Having first launched its products in the United States just five years ago, the Fitbit brand is now the leader in the connected health category worldwide. Our wireless activity trackers and wireless scales help motivate individuals to lead better and healthier lives through the use of smart, mobile connected technology. They provide an opportunity for everyday people, with busy lives, to understand and take control of their activity, diet and sleep in manageable steps, through a personalised dashboard.

As part of our efforts to understand the health and wellbeing of people within the UK better, we recently commissioned The Trajectory Group to undertake some extensive research. Their findings have been published in the ‘Fitbit Healthy Futures Report’.

Interestingly, the report found that a number of people already record aspects of their health and well-being through various means, and that this information does have a positive impact on people’s motivation to become healthier.

Of course, advances in technology now make the act of recording your health data easy, reliable and instant. In fact, the findings also recognise that technology based tracking is significantly more effective than traditional techniques in creating positive attitudes, motivating people to make healthier changes in their lives.

With technology now providing the ability to track, measure and motivate individuals like never before - this is the future of a healthier, fitter nation.

We hope you enjoy the report and would welcome any feedback or questions that you may have.

Gareth Jones

VP & GENERAL MANAGER EMEA, FITBIT INC.
Methodology and key findings

The Trajectory Group was commissioned by Fitbit to provide research and trends insight into the direction of health and well-being in the UK.

Methodology:

The research for this report was carried out in three key phases:

• An in-depth literature review to provide background for the report and to identify the experts most appropriate for the study.
• Interviews with nine experts in fields ranging from body image and sleep consultants to human behaviour to technology communications experts.
• A nationally representative quantitative survey of 1,005 people in the UK between the ages 18-54 was conducted in April 2013.

Key findings:

• There is a clear gap between high levels of public awareness of health and wellness issues and low levels of actual healthy behaviour change by individuals.
• The current economic climate is negatively impacting on many people’s ability to make positive healthy behaviour changes with those experiencing high levels of financial pressure (income or work status not withstanding) finding the constant need for trade-offs mentally exhausting.
• The contemporary cultural obsession with size, shape and looking good can lead to high levels of anxiety and feelings of pressure among individuals.
• Technology based tracking solutions are significantly more effective than traditional techniques in driving positive behaviour.
• There are potentially significant benefits for today’s employers in engaging with the national health and wellbeing agenda.
• The presence of children in a household heightens awareness of the issues around healthy living but there remain significant gaps between awareness and behaviour.
Our research shows a clear gap between high levels of public awareness of health and wellness issues and low levels of actual healthy behaviour change by individuals.

60% claim awareness and understanding of the issues but only 10% agree that this has led to strong positive impact in their behaviour.

At the heart of this disconnect is the long-running individuation trend such that generic one-size-fits-all messaging no longer cuts through to the individual.

While there are and have been many messages out there – from government, from brands, and from celebrities, these messages are often contradictory and confusing.

20% admit to being totally baffled by the range of messages in the market.
And for many people these messages are drowned out or lost in the day-to-day pressures and challenges they face – particularly so for those on lower incomes.

38% agreed that the language used in much messaging stigmatises individuals.

Yet those individuals who have taken responsibility for tracking their own health – by whatever means – have seen significant positive effects and regained a sense of choice and control over their lives.

28% report strong positive impacts on behaviour as a result of self-monitoring.
Furthermore those currently using technology based tracking solutions are seeing twice the positive impact of those using traditional methods.

Nearly 50% of those using technology for self-monitoring of their health report strong positive impacts.

Key aspects of technology applications include the immediacy, the transparency, and the personal nature of the data generated.

These core strengths can only be accentuated by the integration of social and gaming mechanics into the process – enhancing and rewarding our motivation.

But we face a huge challenge given the length of time spent at our desks and in front of screens by many people today as well as low levels of physical exercise.

50% of respondents spend at least 4 hours per day sitting in front of a screen.

What is clear is that the answers start with individuals, their motivation, their decisions and their behaviours.
And the rewards in terms of both health and wellbeing are immediate, incremental and apparent in all areas of life.
New research on behalf of Fitbit shows that, for many people looking to lead a healthier life, public lectures are not only ineffectual but are actually counterproductive.

The research shows a clear gap between high levels of public awareness of health and wellness issues – especially the national obsession with size and shape (driven by public discussion through the media and other channels) – and low levels of actual healthy behaviour change on an individual level.

The challenge is to understand the reasons behind this disconnect. This is central to the growing field of Behavioural Economics – a specialist field of economics grounded in an understanding of human psychology.

**Chart 1: Awareness of health as a national issue and behaviour change**

![Chart showing awareness of health and behaviour change](source: Fitbit Healthy Futures Report)

By way of example: in 2010 the UK Government established its own Behavioural Economics Unit within the Cabinet Office – often referred to as the ‘Nudge Unit’. The unit is tasked with leveraging behavioural and decision-making insights from Behavioural Economics in order to positively impact on people’s behaviour in areas such as health and well-being.

“It’s about guiding people to making better decisions of their own accord. For example, you can give people smaller plates at restaurants, but then they go home and have the same big plates as it’s an extrinsic motivation – you first need to get people to value their own health and then you’ve got to help them achieve the goals they’ve set themselves.”

Ed Gardiner, Behavioural Design Lead, Warwick Business School
Why isn’t the message getting through?

Our research provided many insights into the reasons people give to explain their lack of action – or why they don’t make positive changes to their lifestyle and diet – despite being only too aware of the issues.

Let’s first look at the barriers.

Chart 2: Barriers to positive behaviour change

Out of a range of statements we provided, two stand out and offer some strong clues as to how we might think about improving our approach to promoting health and wellness in the UK today.

63% of respondents strongly associated with “I like to do my own thing, I don’t like being lectured and told what I should be doing”

This links into aspects of a general crisis of trust and confidence in public institutions and individuals – but it is also consistent with a longer-term trend often called the decline of deference.

In the past, with the limited availability of information, we, the public, had little alternative but to accept what we were told by traditional authorities or institutions. Today things are very different and those very same institutions such as governments need to earn our trust and our confidence.

Society is today far more individually orientated than previously and many consumers demand personal solutions to their own needs.

For this Generation Me, public campaigns that don’t talk about the personal but instead promote a one-size-fits-all approach clearly don’t resonate with the general public and are often rejected as lecturing. This becomes a turn-off and so, whilst we are told to eat better and live more healthily, we do the opposite!

76% of respondents strongly associated with “I want to enjoy my life today”

So messages about our lifestyle directed from on high or even from celebrities aren’t getting through, but it also seems that we are predisposed to reject messages we receive.
We know from Behavioural Economics that the human mind is fundamentally averse to delayed gratification. We also know that we are typically more likely to stick with what we are used to. We are more motivated to reduce loss than we are to maximise gain. Even when there are clear benefits to making a change, we hold back on the basis that we do not want to lose what we have already.

Putting that analysis together suggests that health and wellness messaging is suffering from the wider crisis of trust in public institutions, the failure to personalise messaging, and the failure of the message to mean anything to us.

"People often choose short-term gratification over long-term aims due to temporary discounting - you value things in the future less than you value things in the present, so often the nearest one is picked, even if it’s less beneficial.”

Ed Gardiner, Behavioural Design Lead, Warwick Business School

**Figure 1: Barriers to effective health communications**
Are there too many messages and too many champions?

Not only are people put off by being lectured – they are also confused by the lectures they are receiving from a very wide range of supposed ‘healthy lifestyle’ champions.

We are referring here to a wide range of voices and sources participating in the public health debate – from public health campaigns such as the NHS’s Change4Life programme to the more familiar household names such as Jamie Oliver, who has run public health kicks including his healthy school meals campaign.

When we asked whether the language used by the media and health professionals (in relation to size and weight) was motivating, demotivating or stigmatising for individuals, those respondents who gave an answer split evenly between motivating and demotivating (both at 31%) with a larger number (38%) agreeing that it stigmatised individuals.

