



**Northumbria
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Evaluation of the Roundtable on Wellbeing in the North of Tyne



Acknowledgments

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Introduction

The final report of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fittoussi commission in 2009 recommended governments establish national-level 'round-tables' to 'identify and prioritise those indicators that carry potential for a shared view of how social progress is happening and how it can be sustained over time.' Carnegie UK have now conducted three extensive Wellbeing Roundtables, in Scotland (Smith and Herren 2011), Northern Ireland (Woods et al. 2015), and most recently the Roundtable on Wellbeing in the North of Tyne (RWNT).

The RWNT drew together 12 representatives from different sectors in a deliberative process to develop and embed a wellbeing framework for the North of Tyne region. The RWNT convened its first meeting in May 2021 and its resultant wellbeing framework was formally endorsed by the North of Tyne Combined Authority's (NTCA) Cabinet in January 2022. This constitutes the first instance of a cohesive wellbeing framework being developed and applied at a sub-national context in a Mayoral Combined Authority in the UK. It is also the most considered Wellbeing Roundtable approach taken by Carnegie UK so far, building significantly on learning from prior iterations in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

This report describes the core elements of a provisional 'Wellbeing Roundtable' methodological approach and evaluates the process and immediate outcomes achieved by the RWNT. It finds the application of a Wellbeing Roundtable approach in the North of Tyne resulted in the successful creation of a wellbeing framework with broad local support and a clear implementation plan. We describe how the resulting wellbeing framework may benefit the NTCA (and potentially other Combined Authorities) in four ways: in supporting a distinctive regional identity and purpose, in responding to the Levelling Up policy agenda, in embedding a collective regional mission, and in using wellbeing data for policy advocacy. The report also establishes the key contours of a 'Wellbeing Roundtable' approach and describes nine learning points which further applications of this approach might consider.

The Roundtable on Wellbeing in the North of Tyne

Following agreement of a 'devolution deal' with the UK government, the North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) was established in November 2018 as a partnership of three local authorities: Newcastle City Council, Northumberland County Council and North Tyneside Council. The NTCA has been chaired by a directly elected metro mayor, Jamie Driscoll, since May 2019. It is a significant regional economic actor, managing a broad portfolio of economic development functions and administering a budget of approximately £234m in 2020/21. The NTCA also functions as the lead authority for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund which will replace EU Structural Funds over 2022–25.

The NTCA is led by its Cabinet which comprises six local authority Cabinet members, a member of the North East Local Enterprise Partnership and the Mayor. Amongst UK combined authorities the NTCA has a distinctive reputation for its holistic ambitions, balancing social and environmental considerations alongside more traditional economic development and capital investment responsibilities, and for championing the agenda of an inclusive economy for the North East region. The Mayor's stated aim, more recently incorporated within the NTCA's 2021-22 Corporate Plan, of a 'zero carbon, zero poverty' future extends a further concern with key environmental and social outcomes.

Following early discussions with the Mayor and NTCA staff, Carnegie UK and NTCA jointly committed to establish the 'Roundtable on Wellbeing in the North of Tyne' (RWNT), convening a group of specialists and system leaders to establish a wellbeing approach to pandemic recovery. The group met four times between May and October 2021, considering a broad range of evidence sources in their deliberations. That group reported in November 2021, presenting a Wellbeing Framework for the North of Tyne with ten outcomes for the region, which was formally adopted by the NTCA Cabinet on 25th January 2022. The NTCA is amongst the first UK Combined Authorities to pursue a wellbeing approach to their core operating functions in developing and formally adopting a wellbeing framework to guide policy and strategic decision making.

The RWNT built on CUK's experience in convening Wellbeing Roundtables in Scotland and Northern Ireland and providing secretariat support for Roundtable meetings. This informed a strategic and tactical expertise which was crucial in supporting the formalisation of a wellbeing framework within a particularly short (six month) period. The RWNT differed from Carnegie UK's prior Wellbeing Roundtables in some important ways.

Most obviously, the COVID-19 pandemic began early in the exploratory process of the Roundtable. The decision to proceed with the RWNT had significant implications for participating actors' capacity for engagement, particularly those involved in the immediate crisis response and ongoing

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management as the pandemic unfolded across 2020 and 2021. All Roundtable meetings, and most of the evidence gathering processes, were conducted online with videoconferencing software, preventing Roundtable members from meeting in person. The pandemic also shaped the strategic focus of the RWNT, with its remit evolving toward supporting a wellbeing approach to pandemic recovery.

The RWNT was also Carnegie UK's first Wellbeing Roundtable operating at a regional level, set within a rapidly evolving regional devolution context. UK Combined Authorities, even those with metro mayors, have many more limitations to powers than devolved legislatures in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Beyond the lack of statutory authority to support a wellbeing approach through introducing primary legislation, critical areas to collective wellbeing like public health or transport were reserved by other authorities. The possibilities for implementation in a regional context therefore had to be carefully considered at outset and involved an extended groundwork stage leading in to RWNT meetings.

The 'Wellbeing Roundtable' approach

In February 2008, President Nicolas Sarkozy asked Joseph Stiglitz, Amartya Sen and Jean Paul Fitoussi to create a new Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress to review the use of statistics in the measurement of national progress. The report's influence has been widespread. Since the Stiglitz report, more than half of OECD countries (alongside many non-member states) have established substantive national wellbeing frameworks, with wellbeing indicators taking up a growing role in national accounts. These national examples sit alongside other significant examples in regions, cities and places (Wallace and Schmuecker 2012; Coutts and Wallace 2016).

Less noted is the Stiglitz report's key methodological recommendation, that to support this transition, *'At the national level, round-tables should be established, with the involvement of stakeholders, to identify and prioritise those indicators that carry to potential for a shared view of how social progress is happening and how it can be sustained over time.'* (2009, p.18). With its overarching focus on measurement however, the 291-page report committed no further methodological detail beyond this single sentence. Building from this recommendation and from prior experience in applying this approach, we adopt a provisional working definition of a Wellbeing Roundtable as *a collaborative approach to exploring and identifying the key dimensions of collective wellbeing in an area and embedding these in the work of governance.*

Wellbeing Roundtables in Scotland, Northern Ireland and the North of Tyne have involved three key actors, which we refer to throughout this report:

Convening organisation(s): an organisation with responsibility for bringing actors into a Roundtable process, providing technical and secretariat support to carry the Roundtable through. In all three cases, Carnegie UK has played this role.

