



# Towards a Good Life

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# A resource for individuals & communities to make progress towards a good quality of life

Developed by the A Good Life research team

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# Contents

Foreword .....	1
About the Resource .....	2
Using the Resource .....	4
Step 1 – Prioritising Quality of Life.....	4
Step 2 – Progressing Quality of Life .....	5
Flashcards.....	6
Measuring Importance Scorecard .....	12
Measuring Satisfaction Scorecard .....	13
Action Plan Template.....	18
Acknowledgments and Further Information.....	19

## Foreword

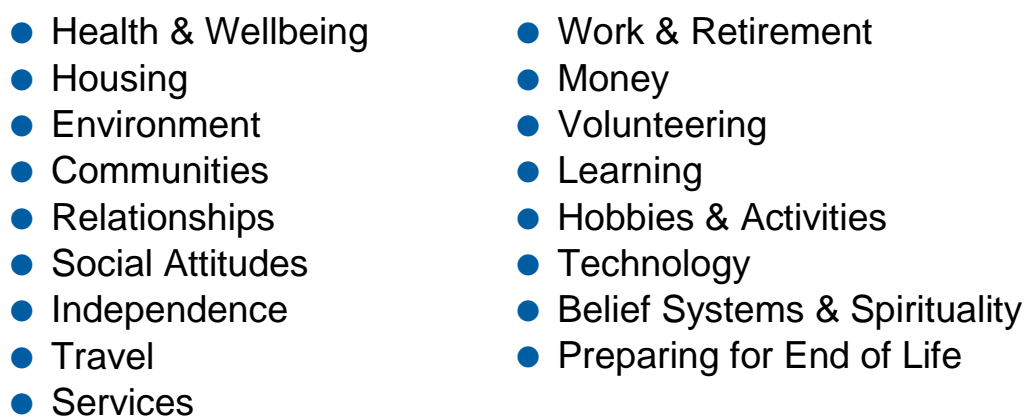
The University of Stirling was funded by the Life Changes Trust to undertake research to identify what was needed to ensure a good quality of life in later years. This research employed co-production methodologies, where university researchers worked in partnership with volunteers over the age of 50 years became researchers within their own communities. The research partnership brought together individuals from across different areas of Scotland, with a wide range of interests and in-depth experience of public, private, third and voluntary sectors; academic researchers, and representatives from Age Scotland.

The project used visual methods, focus groups and a national survey to gather the views of over 900 older people in Scotland on what makes 'A Good Life'. The research highlighted that there were many different aspects that may contribute to positive experiences in later years. There is also a degree of diversity in what makes A Good Life, and what is important to one person, or one community, may be less important to others. While the research focused on later life, many participants indicated that their quality of life depended upon the wellbeing of younger generations, whether in a family, their community or in a workplace-related context.

## About the Resource

This resource is a tool to help individuals and communities to determine what they see as A Good Life, to clarify any aims for progress and optionally form an Action Plan. A community is a group of people who share an interest, perhaps in a rural or urban place, or a specific activity, facility, housing complex or project, or in terms of their cultural or social identity. The tool helps users to explore how they or their community may feel happier or safer, or be more open to including local people, visitors or new members, of different ages and backgrounds. It can be used, for example, when considering how to facilitate improved support, generate income for greater sustainability, or be less demanding on resources. For example you may choose to use the tool to evaluate the impact of the introduction of a new activity or service in order to understand its impacts on people taking part in the activity.

This builds on the evidence from the A Good Life Project and aims to support individuals and community groups in identifying what is important to their members in terms of quality of life. It can be used to gather evidence on current levels of satisfaction with different aspects of quality of life, provide awareness on what aspects of life might be enhanced and facilitate the development of local action plans. The resource's strength is that its 17 themes are wide-ranging and evidence-based having been generated from research. The themes are:

- 
- Health & Wellbeing
  - Housing
  - Environment
  - Communities
  - Relationships
  - Social Attitudes
  - Independence
  - Travel
  - Services
  - Work & Retirement
  - Money
  - Volunteering
  - Learning
  - Hobbies & Activities
  - Technology
  - Belief Systems & Spirituality
  - Preparing for End of Life

Not all of these aspects will be important to everybody and the extent to which they feature in creating A Good Life will be different for each individual and community. To nurture A Good Life, whether at individual or community level, it is important to recognise which of the above themes are most important, where there are current levels of satisfaction and where there is room for improvement.

