

Carnegie UK response to Labour Party Policy Consultation 2023

March 2023

About Carnegie UK

Carnegie UK is a charitable foundation based in Dunfermline. Our purpose is better wellbeing for people in the UK and Ireland. We seek to achieve this by growing support for a wellbeing approach to public policy, working with governments and policymakers at all levels in the UK and Ireland to help think differently about how we understand society and contribute to social progress. We work with partners to contribute to what is known about wellbeing, testing and studying what works in practice. We use this evidence to make the case for which approaches and systems need to change and recommend how to make that happen. Visit www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk to find out more about our work on collective wellbeing.

We were pleased to contribute to the Labour Party Policy Consultation 2023. We submitted our responses online and are publishing here for wider interest.

Supporting Families - A submission from Carnegie UK on digital inclusion for families

Carnegie UK has had an interest in digital inclusion for nearly a decade. Our work has shown that it is often those who are most likely to experience disadvantage or inequality who are also most likely to lack digital access, and therefore there is an effect of compounding disadvantage.

Through our research and practical work, we have developed 5 critical components of digital inclusion: a device, a connection, skills and motivation, a safe online environment, and sustainability of access. Solutions and interventions that acknowledge and actively address all of these aspects of digital inclusion together are uncommon.

Sources such as the ONS and Ofcom provide vital insight and headline figures, such as that 5% of households still do not have internet access at home. We have yet to see a form of measurement which takes into account all components of digital access – such as those who may have a connection to their home, but do not have a suitably working device, or do not have the appropriate skills to access the information and services that meet their needs. It is imperative that we have national statistics that can reflect these nuances, to ensure that the solutions we deliver are reaching all those who are excluded in some way.

A proactive long-term strategic approach is required. We have seen growing numbers of cross-sector collaborations, where national and local government, charities, community organisations, schools, housing associations, technology companies, local and big business have worked together to find solutions. Through the embedding of digital inclusion

approaches into existing structures and services, we can create an environment that is sensitive to those who are digitally excluded, that reduces structural barriers to inclusion, and which is able to recognise where people need support and have the ability to offer this in a holistic way with recognition of the particular aspects of access and inclusion are problematic for that person and why.

In our recent report *Closing the Digital Divide* we outlined how the government, local authorities and schools might work together to deliver a rolling programme of support for children and young people who need help with digital access. Making sure that every child is digitally included at school age would be another huge step forward.

As many of the best examples show, it is often people who are already involved at community level who are best placed to support those who need help with digital access. There is a role for government and for funders, to recognise the potential of frontline services for digital inclusion, and to provide the finance and training needed to ensure these organisations are able to continue to play that role. Government and other funders can also help to enable efficiency savings through the procurement of devices and connectivity at scale, given their purchasing power and potentially the ability to secure better terms.

We recognise a safe online environment as one of our five components of digital inclusion, and our work on the online harms legislation continues. We believe this is an essential component of any governments activity on supporting families. We hope that this legislation will pass in the near future, but there will be an ongoing challenge for any future government in implementing the legislation to ensure it protects children and young people effectively.

Linked to [Closing the Digital Divide for Good - Carnegie UK Trust](#) and [Carnegie UK: Online Safety Bill resource page - Carnegie UK Trust](#)

Safe and secure communities

The UK is the most centralised state in the G7, and one of the most centralised in Europe. Despite the key role that local government plays in supporting community wellbeing, the low level of power of local government is matched by low levels of engagement in local decision-making.

There is a pressing need to rejuvenate local democracy (in its broadest sense), providing a focal point for conversations on improving lives. But there is little point having such vital conversations when the participants are doomed to conclude they themselves do not have the power to make change happen. During COVID-19 our listening project heard examples of local government being given more responsibility and autonomy to respond to the crisis. This has created space for emergency place-based approaches resulting in joined up services, shared budget allocations and new partnerships. For these trusting relationships to continue, local authorities need more flexible funding, unrestricted by targets and central control. Despite rhetoric on localism, there are too few legal powers to raise funds and take decisions at the most appropriate spatial level.

Much economic policy is built on the insight that the future is city-based, and that agglomeration was the goal. Local places had begun to fight back and there are now examples of place-based approaches that take a cross-sectoral approach to tackling deep economic issues. The most well-known of these is community wealth building where local

authorities or other large anchor institutions (universities, combined authorities and housing associations) use their procurement power to stimulate the local economy and support sustainable local supply chains. While progress is being made, these approaches have not yet reached a tipping point into mainstream policy and practice. We call on the Labour Party to support holistic, place-based approaches like community wealth building. There is an opportunity to build on the learning to date from place-based approaches to expand to new localities, resulting in more just and equitable local economies and improved community wellbeing.