Implementing organisation(s): an organisation with ultimate responsibility for custodianship and implementation of the wellbeing framework which is created or revised through the Roundtable meetings.

Participating actors: an individual or organisation involved with contributing to the Roundtable process, either through membership of the Wellbeing Roundtable or its engagement and evidence gathering processes.

Wellbeing Roundtables involve the curation of a temporary 'Roundtable' structure to deliberate over relevant evidence, develop a wellbeing framework and facilitate its transfer to a responsible implementing organisation. Wellbeing Roundtables involve a 'Roundtable' meeting structure as one component, but also involve substantive and deliberate actions before and after this as an end-to-end approach to developing and establishing a wellbeing approach.

This has involved three phases, which are detailed on the following page.

Three Phases of the Wellbeing Roundtable



Scoping and preparation

A convening organisation engages with an implementing organisation to develop a shared vision, design an implementation pathway for the wellbeing framework, and begin recruitment for the Roundtable.



Deliberation and formalisation

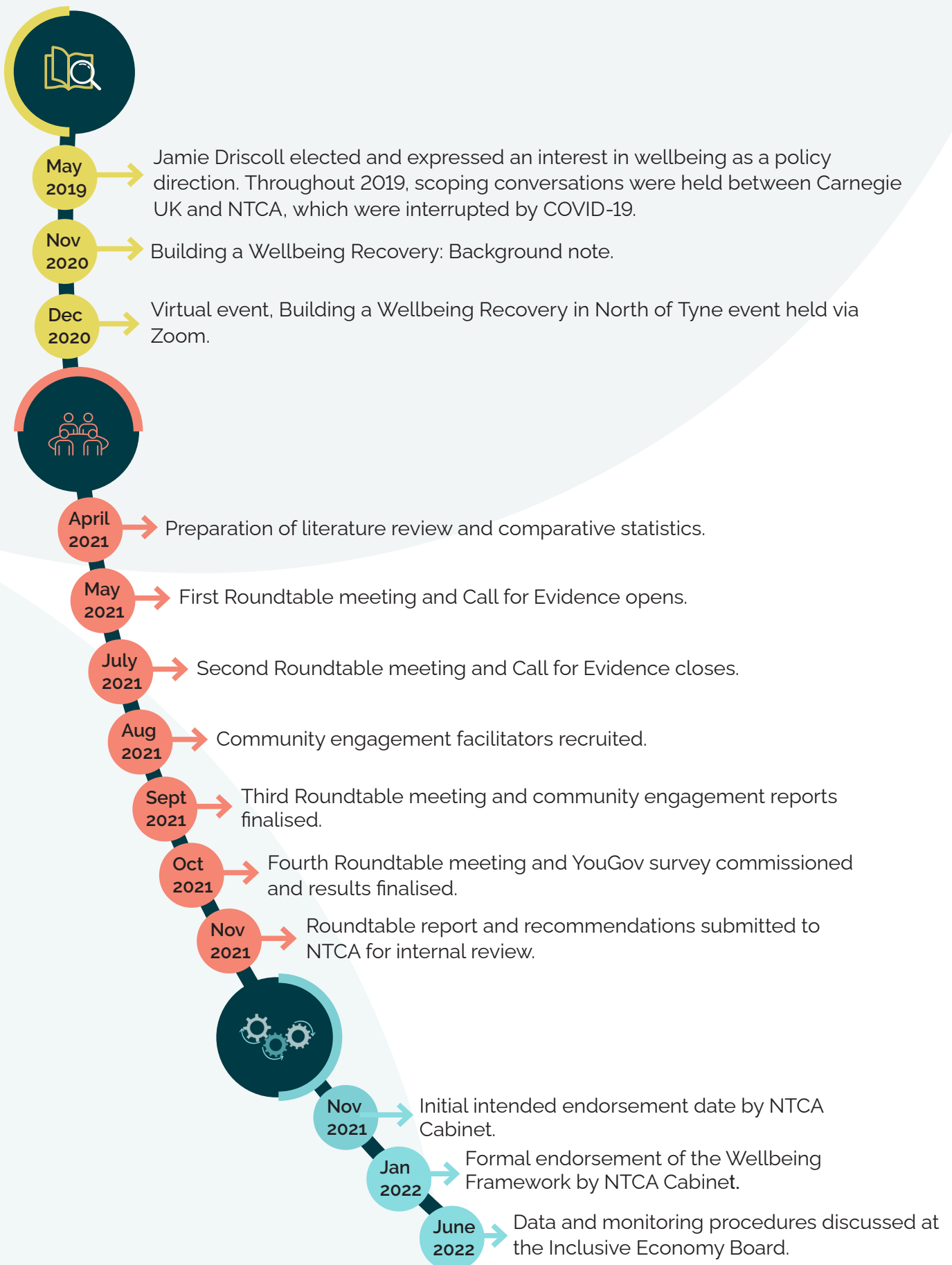
In a short set of meetings, Roundtable members convene to formalise a locally-resonant framework for collective wellbeing. A multi-faceted outreach and evidence gathering process feeds into the vision, metrics and structure of this framework, with the convening and/or implementing actors acting as secretariat.



Transition and implementation

Ownership of the wellbeing framework formally transitions to the implementing organisation. The implementation pathway agreed in Phase 1 is activated alongside Roundtable recommendations to ensure the wellbeing framework is embedded (e.g. in policymaking, financial allocation, strategic decision making and scrutiny functions).

Timeline



Research approach

Research for this report comprised a document review, key stakeholder interviews, and a summative focus group with chairs/co-chairs of Wellbeing Roundtables in Scotland, Northern Ireland and the North of Tyne.