The resource's 17 flashcards with associated questions will help to clarify ideas and priorities for each of the above themes. Current importance and satisfaction levels can be recorded on the A Good Life Chart (see page 16) so that changes can be considered over a period of time. The resource can be used by an individual, or with a small groups of peers, or delivered in a workshop by a facilitator.

Larger workshops usually need more than one facilitator, especially when a public planning meeting is convened by a public body to focus on a project, perhaps to ease a public service or transfer a redundant public building into new use. When workshops using the resource also involve public bodies, co-production will support valuable public engagement by hearing about citizens' views, concerns and needs in practice.

While face-to-face engagement may be the preferred way to discuss and explore quality of life, video-conferencing technologies such as Zoom may be useful for conducting conversations online if it is not possible to meet in person.

## Using the Resource

This resource has been designed to be used in a variety of ways with a range of options on how individuals, community groups and organisations may use it according to their needs and circumstances.

This handbook provides the resources needed to help both individuals and local community groups develop a structured Action Plan to help prioritise and improve aspects of living a good life in later years.

If you are working through the steps as an individual, reflect on the questions in the Flashcards and use the Scorecards to record what quality of life themes are most important to you and your individual level of satisfaction with each of these quality of life themes.

### Step 1 – Prioritising Quality of Life

- Use the Flashcards to ask questions in order to clarify ideas and priorities for each quality of life theme (requires around 90 minutes). The themes may be important to people as individuals or when exploring how a place or community could function better. Identify the top three priority themes for the individual or group. If working in larger workshops or public meetings, discussion is best facilitated in breakout groups of 4-6 people. You may wish to document key points from the discussion.
- Optionally, use the Measuring Importance Scorecard and Measuring Satisfaction Scorecard to measure the importance of each of the 17 quality of life themes, and satisfaction with each theme (requires around 30 minutes). This process can be repeated at a later date to track progress over time.
- In addition, use the Good Life Chart to provide a visual summary and create a record of both the satisfaction and importance of each of the 17 quality of life themes for the individual or group. This will provide evidence to support what quality of life themes you might want to prioritise for further action.

## Step 2 – Progressing Quality of Life

- Have an informal discussion on the ways forward for the three top priority themes (requires around 30 minutes). This may be best suited for informal one-off discussions between peers, friends and family members.
- Or, you may wish to use the Action Plan Template to discuss ways forward and decide how you might achieve them (requires around 90 minutes additional time). This may be most suitable if you want to reflect at a later point on progress towards achieving your goals.
- Where a community group initiated the workshop, or a public body instigated a public meeting, the Action Plan may be reported back to show the progress and results of your activities. Within a formal Action Plan you may set out what needs to be done, by whom, by when and what resources will be needed.
- Setting out an Action Plan can help to make sure that you are working towards the agreed goals/outcomes and any steps needed for change. Once there are multiple suggestions, discuss which options are most beneficial and note those that could be realistically taken forward. Think about the resources and skills that might be needed to achieve these tasks and those available to yourself, your organisation or group.



# Flashcards



## Health & Wellbeing

**What people need to have good physical and mental health and how they adjust to changes in their health.**

What does health and wellbeing mean to you?

What contributes to good health and wellbeing?

What might need to change to improve your health and wellbeing?



## Housing

**Having available, accessible and affordable housing.**

Are you satisfied with your current housing situation?

What housing options would you like to be available to you?

How easily could you access alternative housing options if you needed them?




## Environment

**Being able to easily access outdoor spaces.**

Are you able/unable to access local outdoor spaces?

What do you like/dislike about your local environment?

What might you change about your local environment if you could?