Importantly in terms of motivating people to make positive personal choices, we also found as many as 1 in 5 individuals find the range of health advice ‘totally baffling’.

This inevitably weakens how effective any individual message is and reduces confidence in who is telling them – while, importantly, decreasing motivation for the individuals themselves.

Chart 3: Extent to which people feel overwhelmed or confused by range of healthcare advice and experts

Source: Fitbit Healthy Futures Report
How active are our lives?

Our research asked people a number of questions relating to their leisure activities – particularly looking at the relationship between non-active screen-based activities and active leisure choices.

In terms of screen-based entertainment, a quarter of our respondents were spending 3+ hours per day watching TV (of which 40% were ALSO using the internet for 3+ hours per day) and a further 25% were using the internet for at least 3 hours on a typical day.

When we combine these figures with those for the time spent sitting down at work (over 50% spent 4+ hours per day sitting down with 25% spending 6+ hours per day sitting down) then we can immediately see a significant absence of physical exercise in daily routines.

Many people see this as providing a strong explanation for the obesity epidemic currently affecting large sections of the developed world (as well as developing markets).

In today’s economy the majority of people work in knowledge or information roles demanding little or no physical exertion. The evidence does suggest that our calorific appetite is designed to fuel us through a far more active daily routine than most of us currently pursue.

“*We certainly lead more sedentary lifestyles, with gadgets and tech that makes our lives a lot easier – it’s much easier now to do the housework than it was 40 or 50 years ago, and far less physical energy needs to be expended on it. In some ways technology has improved well-being and in others ways it’s been detrimental – we’re so sedentary now that it’s too much effort to get up and change the channel, but I’d never say that a home appliance like a vacuum cleaner making us less sedentary is a bad thing.*”

Caroline Nokes MP, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Body Image

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**Chart 4: Absence of physical exercise**

- 1 in 7: Never go for a walk
- 2 in 5: Never go to the park
- 1 in 2: Never go to the gym/pool
- 3 in 4: Never play organised sport

Source: Fitbit Healthy Futures Report
Are we personally monitoring activity?

Although the trends in favour of the personalisation of health and well-being messaging may be getting missed, people are already taking the issues into their own hands. 7 in 10 people are already taking individual responsibility for tracking or monitoring one or more key health indicators as a means to sort this.

Chart 5: Tracking behaviour

Interestingly, those engaged in tracking are both more likely to agree that the UK has a serious health issue to address and more likely to say that they are not at all confused or baffled by the range of health and medical advice in the market compared to their peers.

So, while a significant majority of the population are actively tracking at least some elements of their health this is largely confined to a mental note or in some cases a more tangible pen and paper record. And yet, despite the simplicity of this approach, the results are remarkable.

They clearly suggest that even the simplest approach to health tracking can have a significant positive effect on individual behaviour.

Chart 6: Method of tracking (amongst those who track a health indicator)
On the basis of the research conducted we can reasonably argue that tracking your health is up to THREE TIMES as effective as a general awareness of the national health and wellness debate in driving positive individual behaviour.

We will go on to explore the role of technology solutions in more detail, but whatever the tracking mechanism the key point to remember is that of personal control.

Monitoring or tracking enables us to evaluate the impact of different activities on our bodies. This in turn helps us to identify and then maintain good habits and to reduce or remove bad habits. Positive habit formation is a key success factor in meeting personal health and wellness objectives.

“"This kind of technology fundamentally changes things: it gives people knowledge about their body, which in turn feeds into control.”
Larry Smarr, Founding Director, Calit2
What is the potential of technology-based tracking?

And so we move to the centre of the challenge. How can we get people to take the initiative and increase their activity?

We have seen already that individual tracking has a significant impact on behaviour; we have also seen that a significant proportion of the population are already involved in self-monitoring and we also know that the majority of self-trackers are doing so in their heads or, at best, on pen and paper.

So what impact could a more technologically advanced monitoring solution have on individual behaviour and is there an appetite among the public for using their personal technology for such a purpose?

**Chart 8: Method of tracking (for all those that track)**

- **Technology (computer or mobile)**: 31%
- **Paper**: 23%
- **Medical**: 7%
- **Just in head**: 68%

**Chart 9: Efficacy of tracking methods (for all those that track)**

- **Technology (computer or mobile)**: 47%
- **Paper**: 45%
- **Medical**: 70%
- **Just in my head**: 18% 24%
The data clearly suggests that monitoring using technology has a significant positive impact on our overall approach to maintaining our health.

If we look back to the start of this chapter, where we saw that fewer than 10% of respondents agreed that their awareness of the public health message had positively impacted on their behaviour, then we can argue that a technology-based tracking solution is FIVE TIMES as effective as relying on general public knowledge to drive positive individual action.

The use of a technology-based tracking solution can also be said to be TWICE as effective as simply tracking in your head in driving positive personal behaviour.

Here we can see the strong potential for personal technology-based solutions to effectively bridge the gap between knowledge and action – the very challenge that we started this chapter seeking to address.

• Transparent data can avoid the pitfall of lecturing and telling people what to do
• Transparent data is by definition personal
• Transparent data is immediate and progress incremental.

This analysis will be developed later in the report – especially by looking at how data made readily available to the individual through a mobile application or similar wearable technology can serve as a positive reminder and motivator for action.
Our research clearly shows that the current economic climate is negatively impacting on many people’s ability to make positive healthy behaviour changes.

Those experiencing high levels of financial pressure (income or work status not withstanding) find the constant need for trade-offs mentally exhausting.

65% of those living with financial pressures cite trade-offs as a barrier to positive behaviour change – compared to 16% of those not living with pressures.

Financial pressures negatively impact on our sense of freedom and control, reducing our perception of choice and so our range of decision making and behaviour.

There is a negative spiral apparent between financial pressures, reduced wellbeing, poor decision making and poor physical health.

The spiral can be broken by restoring our sense of choice and control – with personal health tracking having the potential to play an important role in this process.

42% of those tracking their own health report high levels of choice and control.

Instinctive explanations of why positive changes are not made should not be taken at face value but rather understood in the context of psychological wellbeing.

40% of those with low choice and control describe change as overwhelming.

And the crucial importance of sleep to our physical health and mental well-being should not be underestimated – or overlooked when tracking our health indicators.

Less than 50% of people track their sleep in any way – the lowest for any health indicator studied.

Overall we have seen that affordable technology based personal tracking solutions can play an important role in developing positive behavioural habits and reducing damaging behaviours.

47% of those using technology to track their health report strong positive behaviour change.
In this chapter we focus on the particular challenges facing individuals and families in the current economic climate relating to making healthy choices.

While it is obvious that price is a key issue for many people when food shopping in particular, we wanted to consider how else financial pressure is affecting us.

Firstly, we look at the reasons people gave for not making positive, healthy behaviour changes – this time split by level of financial pressure.

It is worth noting here that the impact of economic conditions depends not only on current income – but also prior financial management and the experience of life events including health. So a household or individual could have a relatively high income while still experiencing significant financial pressures for the above reasons.

**Chart 1: Barriers to changing behaviour, by perceived level of financial pressure**

Source: Fitbit Healthy Futures Report
We can see just how many barriers are more pronounced for those living with a high level of financial pressure.

For example, the issue most affected by financial pressure – I get tired of all the trade-offs I have to make – shows a difference of almost 50 percentage points (16% to 65%).

Although there are signs of some recovery, economic conditions are not expected to change significantly for most people for a number of years, so it’s particularly important that we understand how we can work to promote positive healthy behaviour choices.

We should also recognise that two of the barriers not showing a significant difference are those with which we began Chapter One – I want to live my life today and I don’t like being lectured.