Firstly, a background document review of relevant Carnegie UK research reports and policy materials on the design and implementation of wellbeing approaches, alongside a review of available papers and outputs from Roundtables in Scotland, Northern Ireland and the North of Tyne Roundtables. An extended review was undertaken of RWNT materials, including all papers, meeting notes, submissions from the call for evidence and community engagement exercises.

Following this, a set of 25 semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders involved in all elements of the RWNT process. This involved: Carnegie UK staff as the central convening organisation (2), key NTCA representatives as the implementing organisation (2), Roundtable co-chairs (1), a core external support organisation (1), representatives from organisations involved in the Roundtable's community engagement (7), respondents to the call for evidence submissions with key external stakeholder roles (4), and Roundtable members (9, 3 of whom occupied at least one other role listed here). Interviews solicited perspectives on the effectiveness of elements of the Roundtable approach, and also suggestions and ideas for changes which could inform the design of future Wellbeing Roundtables.

Finally, a focus group was conducted with chairs of Carnegie UK's three Wellbeing Roundtables in Scotland, Northern Ireland and the North of Tyne. This focus group explored and critiqued key themes from the research, surfaced key differences between the three roundtables, and helped to formalise the key dimensions of the provisional 'Wellbeing Roundtable' approach described in this report.

Evaluation of the Roundtable on Wellbeing in the North of Tyne

Phase 1 Scoping and Preparation

By the time Carnegie UK and the NTCA convened the first meeting of the RWNT, a substantial groundwork phase spanning almost two full years had already taken place. This had three components: scoping and feasibility assessment, development of a binding implementation pathway, and preparation for the Roundtable meetings in the following phase. The overall purpose of this phase was to give the RWNT and the resultant wellbeing framework the best possible chance of adoption and impact.

Leadership commitment and a shared vision

One learning point from prior Roundtables was that stable political and executive support is an important precondition for wellbeing frameworks to take root. The Roundtable on Wellbeing in the North of Tyne began with initial exploratory discussions with the recently elected Mayor and NTCA senior leaders in 2019 to gauge interest in wellbeing as a regional organising principle. Conversations established a firm link between the Mayor's approach to 'zero poverty, zero carbon' and the NTCA's ambition for an inclusive economy. A wellbeing approach was therefore not merely adopted by the NTCA but incorporated into existing strategic priorities.

From this position, initial conversations between Carnegie UK and NTCA established the possibility of a mutually enhancing partnership.

'The way Carnegie described [collective wellbeing] was along the lines of what we describe as inclusive economy and inclusive growth (...) that was when it was decided that this is going to be a great way to [construct] a framework around our inclusive ambitions.'
NTCA representative

Establishing a credible implementation pathway

Initial conversations helped establish a commitment from senior leaders to sanction the wellbeing approach and support its integration with NTCA's developing workplan. The international experience with wellbeing frameworks suggests that, in addition to political and executive support, a credible strategy for embedding wellbeing frameworks within strategic functions and policymaking is also an important prerequisite (French and Wallace 2022). Carnegie UK-NTCA discussions therefore also worked to establish an implementation plan to embed the resultant wellbeing framework and approach following the Roundtable meetings.

Firstly, a public commitment to the RWNT from the Mayor would give high-level support to the RWNT and the resultant wellbeing framework, setting the political

agenda and creating an authorising environment for other regional actors to pursue the approach. Secondly, political leadership would be entrenched by formal endorsement of the resulting framework from the NTCA Cabinet, providing a high-level political and organisational commitment, and binding the NTCA to its pursuit of a wellbeing approach. Thirdly, the NTCA's Inclusive Economy Board, an independent body with a scrutiny mandate and local political representation from all three local authorities alongside other system leaders, was identified as an oversight and leadership body for the resultant wellbeing approach. This body would provide both stewardship and accountability for the wellbeing framework and its implementation in the long-term.

Conversations establishing joint buy-in and commitment to implementation built positive relationships between NTCA and Carnegie UK staff and galvanised a collective sense of ownership of the process. Initial conversations drew attention to an inter-dependency between the two organisations: Carnegie UK could provide technical expertise from prior Roundtables, while NTCA possessed essential contextual knowledge to implement a wellbeing approach effectively. Building on previous experience in Scotland and Northern Ireland Roundtables, which were largely external to their intended implementing organisations, NTCA and Carnegie UK committed to undertake the RWNT as a partnership endeavour.

'And again, coming down to that relationship side, these were people that we felt we could work with, and that we could be honest with and share experience with' Carnegie UK representative

'[Carnegie UK] got in the door quite early on and met [NTCA leadership] directly. I was invited to join that meeting and

was immediately interested because of Carnegie's reputation and the work that they do. It was self-evident that this was a great, potential partnership.' NTCA representative

Resultantly, NTCA committed to provide staff cover and to support the intended implementation pathway for the wellbeing framework. There was no formalised contractual agreement (e.g. Memorandum of Understanding or Terms of Agreement) for the RWNT between NTCA and Carnegie UK, although a Terms of Reference was agreed which set out the scope and purpose of the work. The more binding element was instead the partnership approach taken which would create an enduring sense of responsibility for the RWNT and its resulting wellbeing framework on the part of NTCA.

'It's about the absolute co-ownership of it - that we're not... we expect the North of Tyne [Combined Authority] to respond to the Roundtable's report because we expect them to see it as their report (...) from the moment of publication if anybody in the press called them up and said, "What are you doing about this?" They would have an answer. And that is quite different in construct to what we've done before.' Carnegie UK representative

Public endorsement and stakeholder engagement

The first joint action by Carnegie UK and NTCA was a public event in December 2020 to explore the relevance of a collective wellbeing approach to pandemic recovery. By establishing commitment from the NTCA and Mayor, a strong signal of intent could be expressed to establish the Wellbeing Roundtable as a priority for the region, tying this together with the existing project of regional devolution. Owing to the nature of the NTCA as a political organisation, the

wellbeing approach had to be resonant not just for that organisation's leadership, but to the collective will of citizens and organisational stakeholders who were integral to its democratic authority. Learning from prior work had also indicated that public buy-in and support was significant in building the momentum and political will necessary for implementation. This meeting therefore played a crucial secondary function in sensing the support and enthusiasm beyond the NTCA boundary.