**Relationships**  
**Being in touch with family or friends.**

Are you happy with your existing relationships with family or friends?  
Is isolation ever a problem and would you like help to avoid feeling lonely?  
How do you go about meeting people?



**Communities**  
**Living together and supporting each other in resilient communities.**

What communities are important to you?  
Are they geographically based or focused on culture or interests?  
Are there any positive or negative aspects of the communities you live in?



**Social Attitudes**  
**Promoting respect for people of all ages.**

Do you feel that you are treated with respect and dignity?  
Do you ever face being treated with a lack of dignity or respect?  
What needs to be done to ensure people are treated fairly, with respect and dignity?



## **Independence**

### **Maintaining independence, freedom and choice.**

Do you feel able to make decisions about your day to day life?

Do you feel you have enough information or support to make decisions about your own life?

What kinds of support or information would you need? And where would you seek it?



## **Travel**

### **Being able to get around (once COVID restrictions ease).**

How easy do you find getting around your local area?

How easy do you find it to travel further afield (nationally or internationally)?

What do you need to help you to travel more easily?



## **Services**

### **Access to local services if they are needed.**

Do you have access to good quality local services?

Are there any services that you think need improving?

Would you like any help or support to access local services?



### **Work & Retirement**

**Being employed if you want to be, and being able to retire when you want to.**

Do you currently work, and do you want to work?

Could/did you retire when you wanted to?

What opportunities exist to support older people to continue working?



### **Money**

**Having enough money.**

Do you feel you have enough money or income?

What concerns, if any, do you have about money?

Are there any forms of support or information you would like to access regarding money?




### **Volunteering**

**Having opportunities to volunteer in your local community.**

Do you take part in any volunteering activities?

Do you have opportunities to volunteer available to you if you wanted them?

What may stop you from volunteering?




**Learning**  
**Being able to develop new knowledge/skills.**

What opportunities are available for you to learn new things or take part in new activities?

What would you like to learn?

What support might you need to access new learning opportunities?

What are the barriers to accessing these?




**Hobbies & Activities.**  
**Being able to take part in hobbies, pastimes or leisure activities.**

What hobbies or activities do you enjoy?

What opportunities do you have to take part in these hobbies or activities?

Do you need help or support to take part in hobbies or activities?



**Technology**  
**Using technology in everyday life.**

How do you feel about using technology (e.g. the internet, smart phones etc.) in your everyday life?

Are there digital ways in which to communicate with people that you'd like to explore?

Would you like any support to use new technologies?



## **Belief Systems & Spirituality**

### **Expressing religious or ethical beliefs and spirituality.**

Are religious, ethical or spiritual beliefs an important part of your quality of life?

How might religious, ethical or spiritual beliefs contribute to your quality of life?

Are there any things that affect your ability to follow/practice these beliefs?



## **Preparing for End of Life**

### **Making plans and ensuring your wishes are known.**

Are you at ease having made a will, and settling power of attorney?

What sort of things do you want/need to plan for?

Would you like help, assistance or support to plan for end of life?

Blank flashcard - feel free to add a topic of importance to you

# Data Collection Sheets

## Measuring Importance Scorecard

How important are these things to you?




Please tick the level of importance you place on each theme. After doing this individually, and if using the resource in a group, you may wish to complete a group scorecard that represents the consensus of the group.

	Very Important	Slightly Important	Not very Important
<b>Health &amp; Wellbeing</b>			
<b>Housing</b>			
<b>Environment</b>			
<b>Communities</b>			
<b>Relationships</b>			
<b>Social Attitudes</b>			
<b>Independence</b>			
<b>Travel</b>			
<b>Services</b>			
<b>Work &amp; Retirement</b>			
<b>Money</b>			
<b>Volunteering</b>			
<b>Learning</b>			
<b>Hobbies &amp; Activities</b>			
<b>Technology</b>			
<b>Belief Systems &amp; Spirituality</b>			
<b>Preparing for End of Life</b>			

# Measuring Satisfaction Scorecard

How satisfied are you with these things?

