

# Supplementary guidance on Situation and Response Analysis in Assessment of Local Well-being

## Background

This short guidance note is supplementary to the 2015 non-statutory guidance: Public services boards: guidance on the use of evidence and analysis. It deals specifically with Situation Analysis and Response Analysis and aims to clarify the roles they should play in relation to the Assessment of Local Well-being. It does not, at this stage, address the use of evidence in the Local Well-being Plans.

The supplementary guidance was developed following a series of drop-in clinics for Public Services Boards across Wales in May and June 2016, where Situation Analysis and Response Analysis was the issue most commonly discussed amongst people working on Assessments of Local Well-being. Clarification was offered at those drop-in clinics on how Situation Analysis and Response Analysis should fit in to scheme of activities around assessing well-being. This note summarises these points of clarification<sup>1</sup> and is intended as additional guidance for PSBs.

## What are Situation Analysis and Response Analysis?

### Key messages:

- Situation Analysis and Response Analysis are not entities in themselves.
- They are different forms of analysis with different purposes and approaches, which should be used alongside one another in Assessments of Local Well-being.

**Situation Analysis** is the broad analysis of cultural, social, economic and environmental well-being in an area, which will build an understanding of an area's context, challenges and opportunities and begin to highlight areas which PSBs may wish to prioritise. Situation Analysis is likely to be *largely* quantitative in nature, using summary statistics, time series and spatial patterns to paint a broad picture of an area's well-being. Situation Analysis may also include qualitative evidence, where relevant, to supplement quantitative analysis.

**Response Analysis** is a more detailed form of analysis which will use evidence in a more challenging, evaluative way to:

- Explore the factors which drive or cause the patterns and trends identified in the Situation Analysis;
- Inform the selection of priorities for local areas by the PSB, which will in turn inform discussions around the content of the Local Well-being Plan;

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<sup>1</sup> To set this guidance note in its proper context, readers are reminded that Situation and Response Analysis have no legal status and there is no requirement to adhere to them as an analytical model. They have, however, been widely accepted and adopted by PSBs.

- Assess the possibilities for how local services might respond to particular challenges or opportunities (or are responding currently);

Response Analysis may be either qualitative or quantitative in nature, but should aim to develop explanations and explore causes, rather than describe patterns and trends.

Table 1 illustrates the key differences between Situation and Response Analysis:

**Table 1:** the main differences between Situation Analysis and Response Analysis

<b>Situation Analysis</b>	<b>Response Analysis</b>
Descriptive – looks at what, where, how much? and what has changed	Explanatory – looks at why, how, so what and what if?
Largely quantitative – summary statistics, time series, spatial variation. Uses qualitative evidence to help paint the broad picture of an area’s well-being	Mixed methods – marries qualitative and quantitative data to infer causes, understand factors, explain patterns and develop and evaluate interventions.
Mainly concerned with how things are – a summary of an area’s current state well-being	Concerned with why things are as they are; which factors affect local well-being; the impact of existing interventions on well-being; and what sorts of interventions could work towards well-being in future.
Comprehensive – covering the four domains of Well-being in the WFG Act and linkages across them	Selective – identifying a sub-set of issues to examine in greater detail

Understanding of the types of activities that constitute Situation Analysis is far stronger than for Response Analysis. By its very nature, Response Analysis is more difficult to define and to align to a set of activities. But indicatively, Response Analysis might include elements of the following<sup>2</sup>:

- Reviewing research evidence on different types of problems and interventions, particularly around causal mechanisms and the factors influencing well-being;
- Deeper exploration of data through inferential statistics (e.g. regression, significance testing, analysis of variance);

<sup>2</sup> These are only intended as examples of the types of analysis PSBs *might* employ; they are not a recommendation of what Response Analysis *should* involve.

- In-depth qualitative research with individuals or groups, to explore attitudes, understand factors or test ideas;
- Evaluations to test the effectiveness of interventions and assess the outcomes they produce.