'With Carnegie being a partnership we did an area wide consultation, which was actually a temperature check (...) and that was a chance for us to find out externally, is this something that our different partners and stakeholders feel would be of benefit?' NTCA representative

Feedback was collected on the day through note taking, questionnaires and breakout rooms, exploring relevance to stakeholder organisations. Positive feedback, in concert with the broad engagement and attendance, was taken as an endorsement of the approach, and the final precondition needed to begin practical steps toward convening the Roundtable. This event was important in helping identify core individuals and organisations who may contribute to the Roundtable and evidence gathering. The scoping and preparation work contributed to this - a clear and comprehensible process could be articulated which enabled others to understand how they might contribute (e.g. through Roundtable membership, providing evidence or in community engagement).

Roundtable preparation

The final part of this first phase involved selecting and recruiting Roundtable members and socialising these individuals in the expectations of their role. Carnegie UK and NTCA jointly decided upon Roundtable membership.

Representatives from external groups, like the New Economics Foundation and the Centre for Thriving Places in a crucial support role, were brought in to provide technical skills and expertise. The local knowledge and leadership role which the NTCA occupied was essential in helping identify Roundtable members and key partners whose buy-in and active support was necessary for effective implementation. For example, the key role played by public health directors who were external to the NTCA made it essential this group was actively engaged and supportive of the implementation pathway. Furthermore, a broad selection of leaders from the voluntary and public sectors brought visibility, networks and points of connection to the broader system, and could also play a key role in the eventual implementation of the wellbeing framework. Considerations about representativeness, balance and diversity also informed recruitment of membership, and resulted in the inclusion of a broader range of experiences and backgrounds than prior Roundtables, which interviewees considered appropriate.

In common with the Northern Ireland Roundtable, the RWNT was co-chaired, enabling the rotation of chairing duties, a more equitable gender balance, and a doubling of the leadership and ambassadorial role which chairs would provide for the wellbeing framework in the region. Leadership for the Roundtable was strategically selected to support transition and implementation of the framework. Roundtable co-chairs had significant on-going senior roles regionally in a local authority and in the NTCA's Inclusive Economy Board (IEB) which was responsible for scrutiny and agenda setting. Co-chairs were therefore expected to take on an ambassadorial role for the RWNT and the resultant wellbeing framework process both during and after Roundtable meetings. One co-chair, as both Carnegie UK Trustee

and on the IEB oversight body provided a strong ongoing point of connection between Carnegie UK and the NCTA.

Roundtable members and participants were asked to commit five days' work to the proceedings, comprising meeting attendance, analysis of papers and outreach. Members were also asked to attend as individuals, not merely organisational representatives, in order to think holistically and critically about collective wellbeing in the region. Roundtable members interviewed purported to be well briefed, and clear about the goal and purpose of the Roundtable.

Phase 2 **Deliberation and formalisation**

The second phase of the Wellbeing Roundtable process brings members into a scaffolded process of deliberation which is facilitated by an external organisation providing secretariat support and facilitation. In a manner similar to a Parliamentary Committee or Inquiry process, Roundtable members then engage in a process of discursive sensemaking of a range of evidence types.

Roundtable meetings require members to reach consensus on many key decisions surrounding how wellbeing is to be defined and conceptualised, which sections of society will be included in outreach and evidence gathering, and the myriad technical choices underpinning the selection of outcomes, indicators and values which will comprise the resultant wellbeing framework. One significant danger is that Roundtables get stuck in the ambiguity in how wellbeing might be conceptualised, or the technical aspects of assessing evidence and designing a wellbeing framework.

One way of cutting through this ambiguity is to adopt a formal model of wellbeing to bound the scope of deliberation. The RWNT was the first to adopt Carnegie UK's SEED model in which social, economic, environmental and democratic facets of collective wellbeing are given equal weight. SEED was adopted as a common sensemaking framework in Roundtable meetings providing a common language and orienting framework, as a template through which different evidence types could be processed and presented to RWNT members for deliberation, and as a design guide for the wellbeing framework and the selection of its final outcomes. The adoption of SEED surfaced a central theme in the design of Roundtable processes: how to balance the need for focus and speed in decision making with holding an open space for co-design and exploration.

'[SEED] did already send you down a certain route, but then you're building on what's gone on before, aren't you (...) but then you do wonder how it might have been different if you had started a bit more bottom-up with a blank piece of paper' Roundtable participant

'I think if it'd been a blank page it might have felt a little overwhelming. So I think the use of existing frameworks as kind of markers and examples contain it in a good way.'
Roundtable participant

The clear focus, tight structure of meetings, chairing and secretariat support was cited by many interviewees as crucial to keeping momentum for the processes, helping Roundtable members move from deliberation to formalising a final wellbeing framework in just four half-day meetings. In these meetings, RWNT members reviewed 15 briefing papers extending to over 120 pages of notes.



I think if it'd been a blank page it might have felt a little overwhelming. So I think the use of existing frameworks as kind of markers and examples contain it in a good way



The secretariat function provided by Carnegie UK with support from NCTA was essential in this process, translating complex open-ended subjects - e.g. possible approaches to community engagement or indicator construction - into abridged papers and options for decision making. One potential danger may be over-curation, where the agency of Roundtable members is curtailed by its focus, and the scope of decision making directed constrained to the ratification of pre-prepared options rather than meaningful co-design.

Some elements of the deliberation process were affected by the pace of the meetings. The timing of the community engagement efforts and YouGov surveys were noted by interviewees as quite rushed. Certain key decisions - for instance the selection and wording of outcomes and indicators - occurred in timeframes that were sometimes uncomfortably stretching for Roundtable members. Roundtable members interviewed did not consider their agency unduly limited by this process, however, and all decisions were accomplished successfully without significant disagreement or disaffection noted by interviewees afterward. Interviews suggested Roundtable members overwhelmingly preferred the Roundtable's solution-focussed approach to a more open-ended environment.