Thinking about your current situation, how satisfied are you with each of the following themes? Please give a rating of 1 (satisfied), 2 (okay) or 3 (dissatisfied) to mirror how you feel. After doing this individually, and if using the resource in a group, you may wish to complete a group scorecard that represents the consensus of the group.

	 Satisfied	 Okay	 Dissatisfied
<b>Health &amp; Wellbeing</b>			
<b>Housing</b>			
<b>Environment</b>			
<b>Communities</b>			
<b>Relationships</b>			
<b>Social Attitudes</b>			
<b>Independence</b>			
<b>Travel</b>			
<b>Services</b>			
<b>Work &amp; Retirement</b>			
<b>Money</b>			
<b>Volunteering</b>			
<b>Learning</b>			
<b>Hobbies &amp; Activities</b>			
<b>Technology</b>			
<b>Belief Systems &amp; Spirituality</b>			
<b>Preparing for End of Life</b>			



# Towards a Good Life Chart

The chart below provides a visual summary of how important different themes are and how satisfied people taking part in this session are with each aspect of their quality of life.

Use the chart to quickly see what items are important to people, and whether they are satisfied or less satisfied with them.

This chart may help an organisation, community group or an individual prioritise the areas that they want to focus on to improve quality of life in later years. They may wish to focus on areas that are very important to them (coloured green on the chart) and prioritise them further by looking at those they are currently least satisfied with.

It will clearly show the important aspect of quality of life that people are currently least satisfied with by colour coding the chart in line with the score sheets above.

An individual may also wish to take away their A Good Life Chart to reflect in their own time, perhaps after three months, on how satisfied they are with different aspects of their quality of life.