## The Relationship between Situation Analysis and Response Analysis

### Key messages:

- Response Analysis need not feature heavily in Assessments of Local Well-being; its main role is likely to be in relation to the Local Well-being Plan
- Realistically, the Assessment of Local Well-being will be comprised indicatively of 80-90% Situation Analysis and 10-20% Response Analysis.

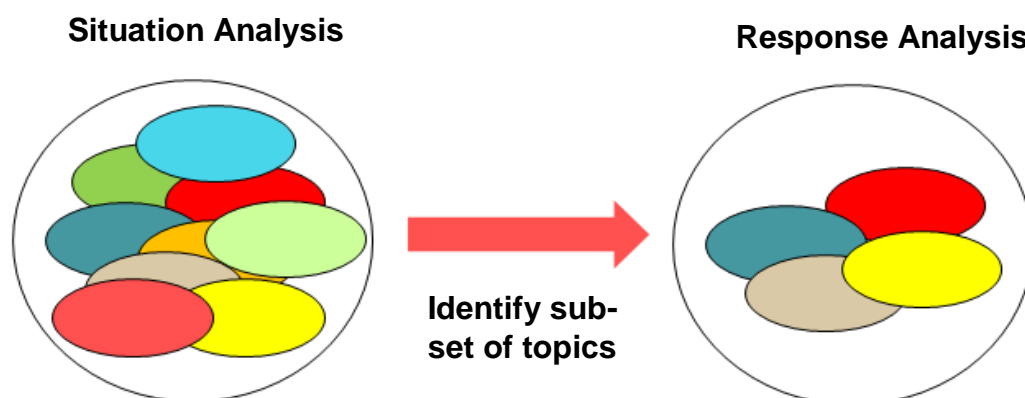
The questions of where Situation Analysis and Response Analysis fit in to Assessment of Local Well-being, and how they relate to one another, have been posed frequently.

It should first be noted that Situation Analysis and Response Analysis are not mutually exclusive approaches. It is reasonable to expect that PSBs will use them interchangeably and in parallel, as circumstances demand. But it is also reasonable to assert that Situation Analysis and Response Analysis lend themselves more readily to particular purposes. Situation Analysis lends itself more to assessing well-being at a relatively high level, while Response Analysis lends itself to understanding issues in more depth and scoping possible solutions. On this basis, it is suggested that:

- The Assessment of Local Well-being will be largely made up of Situation Analysis. While there can clearly no hard and fast rules governing the proportions, it would be appropriate to aim for 80-90% Situation Analysis and 10-20% Response Analysis within the Assessment.
- Realistically, the *bulk* of the Response Analysis should take place after the Assessment has been completed. At this point, a sub-set of priority areas for further analysis should be identified by each PSB, based on the Situation Analysis.
- These priority areas will be subject to for further exploration and research, to inform the development of the well-being objectives for the area and, in turn, the Local Well-being Plan.

Figure 1 illustrates how the Situation Analysis (basically the Assessment of Local Well-being) focuses on a relatively broad range of topics, from which a sub-set will be identified for further examination in the Response Analysis (by implication this will be the basis of the Local Well-being Plan).

**Figure 1:** The relationship between Situation and Response Analysis



As Figure 1 suggests, it is reasonable that Response Analysis, because it is relatively in-depth and more exploratory in nature, will take place on a relatively narrow range of topics, the identification of which will be informed by the Situation Analysis. It is unrealistic to undertake Response Analysis on the full range of topics included in the Assessment of Local Well-being. Although not dealt with here, the process for selecting a sub-set of priorities based on the Situation Analysis would ideally be an objective and robust process, drawing heavily on the evidence and accompanying advice.

