

Understanding the importance of health and wellbeing



U&C aim to create distinctive places with high ecological and social value embedded within which also serve to enhance physical and mental health and improve quality of life for all. Health and wellbeing is one of our universal challenges and last year we introduced a 2025 target to ensure that U&C comprehensively measure whether we have achieved this aim.

Our journey to ensure our new communities support and drive health and wellbeing can be traced back to early engagement with Sport England on Active Design principles for Alconbury Weald and Houlton; and developed as NHS England reviewed the learnings from the Healthy New Town pilots. Lockdowns during Covid also powerfully proved the point of how layout and design influences people's levels of physical activity and more resilient mental health.

U&C were keen to set out a strategy to embed this into the delivery of our sites and with health and wellbeing such a clear priority within national and international frameworks, it was established as one of three universal challenges within the Sustainability Framework. Delivery is then supported through the setting of the Quality of Life metric.

Quality of Life

Working with the Quality of Life Foundation, the U&C Communities and Partnerships team, developed a pilot to support the community reflect on aspects of their day to day lives and which forms part of the Quality of Life metric. The measures developed by the foundation break down into the following themes:

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| ① Control | ② Health | ③ Nature |
| ④ Wonder | ⑤ Movement | ⑥ Belonging |

The pilot involved Quality of Life Resident Review Surveys in three of our more developed communities – Alconbury Weald, Houlton and Priors Hall Park. The survey has been developed with both 'core' and 'additional context' questions, with ONS benchmark questions included against each theme to enable a comparison with the national average. Another key strength of the Foundation's approach is the analysis of the survey by both statisticians and sociologists who compare the results with the benchmarks and develop recommendations and priority areas.



Understanding the importance of health and wellbeing continued

Quality of Life continued

The process was supported by the local Communities teams and included:

- Online and face-to-face surveys
- Flyers, incentives, social media targeted ads, attendance at community events
- Community team promotion and endorsement.

It was a great endorsement that each development surveyed marked above ONS on all standards, bar one, which given the early stage of the developments studied, was highlighted by the Foundation as “a phenomenal achievement”.

Other key areas highlighted by the survey findings for U&C to take forward include:

- Greater public transport connections and active travel initiatives
- Understanding cost and quality that goes into ongoing maintenance of local green spaces
- Intergenerational provision of play and community space, especially for teenagers and older people
- Opportunities for residents to influence decisions in the local area
- Increased provision of shops and services, which residents acknowledged would come in future phases of the developments.

The detailed findings of the surveys have been analysed by the U&C project teams and a commitment made to develop an action plan for each site and share with residents to respond to some of the issues raised. This is part of our commitment to building a continued engagement cycle with residents, shaping and influencing the development around them and ensuring we continue to improve our places and put the community at the heart of that process. We have also committed to repeating the surveys every two years to ensure we can continue to monitor the outcomes, and create truly empowered, sustainable and healthy communities.

I have access to an adequate amount of public or shared green space close to my home



Are you happy with the standard of green space in your area?