Colour the themes to indicate importance

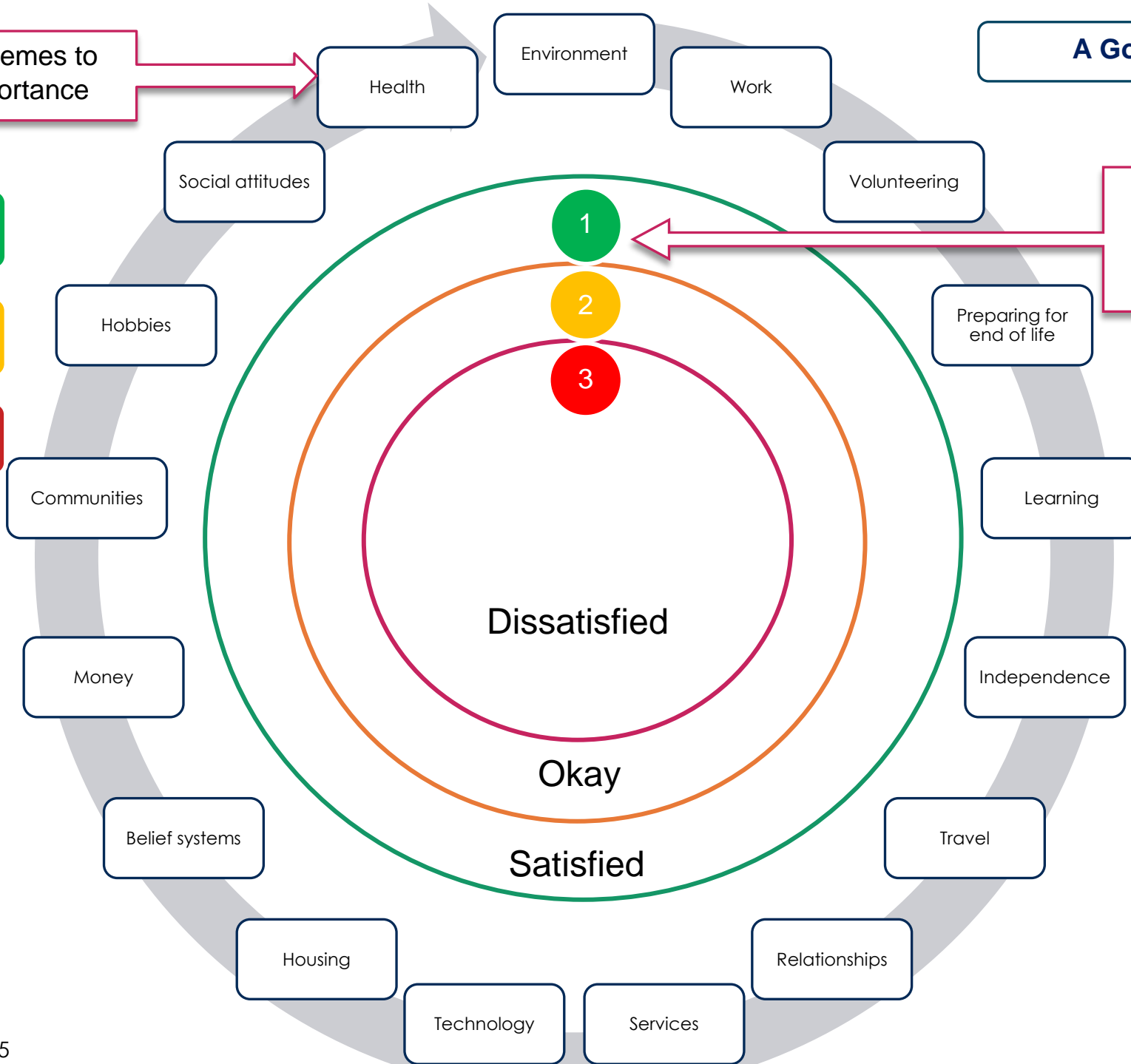
## A Good Life Chart

Very important

Important

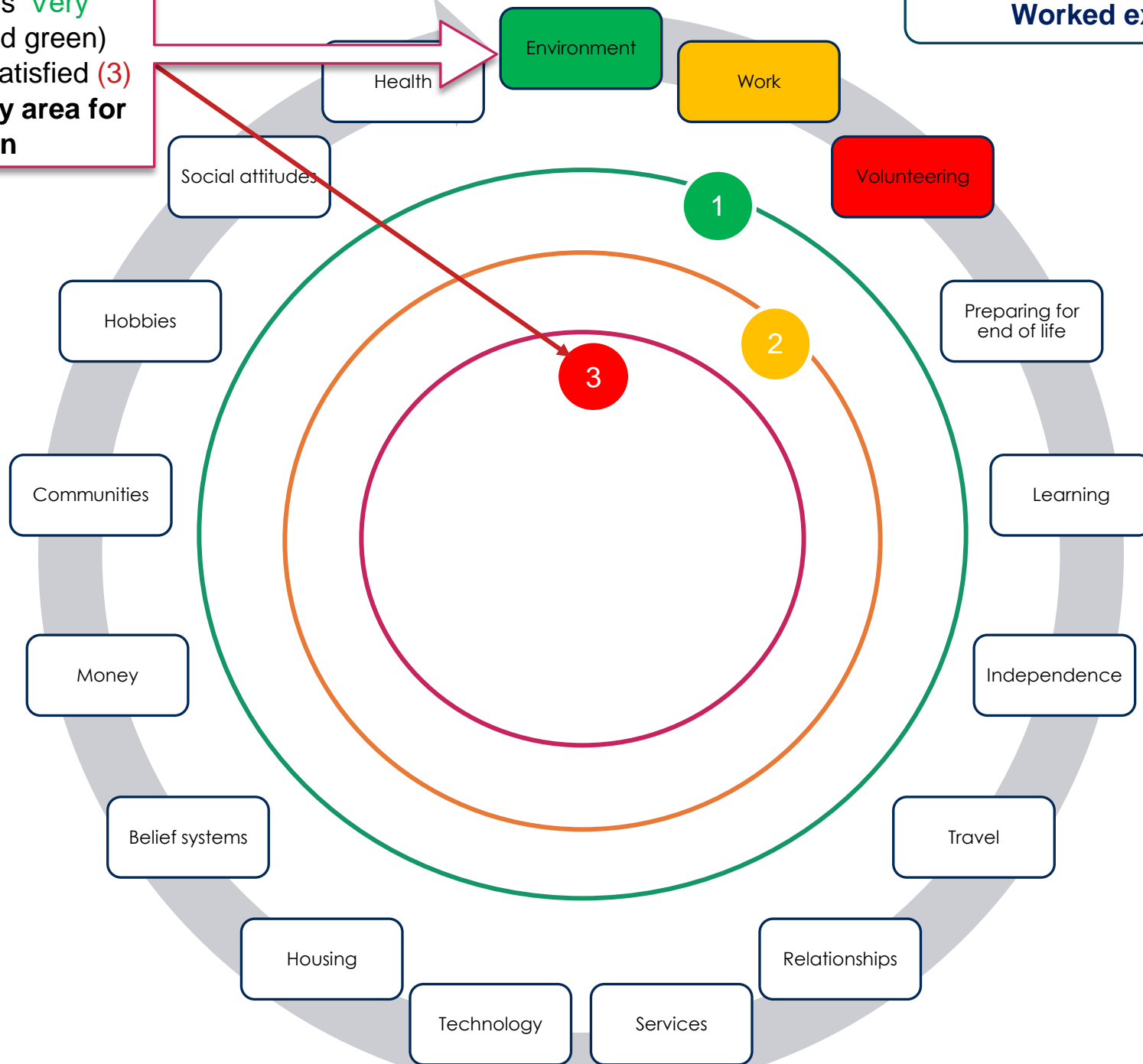
Unimportant

Record your satisfaction here

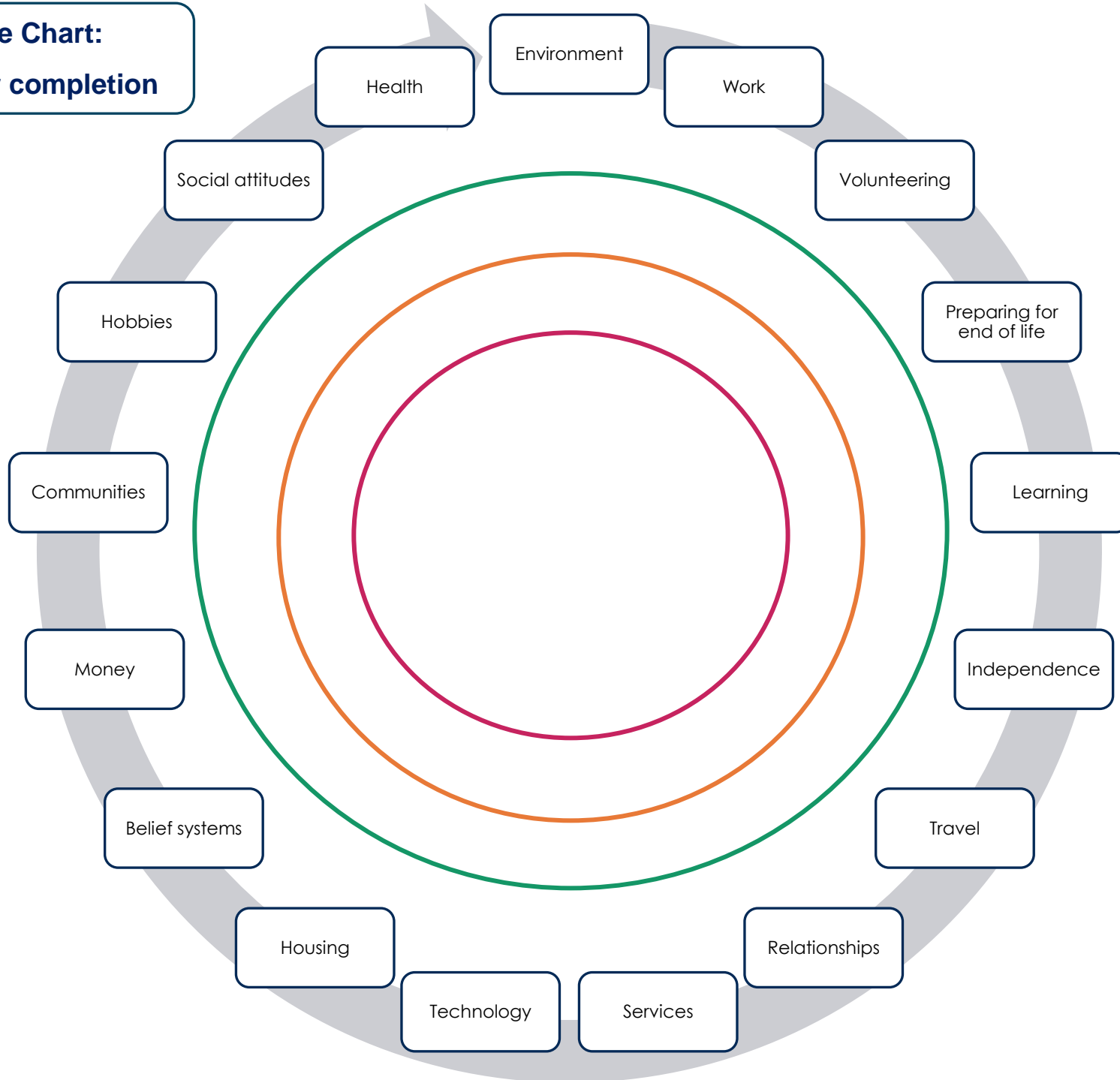


## A Good Life Chart: Worked example

So for example, we see here  
the environment is 'Very  
important' (coloured green)  
BUT people are dissatisfied (3)  
**This indicates a key area for  
intervention**



**A Good Life Chart:  
Blank Chart for completion**



# Action Plan Template

We will:

To achieve this, we will need to ...	The following people will lead this action	We will need the following resources	The action will be completed by date	We will know it is completed when ...

## Acknowledgments and Further Information

The University of Stirling was funded by the Life Changes Trust to undertake research to identify what was needed to ensure a good quality of life in later years. The Life Changes Trust was established by The National Lottery Community Fund in April 2013 with an endowment of £50 million to support transformational