Further analysis of those results by levels of stress, anxiety and happiness (among others) shows the same pattern. So we make compromises based on finances, but compromises themselves may be part of the issue.
Less money, more decisions, more trade-offs?

Social psychology has demonstrated that each of us has a limited store of willpower available at any given time. Making decisions uses up this energy – at which point we are reluctant to make trade-offs and will typically revert to a single aspect to inform all of our decisions – e.g. price. This is known more commonly as ‘decision fatigue’.

These insights provide a valuable framework for interpreting trade-offs, or day-to-day compromises, as a barrier to positive healthy behaviour change. Research clearly shows that shopping is especially tiring for people on a limited budget. Most of us have the luxury of not having to agonise over every product choice in terms of the opportunity cost. Unfortunately, many more don’t.

Beyond retail, modern life is more complicated and requires more choices than ever before. We use up our mental energy (or willpower) in exercising self-control more frequently and in ways that earlier generations couldn’t imagine. Picture, for example, someone working in an office today compared to 30 years ago. Think of all of the potential distractions instantly available to them throughout the day.

Thus we can find ourselves rapidly mentally depleted and so vulnerable to poor decisions and choices – until we can replenish our mental energy levels with glucose (itself perhaps the most surprising insight from social psychology – and originally an accidental discovery!).

“The brain is like a muscle – over time if you make lots of decisions your brain effectively becomes worn out and you’re more likely to cave into temptation. Habit is also related to decision fatigue – habit doesn’t require as much energy since it is automatic.”

Ed Gardiner, Behavioural Design Lead, Warwick Business School

“The average person today processes more information in a single day than a person in the 1500s did in an entire lifetime.”

Rick Smolan, The Human Face of Big Data (2013)
Can we all afford to eat healthily?

This leads us directly to a key barrier particularly affecting people experiencing serious financial pressures – the affordability of healthy eating. Here we saw a difference of 36 percentage points between those living with no and high financial pressures (9% v. 45%).

There is no doubt that recent years have seen food price inflation outstrip any increase in incomes. The UK Family Food Survey highlights the consequences of this situation – with one example being a 10% reduction in total fruit and vegetable purchases between 2007 and 2011.

In fact, some commentators refer to a nutrition recession whose impact is directly correlated with household income.

And yet, government, campaigners, the supermarkets (e.g. Sainsbury’s Live Well for Less) and celebrities such as Jamie Oliver have gone to great lengths to educate and advise people on how they can eat far more healthily at no extra expense. These messages, promotions and other activities also aim to address the idea that individuals don’t have time to cook properly.

We saw in Chapter One how today’s audience – Generation Me – were unlikely to respond positively to such remote and impersonal messages.

For those living with high financial pressures this lack of responsiveness is strongly focused on the benefits and rewards of healthy choices and behaviour. Why should I make room for healthy living when I have so much to deal with already? When times are hard many people are understandably reluctant to give up today’s treats for tomorrow’s rewards.

This is particularly relevant in the context of our appetite for glucose to replenish our mental energy – no coincidence that so many chocolates are available at supermarket checkouts!

A more personal approach to health and well-being communications could make it readily apparent that everyone has time available to cook properly and to exercise – and the simplest and most cost-effective (and cheapest) forms of cooking and exercise can deliver immediate benefits.

Overall, the financially pressured consumer is significantly more likely than their peers to argue that ‘the changes required seem overwhelming to me’. This captures both the direct impact of financial pressures, and the constraints on choice and control experienced by people in these difficult circumstances.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concern</th>
<th>High choice/control</th>
<th>Low choice/control</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don’t like being lectured</td>
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<tr>
<td>I want to enjoy my life</td>
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<tr>
<td>No time to exercise</td>
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<td>No time to cook properly</td>
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<td>I can’t afford to eat more healthily</td>
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<td>I get tired of the trade offs</td>
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<td>Children swayed by junk food advertising</td>
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<td>Don’t understand labelling on foods</td>
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<td>Rewards seem distant</td>
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<td>Day-to-day benefits are not made clear</td>
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<td>Changes seem overwhelming</td>
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Chart 3: Barriers to changing behaviour, by level of perceived freedom of choice and control

Source: Fitbit Healthy Futures Report
The vicious circle of poverty and health

Emerging from the research is an understanding of the close relationship between physical health and personal well-being.

For example financial pressures have a significant impact on well-being measures – including anxiety, choice/control, happiness, satisfaction and stress – and as a result a significant impact on individual behaviour and choices.

These choices can then lead to poor health – which directly drives the same set of negative well-being measures and so individual choices and behaviour.

“"If you feel bad about yourself, you're far less likely to go out and participate in physical activity so it becomes a vicious circle."”

Caroline Nokes MP, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Body Image

Therefore, we find that many people are trapped in a negative spiral of financial pressures, poor choices and decision-making, and poor health (or, for many, vice versa).

This is borne out by the analysis of health and well-being measures by household income as shown below.

Chart 4: Health and well-being, by household income

Source: Fitbit Healthy Futures Report
Can sleep be the simple solution?

Often overlooked in discussions around health and well-being is the fundamental importance of the quality of our sleep - such that it can be seen as a key unifier between health and well-being.

Stress is of course intimately connected to the quality of our sleep. Both measures highlight one of the most common misconceptions about health and well-being - that of executive stress. Studies have clearly demonstrated that it is those people far below the boardroom level that experience the highest levels of stress - and that this is directly related to their level of choice and control.

“A single trigger, like poor sleep, can cascade into general poverty of health for physiological and psychological reasons.”

Peter Hames CEO Sleepio
Sleep is the aspect of our health that people are least likely to monitor. This could be partly because of the limited availability of sleep tracking solutions.

Without such tracking and the resulting evaluation of our behaviour in relation to the results, it is significantly more difficult for individuals to develop the positive habits that are fundamental to achieving health and well-being objectives.

![Chart 6: Different health indicators tracked, by gender](image)

Source: Fitbit Healthy Futures Report
How monitoring can help us manage

We saw in the first chapter just how powerful the impact of self-monitoring can be for individuals – it has three times the impact of public health messaging in generating positive behaviour change.

We also looked at the impact of technology-based self-monitoring in comparison with traditional methods – technology being twice as effective as traditional techniques.

The chart below highlights the impact of self-monitoring on an individual sense of choice and control – please note that this relates specifically to the highest level of choice and control (at the highest end of a ten-point agreement scale).

![Chart 7: % who feel a high level of choice and control, by whether or not they track a health indicator](chart)

Source: Fitbit Healthy Futures Report

The adoption of self-monitoring significantly increases our sense of choice and control – and should therefore positively drive our well-being and our choices and behaviours, offering the potential for a positive cycle of self-improvement.

Without this sense of choice and control our research clearly shows that there is a significant level of disengagement with the health and well-being agenda – especially as promoted by public health agencies and public individuals’ health messages.

A major factor in helping people improve their health and well-being in the current economic climate is to improve their sense of freedom of choice and control. Put simply, we need to empower individuals to improve their choices and behaviour.

At the heart of that improvement is the need to break down the challenge into achievable elements – realistic, short-term targets that contribute towards an overall objective.
Time to take control

We have seen strong evidence from our Healthy Living research that self-monitoring of any form could have a strong beneficial effect on individual behaviour and choices.

We are able to argue that self-monitoring of any kind is up to three times as effective as public health messages in positively impacting on individual behaviour and choices.

We also see that technology-based self-monitoring solutions are twice as effective as the traditional methods still used by many people (paper and pen, or a mental note).

Therefore, in addressing the national health and well-being challenge in the midst of current economic conditions – by motivating Generation Me to take control of their own choices – our research suggests the use of self-monitoring solutions as a potentially effective means of cutting through the fog of financial and economic anxiety.

