

Embedding Wellbeing in Northern Ireland



Introduction

Northern Ireland is at a crossroads. With the long-term impact of Brexit and the policy and political vacuum left by the absence of a Northern Ireland Executive and Northern Ireland Assembly unclear, the ability to plan and deliver effective, responsive and connected public services is challenging.

However, before the EU Referendum and the collapse of Stormont, the then Northern Ireland Executive sought to lay the foundations for public services which are fit for the 21st century.

The [reform of local government](#) and the commitment to place wellbeing at the centre of public services and to work to an outcomes based approach in the draft Programme for Government, have challenged local government and its partners to connect to their communities, to think strategically, and to work collaboratively. With transformation at local level came new powers and responsibilities for those policymakers and practitioners closest to their communities, most notably, in Community Planning. In 2015, Northern Ireland's 11 newly established local authorities, together with [the wider statutory Community Planning partners](#), were tasked with consulting citizens within their new local government boundaries and developing Community Plans which outlined the long-term priorities for improving the wellbeing of their communities. With the new duties came the need to work in new ways – to outcomes, within new partnership structures, and across sectoral boundaries – but with no new financial resources.

Northern Ireland's Community Plans have been operational from 2017, after which the Community Planning Partnerships progressed from developing their Plans to their delivery. Independent research commissioned by the Carnegie UK Trust found that while the 11 Community Plans were informed by citizen engagement, approved by the partnership structure, and committed to delivering wellbeing outcomes, there was scope for support in the new ways of working required for their implementation.

For the Carnegie UK Trust, wellbeing, put simply, means living well.

Societal wellbeing means everyone having what they need to live well now and in the future. More than health and wealth, it includes longer-term considerations like the environment as well as things that matter most directly to people in there here and now like having friends and loved ones, the ability to contribute meaningfully to society and the ability to make choices about our own lives. It is measured internationally, nationally and locally through the three pillars of material conditions, quality of life and environmental sustainability.

Embedding Wellbeing in Northern Ireland



Over
£350,000
investment



11 Local
Authorities
invited to apply



3 year
programme

In response to this opportunity to provide support and as a legacy of our work on wellbeing outcomes at central government level, the Trust's [Embedding Wellbeing in Northern Ireland](#) project was developed to offer significant financial and in-kind support for up to three Community Planning Partnerships to implement a local wellbeing outcomes approach. The project is designed to support the participating Community Planning Partnerships to overcome challenges which they have identified as a priority as they seek to deliver their Community Plans. As part of an open Expression of Interest process, the local authorities were asked to commit to the principles of openness, partnership working, shared learning, and participation, and were required to demonstrate support from their Chief Executive and Chair of the Community Planning Partnership for their application.

The Trust convened an independent, external [Advisory Group](#) to provide strategic oversight and direction to the project. The Advisory Group includes representatives from the Northern Ireland Executive, the Northern Ireland Audit Office, the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, the Office of National Statistics, civil society, and key stakeholders from the wellbeing and outcomes community based outwith Northern Ireland. The Advisory Group recommended

that the Trust support the Community Planning Partnerships working in the local authority areas of Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council; Derry City and Strabane District Council; and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, as three Partnerships well-placed to share learning on improving local wellbeing outcomes across Northern Ireland and the UK and Ireland more widely.

Co-production and shared leadership

After a year of reflecting on their experiences to date, the remaining challenges, and learning from their counterparts in other jurisdictions of the UK and beyond, the project participants are receiving support from the Trust on facilitating co-production and shared leadership within and outwith their formal Partnership structures in delivering their Community Plans.

The Trust [defines co-production](#) as a way of working which recognises people as assets; includes the perspectives, skills and experiences of all – from our immediate colleagues to our unusual friends; supports people to meaningfully participate; and through which public services become change agents which facilitate people's inclusion in society. From co-commissioning through to co-design; co-delivery; and co-assessment, the Trust has commissioned [Community Places](#) to support the project participants on integrating co-production into public services and offering citizens a different – more inclusive, enabling – role, which utilises their strengths and capabilities.

At the same time, the [Centre for Effective Services](#) will be providing support on how to share leadership within, and outwith,

partnership structures – to diffuse power and decision-making abilities; to maximise collective resources; and to improve outcomes which are greater than the sum of the partners' parts.

Both ways of working are integral to Community Planning in Northern Ireland following transformational local government reform. Individually and collectively, members of the Partnerships must engage with their service users; commit to leading on progressing towards outcomes; and dedicate resources to actions plans which will help move the Community Plans from rhetoric to reality.

The support is being co-designed with the project participants to ensure that it is both strategic for the decision-makers in the Community Planning Partnerships and relevant to the practitioners working to deliver projects designed to improve wellbeing in communities. From cross-jurisdictional learning symposiums to workshops; toolkits; and learning modules, the Trust will be supporting local policymakers and practitioners to explore what works as an approach and in their local areas. While our direct support is available to the three project participants, the outcomes of the training and template materials to support co-production and shared leadership within and outwith the formal partnership structures will be made available to the other Community Planning Partnerships in Northern Ireland at the end of 2020, on completion of the project.