Another potential danger is the undue influence of convening organisations - indeed, key decisions like which community engagement approach to take, or which recommendations to give to the NTCA (in meeting 4), were accompanied by strongly expressed preferences in briefing papers, and were invariably the preferred option of the Roundtable as well. As the experienced organisation, Carnegie UK wielded considerable agenda power - there was however broadly expressed trust in Carnegie UK's secretariat skills to present important

information and meaningful decision making. There were also notable instances where meaningful decisions were made which changed the course of the Roundtable. For example, the decision to commission a YouGov survey during the set of Roundtable meetings was an important development motivated by members themselves identifying a gap in submitted evidence.

Where the RWNT's pace did impact the work was in cases where members could not attend meetings or complete the preparatory readings. RWNT meetings had low attendance rates relative to Scotland or Northern Ireland Roundtables, largely put down by interviewees to direct or indirect impacts of COVID-19 on the workloads of key members. Several members reported not being able to process briefing papers before meetings, and subsequently struggling to participate meaningfully. This meant the Roundtable could not bring all members along at the same pace and likely resulted in more uneven contributions in the deliberation process than would have been achieved in less exceptional circumstances.

Secondly, with just four online meetings, the group did not form the enduring, independent working relationships which persisted beyond the Wellbeing Roundtable's lifespan which were evident in Scotland and Northern Ireland Roundtables. Members tended also to put this down to the online nature of the Roundtable during the pandemic.

'No, I don't think we gelled as a group, really, if I'm very honest. I think some of the others knew each other better because they've worked together many times. And they were all lovely. If we'd met face to face it would have had a really different dynamic, I think.'
Roundtable participant

All interviewees questioned considered that the challenges to engagement and relationship building would be remedied when there was an ability to convene in person. Some minor process changes may also support this however, including clarifying and emphasising the commitment expectations of the Roundtable role at recruitment stage, or building in reading time of papers into meeting days to ensure members can participate equally. Several RWNT members also suggested one or two more Roundtable meetings with more open agendas may have helped stronger relationships form.

Learning Point 1.

Help Roundtable members to manage their commitments to the process.

Exploration and evidence gathering

The RWNT undertook a broader approach to evidence gathering than previous Carnegie UK Roundtables, using a range of evidence forms to inform and animate deliberation: statistical indicators, community engagement, a public call for evidence, a literature review, and later polling through YouGov. The Roundtable approach involved both scientific evidence (i.e. statistical indicators of wellbeing) and experiential evidence (first-hand accounts of how wellbeing is understood, prioritised and experienced by citizens). Neither are unique to the Roundtable approach, nor are they in combination: both statistics and community engagement are regularly combined when developing or refreshing national wellbeing frameworks for instance. What makes the Roundtable process distinctive is the means through which these forms are blended and

incorporated into the deliberation process to inform a resonant localised interpretation of collective wellbeing.

Statistical and narrative evidence

The field of wellbeing statistics evidence has developed significantly since the 2009 Stiglitz report, with detailed and robust statistical data at national and often sub-national levels now available. The use of statistics in the RWNT was supported by the technical expertise of the Centre for Thriving Places whose Thriving Places Index provides comparative wellbeing statistics at a local level in the UK. Statistical evidence provided the basis for the deliberation and collective sensemaking process. A narrative literature review which drew together national and local indicators into a narrative account of wellbeing was the first piece of evidence reviewed.

The RNWT conducted external engagement first through a call for evidence and a community engagement process. The call for evidence captured a range of expertise from statutory and voluntary sector organisations, academics and think tanks. This permitted those carrying out work or undertaking research into key facets of regional wellbeing to influence proceedings and yielded a broad range of evidence to inform discussions in the roundtable. The community engagement approach was understood by Roundtable interviewees to enhance the representativeness and legitimacy of the process, ensuring the wellbeing framework reflected the lived experience of wellbeing in the region. Community engagement could also make the process more inclusive, involving more marginalised sections of society and amplifying the voices of those whose current and future wellbeing were most at threat.

External engagement

Rather than seeking to engage directly with citizens and communities or establish a new vehicle or process for engagement, Carnegie UK and the NTCA invested in community and voluntary sector organisations to undertake engagement activities as intermediaries. Adapting from the city of Guelph's 'workshop in a box' model, a set of materials were prepared for facilitators from these groups to undertake the engagement: statistical and evidence reviews were summarised, and a video recording was made explaining Carnegie UK's SEED model and the comparison of the region with other parts of the UK. A facilitation guide was also provided to help facilitators from the 11 engaged CVS groups to structure sessions, and a reporting protocol helped facilitators report back in a format compatible with the SEED framework.

This community engagement approach was seen as a highlight by many interviewees and a significant innovation in the Roundtable approach. Some interviewees contrasted the process with more narrow and extractive models of engagement from statutory agencies. There is also some evidence of spillover benefits. Community organisation representatives interviewed often reported building local connections and relationships by contacting new groups or reconnecting with others. Several were able to use the information gathered instrumentally, helping either to connect with statutory organisations or to leverage further funding based on their engagement activities. Three groups interviewed noted conversations generated better awareness of the NTCA and its role in the region. The engagement approach itself was also influential, helping to inform the community engagement approach taken by North Tyneside Council's Equally Well strategy.

The 11 groups who received funding were asked to facilitate a workshop process structured around the SEED framework, and containing key elements such as a recorded video and comparative statistics from the Thriving Places Index. Most reported the structure was helpful in facilitating the process, though in general, interviewees described some material (the framing of wellbeing, questions to be asked and introductory video) as too 'conceptual' or 'academic' in tone.