We will return to the latest developments in technology-based self-monitoring later in the report, including a look at the social and gaming elements that can bring the data to life.
The contemporary cultural obsession with size, shape and looking good can lead to high levels of anxiety and feelings of pressure among individuals.

Our research showed less than 1 in 3 adults feel at ease with their body today.

These pressures have only grown and expanded - from women to men, from adults to children, from young people to elders, such that today we can all be found looking in the mirror.

Our research showed that 30% of adults feel under daily pressure to look good.

There is a negative spiral between body image, anxiety and well-being – with an inevitable impact on our individual decision making and behaviours.

Thus it is that the very people who would benefit the most from physical exercise are the very people least likely to engage in such activities.

Only 4% of those uncomfortable with their body go to the park to walk/exercise.

Our research shows that these external, aesthetic, pressures are at odds with our own intrinsic motivations – to look and feel good for me.

46% claim to want to feel good in & about their self, 23% to look good for their self, only 10% to look good for others.

And these cultural pressures are internalised and communicated to us by the very people that we are closest to rather than directly through the media or advertising.

42% of all adults cite their partner as the main source of pressure to look good.

Personal tracking of health indicators can help to restore a sense of choice and control and so to ameliorate negative body image and anxiety.

Those feeling daily pressure to look good have a 45% greater level of anxiety than those who don’t.

And there is a direct and immediate relationship between physical exercise and individual happiness and wellbeing measures.

As such we have found that a holistic approach to contemporary health and wellbeing would benefit significantly from the inclusion of personal health tracking.

We have also demonstrated that technology based solutions are significantly more effective than traditional techniques in driving positive healthy behaviours.
This chapter considers the positive relationship between body image and personal well-being and the relationship between enhanced well-being and good physical health.

In today’s culture the pressure to look good can lead to high levels of anxiety driven by body image concerns. Yet the very people with a negative body image also engage in significantly fewer physical activities. Both behaviours result in reduced individual well-being and both are links in the negative circle discussed in Chapter Two (in the context of financial pressure).

A holistic approach to well-being recognises this interdependency between body image, physical activity and well-being rather than focusing exclusively on the dominant size, shape or, indeed, BMI agenda.
Where does self-esteem fit in?

When asked, nearly half of people respond that ‘feeling good’ is more important to them than looking good or performing well in their daily lives. While this is closely followed by the desire to look good, the primary driver here is to look good - for myself.

So while concerns around body image anxiety are often discussed in the context of today’s culture and the media, and of course women, it’s important to recognise that when asked directly most people at least claim to be motivated by intrinsic factors. These are vital to success in any health and well-being programme.

Intrinsic motivations are those that come from within – they are our inner, personal, drivers rather than external pleasures or rewards (or external lectures or instructions).

![Chart 1: Importance of feeling good](source: Fitbit Healthy Futures Report)

This represents our instinctive need for self-esteem. In fact, our research shows that, overall, just under 1 in 3 people feel ‘at ease’ with their own body, with more than 1 in 10 (predominantly women) particularly unhappy with their appearance.

While the figures could themselves be seen as a stark reflection on today’s culture, it is their impact on the individual and the specific elements of their well-being highlighted below that should be our real concern, as we seek to help more members of Generation Me to take control and make positive choices and behaviour changes.
In aiming to help more people achieve a positive body image, it is not as simple as solely improving their Body Mass Index (BMI).

Our research shows that the differences between those of a healthy weight and those classed as overweight are very small – for example, there is a difference of just 4% between the proportion of people in either group who feel uncomfortable with their body.

Equally the perception of pressure to look good is very similar across all BMI groups, with 33% of healthy, 28% of overweight and 29% of obese people saying they feel under ‘daily pressure’ to look good.

This focus on looking good – coming from external sources and focused on the size and shape agenda – rather than feeling good in and about myself – jars with what people say is most important to them and reflects the values that many feel dominate today’s culture.

There are, however, signs that the longstanding approach to health is changing, with the emphasis on well-being becoming an increasingly important aspect of a more holistic approach to living well and feeling good. In the past few years in the UK, the government has launched a well-being index, aimed at tracking the overall happiness, satisfaction and mental well-being of the population. In the face of this new approach, the perceived value of traditional measures such as BMI is declining.

“Campaigns which focus on BMI are very destructive – it’s very inaccurate and was invented by a mathematician who had no understanding of physical health and well-being, and was designed to measure averages across a whole population rather than being an individual guide to good health.”

Caroline Nokes MP, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Body Image
Yet, even as the importance of a narrow focus on size and weight finally starts to decrease, at least through formal and official channels, people do of course still feel under pressure to look good.

In fact, out of all of our research respondents, 30% said they feel under ‘daily pressure’ to look good, with a further 55% feeling some degree of pressure.

Although people consider feeling good to be significantly more important for themselves, for a large proportion of people, the pressure to look good feels overwhelming and, despite the efforts being made within public circles as well as increasingly from individual businesses and brands, it is a situation that is unlikely to change for most people for some time.

In fact, many would argue that whatever the improvements and positive changes on the margins the pressure is actually increasing as more and more people are caught within the orbit of body image pressures – whether that is ever younger children or more and more men and, in the context of our ageing societies, ever more older people.
The pressure to look good comes from a wide range of sources and is frequently implicit and unspoken. It is not always or only the most obvious or blatant signs that should concern us – they should be seen instead as the (visible) tip of the iceberg.

Cultures develop a set of hidden cues or signs that we are barely conscious of internalising. Yet we know that on repeated exposure to these ideas and images they become hardwired into our memories – effectively serving to frame (or interpret) day-to-day experiences.

For some people, culture, advertising and media are clearly significant and explicit pressures. Indeed, 22% of those who are expressly uncomfortable with their body cite the media as the most influential source of pressure (more than double the national average). However, for the majority of people (including those with a negative body image), pressures closer to home are much more influential.

"Day after day, people, especially young people, are being bombarded by television and the media with an image of what they should look like which they can never hope to achieve."
Caroline Nokes MP, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Body Image

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most influential</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Partner (42%)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Friends (23%)</td>
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<td>Men – single</td>
<td>Parents (29%)</td>
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<td>Women – single</td>
<td>Friends (33%)</td>
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<td>Men – married</td>
<td>Parents (28%)</td>
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<td>Women – married</td>
<td>Friends (29%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Negative body image (all)</td>
<td>Partner (32%)</td>
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<td>Positive body image (all)</td>
<td>Partner (42%)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Friends (24%)</td>
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</tbody>
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As the table shows, for every group of people the main sources of perceived pressure are family members or friends – indicating a need to look good for others that is at odds with what people identified as most important to them (and, most importantly, what is in tune with their intrinsic motivation).

There is a clear pattern to precisely where those pressures come from by life stage: for single men and women they arise from parents and friends; for married people they arise from partners and then their children – but, consistently, the most dominant pressures are very close to home.

While it is important not to disregard the role that the wider cultural context can play in reinforcing negative body image for those already uncomfortable in their own body, it is also interesting to note the comparatively smaller impact it has for the population as a whole.

We are not, here, disregarding the fact that the very family and friends responsible for expressing the body image pressure felt by an individual are in reality expressing the wider cultural values that they have themselves internalised. It’s a relatively complex field of causation and one that we acknowledge while moving ahead with the wider discussion.
Looking good, feeling anxious?

Feeling under pressure to look good – from any source – can have a detrimental effect on overall well-being. In a similar manner we saw above that body image was also a key driver of well-being – having a significant impact on satisfaction, happiness and control.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the key aspect of well-being negatively impacted by high levels of pressure to look good is that of anxiety – thus extrinsic pressures (see above) feed into a level of anxiety that is significantly above the norm.

Chart 3: Well-being by degree of pressure to look good (0=very low, 10=very high)

As we discussed in Chapter Two, negative external pressures (financial pressures or pressures to look good) can and do harm our well-being, which in turn will impact on our behaviour and choices; with the wrong choices come poor health outcomes and a negative cycle.