### **Response Analysis in Assessments of Local Well-being**

If the Assessment of Local Well-being is to comprise 80-90% Situation Analysis, it is necessary to consider what the 10-20% component of Response Analysis could involve. Whilst there is no prescription on this, the 10-20% could usefully:

1. Begin to pose the ‘how’, ‘why’ and so what?’ questions – looking beyond the basic patterns and trends in the Situation Analysis to identify what additional work may need to be carried out to improve understanding, for example<sup>3</sup>:
  - The proportion of young people NEET in the area has decreased, but we do not know whether/how our NEET interventions have contributed to this decrease. We will conduct some further research to explore this as part of our Response Analysis.
  - Our public engagement evidence suggests our residents place a high value on access to green spaces and regard this as an asset to the area. We do not know whether this is reflected in people’s behaviour, in terms of how, and how frequently, they utilise green spaces. We will commission some data gathering to address this question, which will inform our strategy for managing the area’s green spaces and promoting physical activity.
  - Our data indicate childhood obesity is a particular problem for the area and we have a range of interventions attempting to address

<sup>3</sup> These are hypothetical examples to demonstrate the sorts of questions that could be posed for later analysis

the issue through various mechanisms. In order to guide the PSB's decision as to which interventions to support and invest in, we will draw lessons from international evidence and form a view on the types of approaches most likely to succeed.

- The Situation Analysis indicates that flooding has become increasingly prevalent in this area of the catchment, exacerbated by a long-standing drainage issue further upstream. We will undertake some research on how this has impacted on the social and economic well-being of residents, particularly as the area is socially deprived and its resilience has been affected by a succession of floods.

In this scenario, the role of Response Analysis in the Assessment of Local Well-being is to lay the foundations for further research and analysis to inform the Local Well-being Plan. It need not attempt to *address* the questions at this stage (unless the evidence to do so is readily available – this is further discussed in point 3 below).

2. Incorporate existing evidence, where it helps to enrich understanding – for example where:
  - Some evaluation may already have been carried out and will indicate whether or not existing services are effective.
  - Relatively straightforward secondary data analysis would allow for a more nuanced understanding of a particular issue and its causes.
  - The wider evidence on effective interventions is clear on which approaches are likely to work;
  - Expert advice – formal or informal - has been sought, which helps to develop an explanation or opens up further lines of investigation.
3. Discuss evidence gaps and limitations – it is important to manage expectations of what subsequent Response Analysis will be able to achieve. Some evidence gaps and questions could probably be addressed in the time between publication of the Assessment and finalising the Local Well-being Plan (e.g. elaborating on particular local issues through qualitative research). Others, however, will be too complicated, costly or long-term to overcome, irrespective of the amount of time and resources available (e.g. testing different interventions to reduce in-work poverty, which is a complicated and cross-cutting research question). The Assessment could be a useful vehicle for surfacing some of these considerations and trade-offs, even if they are discussed alongside it, and not included in the publication.

It is also important to openly address gaps and limitations in the evidence base underpinning Assessments and to discuss the implications of them. For example, if evidence is incomplete or ambiguous, or if there are weaknesses in the methods of collection, it is better to make these concerns explicit and be clear on what assumptions your Assessment has been developed. This level of openness about gaps and limitations will do much to reinforce confidence in the Assessments and give a better sense

of what needs to be done collectively to strengthen the evidence base in future.

### **Implications for Local Well-being Plans**

The areas addressed within this supplementary guidance have implications for the work that will continue after the Assessments of Local Well-being are finalised. By way of concluding this supplementary guidance, some of these considerations are outlined below:

- It will be very important to set realistic goals and expectations for what Response Analysis can achieve within the time and resources available. It may be necessary to accept that, in some cases, the evidence on which well-being objectives and Local Well-being Plans are based will be incomplete or may not be wholly fit for purpose.
- Further evidence gathering or research could itself be an integral part of the Local Well-being Plan, if a deeper understanding of an issue could contribute to improving local well-being – i.e. as part of its Local Well-being Plan, a PSB might include some detailed research on a particular topic or a pilot evaluation of some new initiatives.
- Given there is likely to be a degree of commonality between areas in respect of the main issues identified within the Assessments, there will be significant scope for collaboration and joint research to reduce duplication and maximise the quality of evidence available to inform local Well-being Plans.

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