improvement in the quality of life, wellbeing, empowerment and inclusion of three key groups in Scotland: people living with dementia, unpaid carers and young people with care experience. The funding sponsor played no part in the design, execution, analysis and interpretation of data, or writing of the study.

The research partnership comprised:

Grant Gibson, Corinne Greasley-Adams, Vikki McCall, Jane Robertson  
(University of Stirling Researchers)

Jim Aitken, Pek-Yeong Berry, Daisy Cameron, Tish Chalmers, George Clunie, Diana Findley, Joan Gibson, Ian Gourlay, Amanda Graham, Kate Graham, Rog Harrison, Muriel Knox, Jane MacPhair, Janice Mason-Duff, Fiona McCall, Suzanne Murdoch, Ro Pengelly, Helen Ross, Kim Shepherd, Geri Sinclair, Betty Skelton, Kim Strachan, Sheila Thorburn, Eileen Wallace and 6 individuals who prefer to remain anonymous  
(Community Researchers)

Richard Baker, Toni Giuliano (Age Scotland Researchers)

Cover image by Ro Pengelly, which represents the recognition of being able to express the ripeness and beauty that can come with age.

For further information on the project, its findings and gathered views, see 'A Good Life in Later Years' available at:

<https://www.lifechangestrust.org.uk/project/older-people-and-quality-life-project>

See INVOLVE publication 'Co-production in Action' for further details about the co-production approach developed in this project available at:

[www.invo.org.uk/posttypepublication/co-production-in-action-number-two/](http://www.invo.org.uk/posttypepublication/co-production-in-action-number-two/)

Our findings from the research are presented in the Ageing & Society journal article "It gives you a reason to be in this world": the interdependency of communities, environments and social justice for quality of life in older people' available at:

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0144686X20000859> and  
<https://www.stir.ac.uk/research/hub/publication/1655197>

See this resource created by IRISS and Evaluation Support Scotland for useful tips on supporting participation in a peer support group, which can be applied to facilitating group workshops, available at:

<https://content.iriss.org.uk/peersupport/pdf/peer-support-booklet.pdf>

