains the following column headings:

- Unique identifier code – on both questionnaires
- Date of completion of first (pre) questionnaire
- Score of each question (1-5) from first questionnaire
- Sum of scores (the worksheet calculates this automatically)
- Date of completion of second (post) questionnaire
- Score of each question (1-5) from second questionnaire
- Sum of scores (the worksheet calculates this automatically)
- Record any additional data you are collecting e.g. age, employment status, ethnicity

The worksheet will check that the questionnaires were done 2 weeks apart.

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## Missing data

Only include participants who have a pre and post score. If any of the scores are missing, then do not include their scores when inputting onto the spreadsheet for analysis.

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## Analysing and Interpreting

The data is analysed automatically by the spreadsheet. This will enable you to measure levels of mental wellbeing in your group and the impact of your work. The spreadsheet will tell you:

1. How many responses were inputted
2. How many of these responses were categorised as having low, medium and high functioning mental health and wellbeing.
  - » This is broken down further by age and gender (if inputted).
  - » The percentages of respondents who had a positive change and a negative change.
3. There are also useful descriptive statistics:
  - » The mean SWEMWBS score and by how the scores are distributed (Standard deviation).
  - » The mean change in SWEMWBS scores over the 2 time-points and if this was a statistically significant difference. A statistically significant result means that the change over time is unlikely to have happened by chance.

**Mean score:** A mean score, is often referred to as the average score. It is the middle point of all the scores combined.

**Mean change:** Mean change is a way to describe how much something has changed on average over a period of time.

**Statistically significant:** Statistical significance is a way to tell if the results of a study or evaluation are likely to be true and not just due to random chance. If something is statistically significant, it means the result is probably not just a fluke and there's likely something real going on.

**Standard deviation:** Standard deviation is a measure of how spread out the numbers in a data set are. It tells you how much the individual numbers differ from the average (mean) of the data set.

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Whether a change is statistically significant or not depends on several factors: the number of participants completing the SWEMWBS questionnaires, the average change in scores, and the amount of variation in those scores. Therefore, it's not possible to definitively say what sample size will get statistically significant results. However, as a general guideline, at least 30 before-and-after values are typically needed to achieve statistical significance. This doesn't mean you shouldn't use SWEMWBS to evaluate an intervention with fewer than 30 people, as you may still obtain valuable insights even if the results aren't statistically significant.

**Wilcoxon signed rank test & P value:** Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test: This is a statistical test used to compare two sets of paired data, to test if the change is statistically significant. Using this method produces a P value which tells you how likely it is that the results you got happened by chance.

**Low P Value (e.g., < 0.05):** This means the results are unlikely to have happened by chance. So, you can be more confident that the change you see is real.

**High P Value (e.g., > 0.05):** This means the results could easily have happened by chance. So, you can't be sure that the change is real.

The spreadsheet will automatically calculate all of these for you.

## Examples of analysis from the spreadsheet:

		Before intervention	After intervention	Change	Positive change?	Statistically significant change?	Wilcoxon signed rank test P value
<b>Descriptive statistics</b>							
Total no. of responses		40	40				
% Low wellbeing		35%	20%				
% Moderate wellbeing		65%	70%				
% High wellbeing		0%	10%				
Mean score		24.3	26	1.21	Yes	Yes	p<0.05
Standard deviation		4.2	4.1	1.6			
By age	13-15	27.7	29.6	1.86	Yes		
	16-24	24.5	27.0	2.50	Yes		
	25-39	18.7	19.2	0.52	Yes		
	40-54	24.7	25.2	0.46	Yes		
	55-64	26.5	27.3	0.83	Yes		
By gender	65+	24.2	25.5	1.33	Yes		
	Male	24.6	26.1	1.43	Yes		
	Female	24.1	25.1	1.03	Yes		
Number of people with a meaningful positive change (%)					8	20.0 %	
Number of people with a meaningful negative change (%)					2	5.0 %	

Descriptive statistics														
			I've been feeling optimistic about the future	I've been feeling useful	I've been feeling relaxed	I've been dealing with problems well	I've been thinking clearly	I've been feeling close to other people	I've been able to make up my mind about things		Total SWEMWBS score change	Positive change?	Statistically significant change?	Wilcoxon signed rank test P value
			1	2	3	6	7	9	11					
	<b>Total no. of responses</b>		40	38	40	38	40	40	38					
	<b>Mean change</b>		0.40	-0.03	0.15	0.21	0.15	0.19	0.16		1.21	Yes	Yes	p<0.05

Multiple spreadsheets can be downloaded to record and analyse different data.

The total number of participants and completed questionnaires need to be clear in the interpretation of your results. If you have more questionnaires at the beginning than the end – all the questionnaires at the beginning can be used to measure the wellbeing of the group you included in the project or programme but only those questionnaires for which you have matching at a later time can be used to calculate change.

When using SWEMWBS, it is important to consider that scores might not always change or improve immediately. This does not necessarily mean there is no impact. Scores can fluctuate due to a range of factors, and it often takes time to see significant changes. Patience and a comprehensive view are key in evaluating well-being improvements.

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## Reporting on your Work

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In addition to presenting the data, consider discussing the mechanisms you believe have contributed to the improvement in people's mental well-being. You might also include interviews, feedback, or case studies to gain insights into how smoothly the service or programme has been running and their perceptions of the programme overall. This additional information can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the project's impact.

Think about different situations and what reporting is most appropriate and to whom – e.g. an organisation to commissioner, an organisation as part of a funding bid or a commissioner to strategic boards etc. Different parts of the analysis may be more appropriate to focus on depending on the audience and purpose of the report.

**Use the following reference for any new documents reproduced or any documents outlining your SWEMWBS results (such as reports, presentations):**

*"The Reproduction copyrights for WEMWBS are as follows and must be presented on any copy of WEMWBS used : "Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) © NHS Health Scotland, University of Warwick and University of Edinburgh, 2006, all rights reserved".*

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