Thus the key to a reasonable chance of success in improving health and well-being for Generation Me (in the context of the pressure to look good) is to develop an enhanced sense of control by harnessing our intrinsic motivations against extrinsic pressures.

This increased sense of control will generate more positive well-being and serve to further protect us from poor choices and behaviour and offers the potential for a positive cycle of behaviour.
Move more, feel better

The importance of a holistic approach to all aspects of physical health and mental well-being is underlined by the link between physical activity and higher levels of well-being.

**Chart 5: Proportion doing each activity at least three times a week**

As the chart shows, people who undertake sport more frequently have higher levels of satisfaction and happiness and are more likely to feel that the things they do in their life are worthwhile.

Most importantly, the benefits are immediate and most pronounced at the entry level. There is a significant uplift in well-being simply by undertaking physical activity once a.

And it isn’t just about sport; undertaking a low-exertion type of physical activity, such as walking, can also have a significant impact on overall well-being.

Clearly, then, people trying to improve both their physical health and their overall well-being – in short, to achieve their stated aim of feeling good – need to move beyond simply focusing on weight and onto a more general approach. In terms of living healthily, this approach needs to encourage physical activity.
Our research clearly indicates that body image has a significant relationship with overall participation levels – a negative body image being clearly correlated with lower levels of participation in all areas. In fact, for most of the activities included above, people who are confident and comfortable with their body are three or four times more likely to undertake them on a regular basis. 

![Chart 5: Proportion doing each activity at least three times a week](source: Fitbit Healthy Futures Report)
How self-monitoring can help?

Our research also shows that where individuals choose to track an aspect of their health – whether that is their weight, their diet, the quality of their sleep or their level of exercise – there is a corresponding uplift in their well-being, including for those with negative body image.

Chart 6: Impact of tracking on well-being, for all with negative body image (0=low, 10=high)

The results highlighted in the chart above are hugely important. They clearly quantify the impact of tracking for those suffering with negative body image and related anxieties.

While tracking is no miracle cure – as absolute levels of well-being remain below the norm – the improvement is significant and surely sufficient to start to develop a positive cycle of behaviours and choices.

The reason for these improvements lies in the importance of feeling a sense of control.

So we have this pattern of research results that clearly points to the positive role of self-monitoring in improving an individual’s sense of choice and control – whether that is for people who are indifferent to national public health messages and messengers (Chapter One), people who are suffering from financial pressures (Chapter Two) or people suffering from negative body image or the daily pressure to look good (Chapter Three).

“It’s about regaining a sense of control – once people start becoming cognitively aware of the choices they make and the impact it has on their body, they realise how much power for positive change they have.”

Larry Smarr, Director, California Institute for Telecommunications and IT
There is significant interest and excitement around the potential role of personal communications technology in the field of health and wellbeing.

Personal technology amplifies and enhances the long running individuation trend and so is fundamentally in tune with individual psychology and the spirit of the age.

Our own research clearly shows that technology based tracking solutions are significantly more effective than traditional techniques in driving positive behaviour.

**48% report strong positive behaviour resulting from tech based self-monitoring.**

For many people today their smartphone is their life manager – such that this is the most direct platform to prompt and motivate positive choices and behaviour.

**25% of 25-34 year old adults say they run their life through their smartphone.**

Equally social media is a significant aspect of most people’s lives today – such that social integration can serve to enhance and reward our personal motivation through the importance of social approval.

Data is seen as a particularly powerful driver (or hot trigger) for positive behaviours today as it is by definition personal, transparent and immediate.

**25% of 25-44 year olds agree they would benefit from mobile prompts to action.**

As such our research shows that technology based tracking solutions are significantly more effective than traditional tracking techniques.

And we believe that the role of technology in this field will only grow in the future as we move to a world of wearable technologies and ever deeper social integration.
For many people the idea that modern communications technology could be a positive force within the health and well-being sectors is simply incredible.

We have seen throughout the first half of this Healthy Living Trends report that technology-based self-monitoring solutions can have strongly positive effects for individuals.

"Technology and well-being are now intrinsically linked, whether it’s simply by counting calories or by measuring running or walking journeys.”

Andy Reynolds, Executive Director, OMD International

Impact of mobile?

The emergence of the mobile phone and crucially the mobile internet (via the smartphone) has transformed our relationship with and use of technology – and this continues to progress with tablet computing and wearables.

For many people today the smartphone is their key device, the first thing they check in the morning, the device that is closest to them at all times, home to a dazzling array of professional and personal applications, a gateway to social networks – and in many practical senses their life manager (including calendar commitments, reminders, prompts to action etc.).

The potential to leverage this new relationship with personal technology to support health and well-being objectives should be immediately apparent – our research shows that many of today’s consumers share an appetite for this.

The results shown below also serve to highlight how we have allowed technology – and mobile internet-based technology particularly – to take a lead role in organising our lives. We now expect to receive useful prompts and reminders to support our decision-making and behavioural choices.

This is probably a rational response to the vast changes in information processing required of individuals today compared to previous generations – and should allow us to retain focus on those areas of life requiring the most involved decision-making.
Overall there is a significant level of agreement with the proposition that ‘I run my life through my smartphone’.

This is consistent with the culture of time pressure which we refer to in the next chapter of the report (in the context of work) and highlights the contemporary life management role for the smartphone.

Interestingly, some recent research reveals the extent to which people are unconsciously treating their smartphone as an active independent agent (i.e. another person) – much to the horror of the research project participants!
In Chapter One of this Healthy Living Trends report we referred to three components of data that help to explain why it has the potential to overcome resistance to health messages:

- Transparent data can avoid the pitfall of lecturing and telling people what to do
- Transparent data is by definition personal
- Transparent data is immediate and progress incremental.

Our research results backed up our theories around tracking such that it was found to be up to three times as effective in driving personal behaviour change as public institutions’ health messages or celebrity health kicks. What was most exciting about the research results, however, was that they showed technology-based solutions were twice as effective as traditional tracking techniques.

So we have a powerful set of attributes and evidence to support the role of transparent data in an effective personal health and well-being programme – but is there more to this technology proposition?

“Technology makes it far more real so you can see the gradual steps that you need to take and the benefit it’s having on you. With the old-fashioned well-being methods … You never really truly understood what you were doing to yourself. You knew it was having an impact but technology allows you to see it and see where you can make those changes. It translates it into a language that they truly understand.”

Andy Reynolds, Executive Director, OMD International

“Technology fundamentally changes things: real-time sensor technology gives people knowledge about their body, which in turn feeds into control.”

Larry Smarr, Founding Director, Calit2
The social effect of social networks

Perhaps the most visible aspect of the current consumer technology paradigm is the emergence of social media and especially social networks.

Combining this social culture with psychological insights around our herd (or copycat) behaviour, as well as the power of gaming techniques, creates an exciting cocktail of ingredients to exploit in the development of an approach to health and well-being. This is immediate, personal, social and even fun!

“Social networks can play a big role – improving your body is like throwing a rock in a pool; a circle emanates out, touching a wider and wider circle of friends who want to emulate the change in themselves.”
Larry Smarr, Founding Director, Calit2

This quote draws our attention to one of the key issues with much of the existing public health messaging discussed in Chapter One – the negative orientation toward sacrifice; giving up the things we enjoy today, long-term benefits etc.

“What’s most important for one of these apps is that it motivates and encourages, rather than being negative – so if people feel better about themselves, then they’re more inclined to do a little bit more.”
Caroline Nokes MP, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Body Image

“...a lot of these more immediate reward systems like social sharing and badging help – they manifest rewards for smaller steps on that journey. Bad behaviour .... [has] an immediate positive reward, for example having a slice of chocolate cake will give you that immediate rush of endorphins, an immediate pleasure reward.”
Peter Hames, CEO, Sleepio
Technology a ‘hot trigger’ for better health

The case for the role of technology as a positive driver for health and well-being is becoming more compelling as we progress through our Healthy Living Trends report. It is worth noting that our research, expert interviews and experience are borne out by the theories behind human behaviour and decision-making.