'On one hand it was like partly the work had been done for you, but on the other hand, I had to adjust it a lot because working with those particular groups, they have particular needs, particular levels of understanding, particular communication styles (...) I had to kind of make it so it's much more understandable on a practical level for the groups we worked with.' Community engagement facilitator

'The measures like saying, you know, wellbeing in this area and comparison to wellbeing in another area, people were, like, why would that matter to me?' NTCA representative

The engagement process involved a wide range of groups, spanning volunteer-run community groups to large professionalised charities. Templates and facilitation packs are important in this context to provide commonality, however the process was often significantly adapted based on the expertise of facilitators. One amendment might be to separate workshop materials into necessary elements which are essential for the Roundtable process (e.g. facilitators reporting via the SEED framework - perhaps to encourage discussion on more neglected elements of 'environmental' and 'democratic' areas of wellbeing) and optional elements (e.g. the background video) to help facilitators adapt the process



The measures like saying, you know, wellbeing in this area and comparison to wellbeing in another area, people were, like, why would that matter to me?



more confidently to the specific preferences of their audiences. Providing a training workshop for all facilitators as a condition of funding would be a straightforward way to help orientate facilitators in these components and the overall aims of the Roundtable.

Learning Point 2.

Help facilitators navigate community engagement activities.

Time and resource constraints focussed community organisations on their existing and immediate networks, rather than undertaking additional outreach activities. In some cases, this may have limited the reach of community engagement efforts to residents who are more marginalised for geographic, social or technological reasons.

'So in lots of ways, I think our sample that we got which was obviously because of the shortness of time it was more or less by invitation so I approached people that I knew. Yeah so there wasn't a whole variety. There wasn't a good range of people with lots of different experiences.' Community engagement facilitator

In certain instances there may be value in looking beyond a workshop model for community engagement. One group engaging with refugee and asylum seeking communities could not involve those who attended their meetings who spoke limited English. This group suggested a different process of enabling community activists with translation abilities to contact those individuals who could not engage in focus groups. This would involve:

'Activists linking to their community to get data, which they can share a platform, like ours. It would be more rich if [a community activist] is empowered to gather data from

her community even to those that cannot speak in forums because she can translate (..) she can share some of the key points that she has picked from her community in a formal way.' Community engagement facilitator

One suggestion might be to offer an alternative 'outreach' model of community engagement in addition to the 'workshop' model, in which individuals are met on their terms (e.g. in an isolated rural setting, in their native language, in an institutional environment). This could follow an approach offered by models of community journalism or community reporting.

Learning Point 3.

Consider adopting complementary methods to community engagement beyond the workshop model.

A final issue raised by those involved in both the call for evidence and community engagement process was in the manner of feedback. Participants of both were informed of the process and Roundtable outputs on publication. A larger issue for community engagement interviewees however was in understanding the impact of their contributions. While certain community groups and call for evidence respondents could pinpoint where they had influenced outcomes or indicators in the wellbeing framework, a majority could not, in spite of the contribution which these processes made. Interviewees also noted the final report did not directly reference or quote community group views.

One way to address this would be to reference the evidence sources and contributions of engagement efforts in the report body and in indicator and outcome descriptions alongside statistical information in the final report's Framework Indicator

List (pages 46-50). A more accessible summary of these contributions might also be prepared or a short video on behalf of the Roundtable setting out how community engagement efforts will inform future actions.

Learning Point 4.

Provide tailored feedback on the impacts of community engagement.

This point about feedback was echoed by some of those who had submitted to the call for evidence. Some of these interviewees noted a lack of visibility of the Roundtable meetings until the report publication, giving an impression of a lack of progress to some respondents.

'I thought "I wonder what happened to that piece of work; maybe they've stopped doing it; is it because there's a pandemic on?" so I kept checking on the website, but there didn't seem to be much going on. I just thought maybe it had been put on hold.' Call for evidence participant

One way to address this would be to prepare more of a public record for the Roundtable in the manner of a parliamentary committee process. This could involve publishing submissions to calls for evidence, community engagement materials; it could also include briefing papers, decisions made, agendas and meeting summaries prepared for the Roundtable, which would perhaps give more visibility and a sense of momentum, but also transparency and accessibility through leaving a public record of the Roundtable's deliberations.

Learning Point 5.

Learning point 5 – Leave behind a transparent and accessible public record of deliberations.

One notable trend in community engagement feedback was it tended to surface discussion on economic and social wellbeing rather than environmental and democratic domains. A YouGov survey of 1,700 residents commissioned to tie together evidence and build confidence in findings confirmed this trend among a broader pool of resident opinion.

'We got a very clear explanation from people themselves because they were asked and they said, "It's hard to be green until you're out of the red." That was the pithy answer to it (...) If we hadn't had the YouGov survey as well, I would have worried that may have been because we'd gone to the wrong groups but there was consistency there.' Roundtable co-chair

This may have been the workshop format which tended to create a personal, reflective and confessional space, with many groups reporting struggling with place-based questions given (e.g. on how the area might be transformed if money weren't an issue). It may be that tailoring toward CVS organisations concerned with environmental issues or democratic participation, or altering workshop materials to give more direction on introducing environmental and democratic issues, could redress this balance.

Learning Point 6.

Focus community engagement activities on environmental and democratic wellbeing.

Making sense of evidence

A core role played by Roundtable members in meetings was to engage in collective sensemaking of different forms of evidence, overlaying one form against the other and accounting for strengths and weaknesses of each type. Sensemaking was not a 'jigsaw' process with each evidence revealing some part of the overall picture, rather it involved bringing value-judgements to bear on which evidence to prioritise over the other, what

findings should be challenged, and how narrative accounts of differences can be developed which satisfy enough Roundtable members to achieve consensus. Table 1 accounts for the strengths and weaknesses interviewees attached to each evidence form in this collective sensemaking process.