Peer-to-peer support

With different structures in place and different experiences of delivering their Community Plans to date, the project participants can learn much from each other. The Trust has built into the project a peer-to-peer support model in which the project participants come together formally at least once a year during the project's three-year duration to discuss common challenges, and commit to reporting out to their counterparts in other Community Planning Partnerships across Northern Ireland. The project participants will be supported to share the learning from these meetings with the wider Community Planning network.

The first peer-to-peer learning event hosted in November 2018 was on the challenges the project participants are experiencing in [identifying, using and presenting data in Community Planning](#) – a challenge highlighted by all Community Planning Partnerships in their Expressions of Interest to take part in the project. Further to the peer-to-peer learning event, the Trust developed support on two strands of work on the use and presentation of data and evidence in Community Planning. Firstly, the Trust supported NILGA to pilot a [training session for elected members](#) on the value and use of data and evidence in Community Planning. Secondly, the Trust hosted a [hackathon](#) to support the Community Planning network in the development of effective visualisation and communication of the data in their Statements of Progress, which report to the Department for Communities and their own communities on the progress made on the implementation their Community Plans to date.

These formal opportunities for peer-to-peer learning are supported by an [online platform](#) to connect policymakers and

practitioners working to improve wellbeing outcomes with sources of external information and support. The virtual network is designed to allow users to share information of general interest to improving local wellbeing outcomes, and also to take part in dedicated discussions around particular outcomes; challenges; opportunities; and ways of working online, and to take these offline.



Policy learning

The Trust encourages cross-jurisdictional policy learning to support policymakers and practitioners to learn from international best practice on the successes, and challenges, in improving wellbeing outcomes. The Embedding Wellbeing in Northern Ireland project participants took part in a study visit to New York in October 2018. The study visit comprised an [international seminar](#) on wellbeing in Northern Ireland and a [stakeholder engagement day](#) with those who are involved in measuring local wellbeing outcomes in North America. The international seminar celebrated and reflected on the progress made in improving wellbeing in Northern Ireland. The event featured the views of senior politicians and stakeholders on the progress made in Northern Ireland to date, the current situation, remaining challenges, and aspirations for the future. The project participants also met with representatives from projects measuring and improving local wellbeing outcomes in Santa Monica; Toronto; Vermont and New York City, as part of the project's commitment to international policy learning.

The project participants undertook a second [study visit to Wales](#) with members of the project Advisory Group in March 2019, given the similar duties placed on local partnership structures to improve local wellbeing outcomes in both Northern Ireland and Wales. Representatives of the three Community Planning Partnerships project participants were provided with the opportunity to engage with Welsh policymakers and politicians, and to find out how the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) has enabled Wales to improve the wellbeing of citizens.

Next steps

As part of our commitment to share learning from the project, we are evaluating not only the impact of our specific intervention with the project participants but also the act of an external, independent organisation supporting local government with financial and in-kind support; the impact of such an organisation playing a convening role between place-based partnerships and with external stakeholders to leverage additional support; and the impact of support for peer-to-peer and international policy learning.

Throughout the duration of the project, the Trust will continue to promote the importance of Community Planning in improving local wellbeing outcomes; convene groups of key stakeholders who can provide sources of support to our colleagues in Northern Ireland; and release learning through reports, blogs and social media content to inform and inspire wider Community Planning network, their counterparts across the UK and Ireland. At the end of 2020, we will publish our final findings at a conference in Northern Ireland, making the outputs available nationally and internationally to contribute to the debate on how to improve wellbeing outcomes.

The Carnegie UK Trust has developed a strong reputation as an advocate for wellbeing frameworks which allow governments to measure social progress for citizens in a meaningful way since the establishment of the first [Carnegie Roundtable on Measuring What Matters in Scotland](#) in 2010. Since 2011, we have:

- published [case studies](#) of how governments and civil society organisations measure wellbeing in France, the USA, and Canada;
- made recommendations on [next steps for the Scottish National Performance Framework](#);
- set out steps for developing a [wellbeing framework in Northern Ireland](#);
- produced [guidance on wellbeing frameworks for cities and regions](#); and
- convened an [international roundtable discussion](#) on the successes and challenges of developing high-level strategies based on wellbeing and translating this to policy action.

For more information on the project, please visit www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/theme/enabling-wellbeing/ or contact Lauren Pennycook, Senior Policy and Development Officer, at lauren@carnegieuk.org.

Join the [Embedding Wellbeing Support Network](#) and follow @CarnegieUKTrust and the hashtag #NIwellbeing on Twitter for project updates.

 Derry City and Strabane

 Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon

 Lisburn and Castlereagh