BJ Fogg, founder of the Persuasive Technology Lab at Stanford University (USA), is regarded as a world expert in understanding human behaviour and designing persuasive technology to support positive habit formation.

The ‘Fogg Behaviour Model’ expresses the simple truth that any behaviour is a function of three components – motivation, ability and a trigger – all being available at the same time.

Behavioural triggers come in two forms – cold and hot: cold triggers are those that can’t be acted upon while hot triggers are those that a motivated user can easily act upon.

So an effective trigger must be actionable – asking someone to do something beyond their ability is very frustrating and almost certainly counterproductive in the long run (leading to the by now familiar refrain that ‘the changes required seem overwhelming to me’). Equally, prompting someone to do something they are not motivated to do will simply be annoying!

As discussed in Chapter Three, in developing the argument in support of technology-based health and well-being solutions we are certainly not overlooking the fundamental importance of intrinsic (or self-) motivation. Our research clearly shows that there is a significant level of latent intrinsic motivation available – with almost half of respondents agreeing that ‘feeling good in and for themselves’ is most important to them (compared to external pressures and priorities).

We have touched on the difficulties of effective behaviour change and specifically how hard it can be to change existing (default) habits.

Even for a fairly highly motivated individual there will be many occasions when bad habits return – unless they have ready access to the reminders and prompts welcomed by our respondents at the start of the chapter.

When these personal and individual triggers are complemented by the social and game aspects referenced above then we are blending intrinsic and extrinsic motivations into a social and competitive package which supports and challenges the individual while rewarding incremental progress toward their overall objectives.

“Facebook, Twitter, Google, Instagram, you name it, these companies have been using computers to influence our behaviour ... but how they do it has nothing to do ... with computers ... the ... link isn’t the technology, it’s psychology.”

BJ Fogg (Quoted in Forbes 12th April 2012, ‘How to win users and understand behaviour’)

Even for a fairly highly motivated individual there will be many occasions when bad habits return – unless they have ready access to the reminders and prompts welcomed by our respondents at the start of the chapter.
More mobile, more integrated, more wearable

The best technology innovations have drawn extensively upon an understanding of human psychology and behaviour in order to develop their products and services – and we can do the same for health and well-being.

This presents a rich and relevant context for Generation Me to engage with.

We are talking about a generation of people who have been at least partly defined by the pace and range of communications technology innovation during their lifetimes. Indeed, many members of Generation Me are the very same programmers, innovators, and entrepreneurs behind the communications technology revolution.

One thing that we can be confident of in terms of the future is that the trajectory of change for consumer technologies will see them become ever more mobile, ever more integrated, ever more wearable, and so ever more personal and embedded in day-to-day life – such that people already talk of a blurred (and seamless) physical and virtual reality.

As the available data for analysis continues to expand, the potential is there to really pinpoint health and well-being triggers by individual and crucially by context.

While people have for a number of years talked about the opportunities around the internet of things (internet-enabled machine-to-machine communications), perhaps the real excitement concerning technology, especially in the context of health and well-being, should be around the potential for greater application of psychological insights to support individuals.

In that context we might anticipate further positive improvements in terms of positive behaviour change beyond those captured by our research. We already know that tech-based tracking is twice as effective as traditional tracking and five times as effective as public health messages. We also know that there is significant interest in developing these applications through social and gaming elements.

As such it would be very interesting to revisit this subject in years to come and to see how the latest iterations of these technologies perform in terms of sustained positive behaviours – and what that will mean for the national health and well-being conversation.

Next time it’s hyper-personal

It’s highly likely that we’ll look back on today’s public health messages as an anachronism in an age dominated by hyper-personal context-specific technologies and communications.
Chapter Five
The Rise of the Work–Health Balance

There are potentially significant benefits for today’s employers in engaging with the national health and wellbeing agenda.

As the demands and expectations of many employees expand as a result of digital connectivity there is an argument for ameliorating the most negative consequences.

**Over 50% of adults report experiencing high levels of day-to-day time pressure.**

Time pressure is a central trope in today’s culture but one that needs to interpreted within the wider lens of individual well-being.

There is a positive feedback loop between physical health, individual wellbeing, good decision making and enhanced productivity that employers can benefit from.

**46% of adults report never going to the gym, for a walk, a run or for a cycle.**

Employers today need to be aware of this intimate relationship between health and wellbeing and ensure that their own practices don’t reinforce cultural pressures and the resulting body image and anxiety issues.

**48% of full time workers report spending 5 or more hours per day sitting down.**

Too many people today are simply not getting nearly enough physical exercise, as a consequence of desk based work, time-pressures, anxiety and other issues.

**28% report high levels of stress at work and 18% pressure to look good at work.**

Employers of whatever size are ideally placed to support their workers in taking a fresh approach to their personal health.

And it might only take one positively engaged employee to drive wider take-up within a business as a result of peer influence and recommendation.

The challenge is of course to ensure that today’s employer isn’t seen to be preaching, that they work in partnership with individuals and wherever possible make the approach sociable and even fun!
Work is a central feature of many people’s lives. Some spend more time at work than at home during a typical week. Time spent travelling is a significant additional element. This being the case, this chapter will explore the workplace in our approach to health and well-being.

What do the barriers to positive behaviour change look like for a working person? Lack of time is the number one barrier to increased exercise and activity levels (ahead of money) among full-time employees. This confirms the contemporary idea that many of us are cash rich while time poor.

Chart 1: Barriers to changing behaviour by employment status

And of course time pressure is one of the key trends in contemporary culture. While academic analysis of time use – championed by the Centre for Time Use Research at the University of Oxford – may challenge the conventional wisdom, there can be no doubt that the perception of time pressure is a reality for many and represents a key barrier to be overcome in the effective promotion of the health and well-being agenda.

This perception is reflected in the proportion of different types of respondents agreeing that they ‘often feel under time pressure in their day-to-day lives’
Throughout our analysis we can see time being used as the default explanation for a lack of positive behaviour change by a significant proportion of respondents. While this is particularly pronounced for those experiencing low levels of personal well-being, it both reflects the wider cultural context and serves to justify the maintenance of existing habits.

In fact, the perception of time pressure in day-to-day life (by demographic) is most common among women, those with children living at home, and our youngest age cohort (25–34).
What’s the role for the employer?

As a starting point we should acknowledge the fact that people in full-time-equivalent work are significantly more likely to rate their own health as excellent or good than their peers – and are also the most likely (other than the retired) to rate life satisfaction at the highest levels.

We should also state that our research saw only 1/3 of respondents agree that their employer provided ‘any practical support for healthier living’.

Yet employers can play a powerful role in helping to develop the national health and well-being agenda.

There are a number of reasons for this – the share of time spent at work, the wider decline of deference and the ever increasing expectations of many employees as a result of mobile communications technologies – with 25% feeling tremendous pressure to be ‘always on’.

“IT’s not about work/life balance anymore – [up to half] of our time [is spent] working, it doesn’t become a separation, it just becomes life. Studies show happier employees are more productive, creative and effective ones.”

Jen Lim, CEO, Delivering Happiness

And there is the wider issue alluded to in the title of this chapter – the question of work–life balance: while 52% of our respondents agree that they like to keep work and life separate as far as possible, a significant minority (22%) are aiming to achieve a sustainable integration of work and life.

This new reality, driven by mobile communications technologies, has clear implications for the role of the employer, and is particularly common among female employees.

There are also a number of practical considerations that should alert any employer to the importance of maintaining a focus on employee health and well-being.