Table 1. Evidence types and their bearing on

Roundtable deliberations

	Literature review	Statistical data	Call for evidence	Community engagement	YouGov survey
	Undertaken by Carnegie UK prior to Roundtable meetings.	Statistics and infographics provided by Centre for Thriving Places (Thriving Places Index).	Convened by Carnegie UK with outreach from NTCA and Roundtable members.	CVS organisations commissioned as intermediaries by Carnegie UK and NTCA.	Commissioned by Roundtable in meeting 3 to fill evidence gap.
Strengths	Narrative overview of key domains of wellbeing appropriate to the region.	Straightforward comparison with other areas to highlight regional differences. Clear, evidence-based data for monitoring purposes.	Access to local institutional and research expertise on regional wellbeing.	Captures authentic lived experience of wellbeing. Elevates the voice of communities subject to marginalisation.	Provides a large-scale aggregate perspective on regional wellbeing.
Weaknesses	Lacks easy comparability with other UK areas. Draws from academic/policy, not experiential, knowledge.	Reveals aggregate differences factors, not what wellbeing means to people living in the region.	Limited reach, and may privilege institutions accustomed to providing written evidence.	Responses focussed on social and economic factors more than environmental and democratic wellbeing. Generalisation to broader populations is limited.	Responses lack the depth of community engagement.



We got a very clear explanation from people themselves because they were asked and they said, “It’s hard to be green until you’re out of the red.” That was the pithy answer to it (...) If we hadn’t had the YouGov survey as well, I would have worried that may have been because we’d gone to the wrong groups but there was consistency there.



Crucial to this sensemaking process was the layering of evidence into deliberations. Statistics and the narrative literature review provided the starting point for this process, partly because this evidence was readily available for aggregation. The call for evidence and the community engagement process commissioned by Roundtable members provided external accounts of both challenges and opportunities for improving wellbeing in the area, which could then be overlaid with this statistical backdrop. The experiential accounts of collective wellbeing gathered through community engagement could then begin to reinforce the significance of certain areas, while discrepancies in others could direct discussion toward plausible accounts for divergence. In general, it was community engagement and the YouGov survey which Roundtable members felt had most bearing on the construction of the final wellbeing framework since they unearthed new and unexpected information. This at certain times meant a sacrifice of statistical or conceptual purity for representativeness and democratic legitimacy.

'And one of the things that came out from, now, this was actually from the community engagement activity (...) was that access to services was a significant barrier to wellbeing. And we had, you know, we tried we would rehearse the arguments with them and you know, that's not really an outcome, the outcome is health or the outcome is you know, something else. No, no here, right here, right now, in this region, access is absolutely so bad that we have to see it as an outcome indicator in itself.' Carnegie UK representative

While community engagement was seen as essential in granting legitimacy to the framework and reaching marginalised voices, Roundtable members at times questioned how generalisable findings were. Where evidence was irreconcilable, strategic decisions had to be reached through deliberation and collective sensemaking to privilege certain forms of evidence over others. The literature review and statistical indicators for instance could be overlaid with the YouGov poll and community engagement findings, revealing gaps in responses around environmental and democratic indicators which were subsequently addressed in the final composition.

Each form of evidence played a different complementary function in helping formalise a wellbeing framework that was both statistically robust and locally resonant. The combination of evidence and data types made the resulting framework therefore more than a sum of its parts, and was integral in establishing a credible localised wellbeing framework with the best chance of impact.

'I was in a meeting yesterday and I'm quoting the intelligence and insight we got from that range of those surveys and the face-to-face meetings. (...) I think the range, the breadth and the richness of the data, to underpin it, was really invaluable. That is probably the key factor because, without it, we wouldn't have had the credibility. It would have been back to the same old of [the NTCA] saying, this is what we think the area needs, rather than the area [saying that].' NTCA representative



Phase 3

Transition and implementation

The final phase of the Wellbeing Roundtable involves a transfer of ownership and responsibility for the wellbeing framework from the Roundtable to a responsible implementing organisation. The RWNT's intended transition was accomplished successfully, with the NTCA Cabinet formally adopting the wellbeing framework in January 2022 and responding to the recommendations provided in the RWNT's final report by developing an initial implementation plan.

At time of interview the NTCA was on course to develop an indicator dashboard aligned with the wellbeing framework for monitoring purposes. There were also plans in place to incorporate the wellbeing framework in the NTCA's business case process and in its Cabinet paper templates to ensure strategic decision making took note of the wellbeing framework at the beginning of the policy process rather than at its end. Internal team structures had also been modified to undertake this implementation work. The NTCA was beginning the development of a communications strategy for the framework which could begin to establish its relevance with wider stakeholders. This strategic thinking had been spurred by the close partnership with Carnegie UK and informed by experience in prior Roundtables.

'Knowing what we know from other places, we want to do a little bit more of the kind of implementation side where we think actually, what is your procurement handbook, what is your advice, what are your policy appraisal processes, and do they align?' NTCA representative

At time of interview the Inclusive Economy Board's scrutiny role was not yet in motion, however an item on the June 2022 meeting

agenda sought to take account of data, monitoring and review processes. This was the first step in formalising a monitoring and annual review process. There were also intentions expressed to use the IEB's scrutiny powers as an accountability device to hold the NTCA Cabinet to task for embedding the wellbeing framework and responding to its principles.

'Going forward, it's our board, the Inclusive Economy Board, that has the responsibility not for doing the implementation but for having scrutiny of the implementation. So we can ask, "How is it being implemented? Who is doing it?", which is going to be very important I think in the future.' Roundtable co-chair

Horizontal integration

Wellbeing frameworks can involve a range of organisations operating across all sectors of the economy in a whole-of-society approach, with implementation involving a far broader scope than a single implementing organisation. The RWNT involved a secondary, more emergent and diverse implementation pathway, taken forward by Roundtable members not directly involved in the NTCA. There was some level of integration of the framework in the actions of all three local authorities within the NTCA.

In North Tyneside Council and Newcastle City Council the framework had begun to play a role in strategic conversations and policy development. For instance, the framework was informing Newcastle City Council's ongoing discussions around its Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and was cited as one 'anchor point' in the revision of the Health and Wellbeing Board's pandemic strategy. Northumberland County Council, where Roundtable co-chair Sarah McMillan is also Assistant Director of Policy, featured strongest evidence of implementation

of the three. The wellbeing framework was put forward for endorsement by the Council's Health and Wellbeing Board, and discussions were active in incorporating it into key policies like the Health in all Policies approach and developing tools to embed the framework in policy development and strategic decision making processes. The wellbeing framework was also featured prominently in the Health Inequalities Summit, a significant public event, in March 2022¹.