A new settlement between central and local is required that adheres to the principle of subsidiarity (where powers to make decisions should be held at the most immediate, or local, level possible to ensure wellbeing outcomes). We are calling on political parties to enshrine the principle of subsidiarity into law to revitalise local democracy. A renewed local power base would galvanise non-governmental actors like businesses, universities and civil society to come together to improve wellbeing in their local area.

More local power needs to come with clearer local visions. We have worked closely with the North of Tyne Combined Authority over the past 3 years to develop a wellbeing framework to guide their decision making. Built on the views of local people, a set of 10 'wellbeing outcomes' or goals for the region was created which reflect the people's priorities. Tied to each outcome is a set of 'indicators' that will allow government officials and members of the public alike to track progress. We urge the Labour Party to consider supporting regional and local wellbeing frameworks to support community engagement, shared decision making and improved outcomes for communities.

Better public services for all

The challenges faced by public service across the UK require a fundamentally different approach to governance. Over the past decade, governments in the UK have been engaged in a process of transformation away from New Public Management's focus on command and control through targets towards a whole-of-government approach that emphasises long-term goals and joined up working.

We urge the Labour Party to accelerate this paradigm shift by developing a wellbeing framework that applies across all public services. One way of doing this would be to emulate the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. This legislation was brought forward by Welsh Labour and implemented so effectively that has been a beacon for wellbeing governments across the world ever since. It includes wellbeing goals and five ways of working that apply to all public services in Wales. We supported Lord Birds Wellbeing of Future Generations Bill, introduced to the House of Lords in 2021 and would welcome discussions about this being taken forward by future governments.

The two key elements of wellbeing legislation are

- 1) a wellbeing framework that consists of:
 - A vision to put collective wellbeing at the heart of decision-making.
 - A set of outcomes that are an aspirational but achievable vision for society.
 - A measurement framework for understanding what needs to improve, for whom and debating trade-offs between different outcome areas.

And

- 2) legislative ways of working that encompass a whole-of-government approach. The Welsh ways of working are:
 - Long-termism: The importance of balancing short-term needs with the needs to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.
 - Integration: Considering how the public body's objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.
 - Involvement: The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.
 - Collaboration: Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its objectives.
 - Prevention: How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives.

On the basis of over a decade of work on wellbeing frameworks within and outwith the UK, we would like to make several recommendations to the Labour Party to embed wellbeing:

1. Host a full public conversation on collective wellbeing. We have supported the ONS in its review of the Measuring National Wellbeing dashboard but a broader national conversation is required on what we want from our public services, and each other going forward is necessary given the scale of the current challenges.
2. Legislate to put collective wellbeing at the centre of decision-making. COVID-19 revealed how closely related our health, economy and environment are. Governments can use this clarity as the opportunity to frame collective wellbeing as the goal for all public services and overcome the deep siloism in our public services that reduces efficiency and effectiveness.
3. Use a shared set of wellbeing indicators to support budget decisions that balance wellbeing outcomes. The Green Book guidance on incorporating personal wellbeing risks unintended consequences if we do not consider inequalities in collective wellbeing when making spending decisions. The Green Book and other guidance notes require updating to take into account new developments in the understanding of collective wellbeing.

Better Jobs and Better Work – A submission from Carnegie UK on Good Work

Prior to the pandemic a focus on fair work had been an increasingly prominent feature of political and policy attention. At UK level, Matthew Taylor published his Review of Modern Work Practices in the UK, with 50 recommendations broadly accepted by the UK Government in its Good Work Plan. We attach the components of job quality that emerged from a follow on programme on Measuring Job Quality. We continue to urge the ONS and the UK Government to measure and report on job quality alongside job quantity.

As well as being important for wellbeing, good quality work supports higher workplace productivity, which will be a critical aspect of supporting wages and living standards recovery. Our research has shown that there is a positive correlation between most aspects of fair work

and improved worker productivity. The correlation is much stronger at the 'poorest' end of the spectrum, meaning we should tackle 'bad work' to deliver the greatest improvements in worker wellbeing and productivity. We have attached the essays that contributed to our thinking on this issue.

At devolved, regional and local level, many areas have sought to develop new approaches to foster fair work practices in local economies. Scotland has a Fair Work Convention; Wales a Fair Work Commission and both jurisdictions have sought to embed a fair work focus across government with dedicated directorates and a long-term commitment to change. We support the localism implied by these approaches and encourage the Labour Party to continue supporting further economic decentralisation.

As part of our commitment to localism, we supported the Living Wage Foundation and Living Wage Scotland to pilot a series of Living Wage Places across the UK.

At the heart of each Living Wage Place – whether it be a region, city, town or building – are Action Groups of local Living Wage employers, who work together to create and deliver an Action Plan to grow the number of Living Wage employers in the region, so boosting the number of local people earning at least a Living Wage. We strongly encourage the Labour Party to support further growth of Living Wage Places across the UK.

Linked to [Can Good Work Solve the Productivity Puzzle? - Carnegie UK Trust](#)