**Figure 1**

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<th>1 in 5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have a high sense of everyday time pressure (56%)</td>
<td>Get very little exercise at all (32%)</td>
<td>Have a high level of concern over their weight (24%)</td>
<td>Have a very poor diet (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full time workers spend 5+ hours a day sitting down (48%)</td>
<td>Feel a high level of financial pressure (34%)</td>
<td>Have a poor level of sleep quality (24%)</td>
<td>Feel under pressure to look good at work (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never go to the gym, for a run, a cycle or swim (46%)</td>
<td>Don’t have time to cook properly (32%)</td>
<td>Have a high level of stress at work (28%)</td>
<td>Spend over 45 minutes travelling each way to work (19%)</td>
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</table>

Fitbit Healthy Futures Report

All of these individual elements (not to mention their interaction) will affect an employee’s long-term health and well-being – but will also have a direct impact on their employment performance (as well as attendance).
Interestingly, our research also highlighted the fact that those individuals who did receive some level of practical support for healthier living from their employers rated their personal satisfaction at work marginally more highly than those who didn’t – while their overall life satisfaction was significantly higher.

One other element supports the argument for a greater level of employer involvement in health and well-being matters – the fact that almost 10% of full-time employees claim that word-of-mouth recommendations (from friends, family and colleagues) are their most trusted source of health and well-being information.

Thus, just one engaged employee within a business can generate a positive dynamic – acting as a catalyst for positive behaviour change for others across the business.

Of course, that principle can be maximised – and potential employee resistance minimised – through the integration of social media and even gaming elements (gamification) within an employer programme.

Our research explored attitudes to the use of mobile technology, particularly in relation to promoting healthy behaviour change.

**Chart 3: Attitudes to mobile technology**

“As soon as you speak about health or well-being, you often get a collective sigh in return, but if you can use fun and social influence in a stealth manner, you can have a more dramatic effect. This is the beauty of gamification – it can play on both social influence and fun.”

Ed Gardiner, Behavioural Design Lead, Warwick Business School

Interestingly, our research also highlighted the fact that those individuals who did receive some level of practical support for healthier living from their employers rated their personal satisfaction at work marginally more highly than those who didn’t – while their overall life satisfaction was significantly higher.
Given that the latter is a key measure of individual well-being with a direct relationship with decision-making and behaviour, this is a significant bonus for both employer and employee.

Chart 4: Levels of satisfaction by whether or not participant receives ‘healthy living support’ from employer

![Chart showing levels of satisfaction]

It is fair to argue that, through dedicated HR departments and simple economies of scale, for example, large businesses are in a better position to benefit from such enhanced employee satisfaction and well-being – and our research supports that case.

Chart 5: Percentage of employers offering practical healthy living support, by number of employees

![Chart showing percentage of employers offering support]

This doesn’t mean that it’s not possible for smaller businesses to reap the benefit from higher levels of employee well-being. Many practical measures have little or no monetary cost to the employer and can be accommodated within the flexible framework already common to many small businesses.
Many of us today are desk-based knowledge or information workers spending our days in front of multiple screens. The result is that most of us do far less physical activity as a part of work than in the past – a situation compounded by the prevalence of screen-based (in-home) entertainment options.

Therefore, perhaps the most important role that an employer can play today is to enable their colleagues to make the time for exercise – or to integrate exercise into their existing routine – be that by using the stairs more often, promoting walking or cycling to work, providing extended breaks for those participating in organised sports or even recalibrating the summer party as a sports day!

Many employers already provide financial assistance for their employees – whether through subsidised gym membership schemes, subsidised bicycle purchase or similar – but those schemes will only ever benefit a subsection of employees rather than the many who could benefit – and those who, arguably, would benefit the most.

It is also a very individual model and very different from the corporate cultures prevalent in South East Asia, or even in continental European businesses such as BMW. In fact, progressive employers such as VW have introduced policies that enforce the switching off of company mobile devices between certain hours.

A smart 21st-century employer might integrate these ideas such that employees can benefit from some digital downtime (an increasingly important trend) while using that time to engage in healthy exercise and also to socialise (however competitively) with their colleagues. That is a formidable combination of benefits for personal health and individual well-being.

As such we’d expect the benefits in terms of employee engagement to be significant – especially for Generation Y (those born after 1981 and coming of age in the new millennium).
This chapter has drawn upon the previous chapters of the report and focused those insights around today’s workplace.

In the modern economy employers have a potentially powerful role to play in developing employee engagement with the health and well-being agenda – and suggested that with the integration of mobile communications technologies there is a degree of responsibility for employers in managing the transition to fluid working.

The proximity of employers and the share of time spent at work means that they are well placed to deliver the type of personalised packages and messaging that can motivate Generation Me effectively – while avoiding the pitfalls central to the decline of deference.

Learning from their employee’s relationship with technology platforms – be they mobile, social or game-based – can also enable employers to hand over the specifics of the programme and allow employees to develop the personalisation that works best for them.

And the benefits of these types of approaches are readily apparent for both the employer and employee.

At one level, better physical health means less absenteeism, but it is also the key platform for improved well-being which directly drives productivity and effectiveness – as well as sustaining better decision-making and personal choices.

### Healthy for business; the mutual benefit

The chart highlights the fact that while the 25–34-year-old cohort is no more or less likely than other age groups to track any aspect of their health – they are significantly more likely than the older age groups to engage with technology-based solutions.

We have seen throughout the report that tracking has a significant impact on individual behaviour (up to three times as effective as public health campaigns) – and we saw that there was a significant differential between traditional and technology-based approaches to self-monitoring or tracking (with technology being twice as effective as traditional techniques).

Therefore for today’s employers, no matter what the size of the business, there is an opportunity to work together with their employees to deliver mutual benefits – enhanced productivity and reduced absenteeism on the one side, improved personal health and individual well-being on the other – that reinforce and support each other in a positive feedback spiral.

**Chart 6: Tracking behaviour, by age**

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At one level, better physical health means less absenteeism, but it is also the key platform for improved well-being which directly drives productivity and effectiveness – as well as sustaining better decision-making and personal choices.
When addressing the national health and wellness agenda it is clear that the home is a central arena – not least for the influence on future generations’ behaviours.

The presence of children in a household heightens awareness of the issues around healthy living but there remain significant gaps between awareness and behaviour.

**Only 47% of parents do any weekly exercise with their children.**

In fact parents’ are more likely than their peers to agree that businesses producing unhealthy food and drinks should be taxed and regulated more tightly.

**51% of parents agree that advertising of unhealthy foods should be regulated.**

But many households today are of course experiencing significant financial pressures which can serve to restrict their sense of choice and control and to narrow their focus.

**54% of parents feel under daily time-pressure, 44% report financial pressure.**

But surely this can’t excuse the high number of parents who do little or no exercise with their children – leaving them vulnerable to the charge of ineffectual preaching.

Equally significant numbers of parents report that they rarely have the opportunity to sit down and eat dinner with their children.

**31% of parents report not eating dinner together with their children regularly.**

We have seen that personal health tracking can effectively bridge the gap between knowledge and behaviour – and yet parents’ are slightly less likely to undertake self-monitoring than their peers.

Of course families can also be a source of negative influence by internalising the cultural obsession with size, shape and physical appearance.

But by emphasising a holistic approach to health and wellbeing and the importance of intrinsic motivation families can also help to address the imbalance in society.

And in doing so parents should pay attention to their own wellbeing not least as it is negatively impacted by poor sleep with the resulting impact on decision making.

**27% of all parents report a consistently poor quality of sleep.**

Finally we would again highlight the potentially powerful role of personal technology in the process, offering as we have seen all of the benefits of data, social integration and gaming mechanics – but for parents also perhaps a way into their children’s lives!
This final chapter of our Healthy Living Trends report focuses on the extent to which family life can affect our attitudes to health and well-being, and the challenges parents face in ensuring their children live as healthily as possible.

**Messages to mums and dads?**

Parents are particularly receptive to messages around healthy living. When compared to non-parents, those with children are notably more likely to be aware of and to have acted on news and information related to health and well-being.

More than 2 in 5 say the debate has had a strong or a slight positive effect on at least one of the elements identified in the chart below.

![Chart 1: Health messaging has had ANY positive effect on...](image)

Note that this data relates to *any* positive effect generated from public health messaging as opposed to the *strong* positive effect on behaviour discussed in Chapter One of the report.

It seems that, when we have children, messages around our physical health and well-being - whether related to family diet or exercise routines - resonate that little more loudly.

There is also considerable uplift in various aspects of our psychological well-being when we have children.

**Fewer than 30% of non-parents feel the things they do in life are ‘worthwhile’, for example, compared to 45% of parents.**

Parents are also more likely to think that the national conversation on healthy living is beneficial to society as a whole -

**30% of those without kids think the frequent use of the terms ‘obesity’ and ‘obese’ encourage individuals to make positive changes, compared to 35% of parents.**
Parents’ views on measures to tackle damaging consumption reveal the wider trend:

As the chart above shows, parents are slightly more likely than non-parents to support punitive measures for companies that produce junk food, whether by increasing the tax those companies pay (and, consequently, increasingly the retail price) or by imposing stricter conditions on the advertising of those products.

**Most notably, they are also less likely to adopt a libertarian stance, with just 30% believing that people should be free to eat or drink whatever they like.**
The role of parents in promoting healthy, active lifestyles at home cannot be understated, even as we see improved education and technology from a young age.

However, further analysis of the research results shows significant differences among parents. While 60% of parents say they talk to their children either quite often or very often about the importance of eating healthily and exercising well (with just 5% saying never), 37% say they exercise with their children just once a month or less.

Additionally, almost 1 in 10 parents rarely or never sits down to eat dinner with their children.

“Parents are less active in their children's lives due to new technology. For example, new toys don't require as much parent interaction. It's a case of managing it and not letting it take over your life – but it can be incredibly powerful in the realm of health.”

Ed Gardiner, Behavioural Design Lead, Warwick Business School

“People who sit down at a meal table and eat more regularly are more likely to have a better diet than those who eat off their laps in front of television; also mealtimes are an important occasion for family relationships, to engage in conversation.”

Caroline Nokes MP, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Body Image

Chart 3: Frequency of doing the following (parents only)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Less than once a month: exercise with kids</th>
<th>Quite/very often: talk to children about importance of being healthy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>37%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fitbit Healthy Futures Report
Once again there appears to be a significant disconnect between the overall impact that health messaging has on parents in terms of awareness raising the transition to active engagement within the family.

Children are in danger of being the recipients of lectures that have little personal relevance as they are not matched by the behaviour and choices that they see in their own home.

Previous chapters of the report have shown how external, or extrinsic, pressures can negatively impact on our well-being and so our behaviour and choices.

For many families today, the economic context will be critical. Having children may improve our well-being by making us feel more worthwhile; it does not, however, help to make the family budget go further when times are hard – increasing financial pressures.

Equally body image anxiety can be readily transmitted from parents to their children and time pressures for a family juggling jobs and children can present a huge barrier to positive behaviour. It was striking from our research results that high levels of body image anxiety were more prevalent among parents than among general respondents.

We have also seen – in Chapter Three of the report – how much of the daily pressure to look good comes from within the household, whether from a partner or children or parents.

So, in the same way that a relatively high income does not necessarily insulate us from the negative impact of financial pressures – due to prior financial management and the impact of life events – so the presence of children doesn’t necessarily stimulate increased engagement with the health and well-being agenda – due to external pressures and prior life experiences.
Improving family health

One area that is particularly challenging for today's parents is the central role of screen-based entertainment in children's lives and contemporary culture.

If it isn’t the vast range of dedicated children’s TV channels available at all hours of the day, then it’s the latest DVD, the favourites stored on the PVR, or the portable games console (rapidly graduating to the main household console). Increasingly, of course, children are also mastering tablet computers (often ahead of their parents) and proudly owning mobile and now smar mobile phones.

Given that introduction to the subject it’s perhaps not entirely surprising that households with children tend to spend slightly more time on screen-based entertainment or activities than their peers – with TV and film, social networks and gaming leading the field.

Chart 4: Proportion doing each activity for at least two hours a day

The other side of the equation is the variety and volume of physical activities undertaken. On these measures parents perform slightly better than their peers – as might be expected.

Chart 5: Proportion doing each activity at least twice a week

Overall, then, the picture is certainly one of busy family households – engaged in more physical activities as well as more screen-based activities.
When it comes to self-monitoring, however, parents are actually very slightly less likely to track a health indicator than their child-free peers, making it harder for them to maintain their relatively high level of self-reported health (ahead of their peers).

A range of barriers might affect the parents’ transition from high health awareness to a more active level of engagement. An obvious place to start is the significant impact having children has on parents’ free time and levels of stress.

The impact of poor sleep is particularly important for parents attempting to promote healthy and active lifestyles at home.
While this issue is acknowledged in the data – sleep being the only health indicator that parents are more likely to track than their child-free peers – the consequences of feeling time pressure – often driven by poor sleep – are wide-ranging. Poor sleep can result in lower levels of subjective well-being, which will negatively affect choices and behaviour.

This is highlighted by the fact that almost 1 in 5 parents (18%) among our research sample report that introducing healthy items into the family menu is difficult.

Parents were also more likely to agree that children see so much advertising for junk food that that’s what they want to eat, as well as being more likely to agree that they when shopping they don’t understand the labelling on many foods.

As we have seen, the key to effective and lasting behaviour change is feeling a high degree of choice and control – something that is easily prevented or disrupted by external factors such as time pressure, poor sleep, body image anxiety or financial concerns.

Feeling a high degree of choice and well-being not only increases overall well-being, but also increases the quality and range of our decision-making.

The impact of different perceptions of choice and control on parents is stark:

**Chart 8: Parental involvement in health, by degree of choice and control**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Always/mostly: eat dinner with children</th>
<th>At least once a week: exercise with children</th>
<th>Very/fairly easy: introduce healthy items to family menu</th>
<th>Quite/very often: talk to children about importance of being healthy</th>
<th>Some/strong: level of children's interest in healthy living</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High choice and control</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower level of choice and control</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Healthy futures?

We can see from this brief exploration of family life today that the home is in many ways the centre of the action when it comes to exploring healthy living trends.

It is perhaps only in the home that all of the trends explored throughout the report combine to create a potentially explosive cocktail of priorities and, therefore, an increasing need for compromises and trade-offs between competing priorities and limited resources.

All of the ingredients we have covered previously come together in the family household with potentially far-reaching consequences for the children involved.

As such it is critical for those parents who express their awareness of and support for the national health and wellness priorities to find and sustain the intrinsic motivation that can assist them in combating the negative effects of these external or extrinsic pressures. If they can do so they will help their family to avoid the vicious circle explored previously.

From the outset our research has supported our arguments in favour of self-monitoring solutions – from the simplest paper and pen or mental records through to the latest technology-based solutions.

What is particularly exciting – as we discussed in Chapter Four – is how the latest mobile and now wearable technologies can utilise social and gaming mechanics to improve the overall experience for today’s families – buffeted by economic and cultural pressures as they are.

In doing so we hope to produce a sustainable and positive cycle of improved physical health, enhanced individual well-being, better choices and behaviour and so sustained improvement of physical health.

While that is the core cycle, we should also note the spin-off benefits in terms of the positive relationship between health and well-being and income or employment, the strong relationship between well-being and decision-making and, of course, the central importance of intrinsic motivation as a bulwark against external pressures – whether from within our family, from the wider culture or simply from time and money pressures.