These early impacts show the effectiveness of holding a clear pathway to implementation and appointing key stakeholders within that pathway to the Roundtable itself. Some Roundtable members interviewed also described themselves as 'advocates', 'champions' or 'ambassadors' for the RWNT and its wellbeing framework, and undertook an awareness raising, advocating and support role in their own institutions.

'I kept members of the team up to date with what was going on with the work (...) For me it was just making sure I was talking to the right people within the council making sure they're aware of what was coming and potentially use it and what it might mean (...) the [council's] chief exec actually came and found me (...) and then spoke to us about how we need to think about it internally across wider departments.' Roundtable participant

A notable point is that this 'ambassador' role was not a formalised expectation from Roundtable members, but one which was embodied voluntarily through the process of participating in the RWNT. In other cases - where members struggled to attend meetings or engage with evidence for instance - this ambassadorial role was not taken on, and fewer actions towards engagement or implementation were undertaken. To some interviewees, the

notion of taking an operational duty beyond the Roundtable had not occurred since it was not the focus of Roundtable meetings.

'In my head I've been thinking this is all about how the North of Tyne Cabinet operates, but actually it would be even more powerful if we all took it into account in terms of how we do things (...) I guess it's being an ambassador for actually, how could we use this framework to inform what we might do collectively as well? (...) because it hasn't... yeah, it's just bizarre to reflect on the fact that we've never as a group seen that [ambassadorial role] as something [we do] and yet it is got our work written all over it.' Roundtable participant

Given the significance of this 'ambassador' role in promoting a more broad-based and decentralised implementation approach, future Roundtables might consider making this a more formalised element and expectation of the role. This could be accomplished through establishing this role as an expectation in recruitment. Another approach would be to approach the deliberation phase as an opportunity to socialise Roundtable members as ambassadors in the subsequent implementation of a wellbeing approach, perhaps through an additional briefing paper or the subject of a final, additional, Roundtable meeting.

Learning Point 7.

Establish an 'ambassador' role as an expectation of Roundtable membership.

Learning Point 8.

Consider convening an additional Roundtable meeting on implementation.

1 <https://northumberland.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s9570/07%20North%20of%20Tyne%20Wellbeing%20Framework%20Covering%20Report.pdf>

One suggestion was to reconvene the Roundtable with a remit for re-engaging with the wellbeing approach, either with an orientation towards conducting more community engagement, or in a monitoring and scrutiny function. However, both of these functions would overlap with the responsibilities taken on by the Inclusive Economy Board, and so this may not be the right approach in the NTCA case. This serves another point however - once an ambassadorial role has been taken on by Roundtable members, it seems appropriate that some mechanism for continued engagement with the wellbeing approach is put in place to support these intentions.

Learning Point 9.

Consider the appropriateness of reconvening the Roundtable to reassess the wellbeing framework and review implementation progress.

Collective wellbeing as a regional agenda: using the North of Tyne Wellbeing Framework

The RWNT sought to embed a wellbeing approach to pandemic recovery and support the NTCA's agenda of inclusive growth through developing a robust and representative wellbeing framework. While it is too early to determine whether these long-term goals have been achieved, the RWNT comprehensively achieved what may be considered its key process outcomes: the formalisation of a statistically robust and broadly supported wellbeing framework, and the accomplishment of an implementation pathway seeking to embed the framework as a key strategic priority. Furthermore, impacts on the more immediate outcomes of adoption and implementation are so far promising, particularly as they compare with prior Roundtables in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Establishing a wellbeing approach in a regional Combined Authority context offers perhaps more challenge than at a central or devolved government level. Firstly, the North of Tyne Wellbeing Framework is set in the shifting sands of a politically contested policy landscape. As one key example, the UK Government's Levelling Up White Paper announced plans to create a new expanded Mayoral Combined Authority in the North East alongside Sunderland Council, Gateshead, and South Tyneside Council. At the very least this would necessitate a revision of the Roundtable process and a

new wellbeing framework developed to reflect a changed context. The test of the framework's staying power may then be the degree to which it becomes a valued cultural asset to the region, and its level of integration into regional governance processes in the North of Tyne.

A second challenge is that many of the strategies and policy levers used to give wellbeing frameworks staying power and impact behaviour change - like giving frameworks a statutory basis - rely on legal and legislative powers which Combined Authorities lack. Success is therefore likely to depend more significantly (though not exclusively) on what French and Wallace (2022) describe as a 'soft power strategy': the wellbeing framework's capacity to set agendas, build coalitions, and work through negotiation and persuasion to entice other actors to pursue its vision. Part of this involves shaping perceptions of the wellbeing framework as a tool which supports actors within a collective and shared vision rather than seeks to blame them for movement in indicators determined by forces beyond their ability to control.

With these limitations in mind, there remain several key strategic purposes the wellbeing framework can serve. Four key areas seem particularly significant.

Supporting a distinctive regional identity and purpose

Firstly, a focus on collective wellbeing might help the NTCA - and potentially other UK Combined Authorities - to give shape and substance to its ambitious and forward-thinking strategic agenda. The NTCA's vision of an inclusive economy and the Mayor's 'zero poverty, zero carbon' approach are well-aligned to the expression of collective wellbeing put forward by the wellbeing framework. When joined with usable data and indicators, the wellbeing framework may help to bolster a distinctive sense of mission and purpose in the Mayoral Combined Authority. Helpfully, this purpose was anticipated by NTCA staff, and significant steps have already been made.

'We're thinking about our own data and insights, function and performance, this [wellbeing framework] is just perfectly timed for that. It's a readymade, relatively easy product and framework to knit into what we're doing. Now there's a huge amount of work to be done' NTCA representative

The wellbeing framework can be adopted not merely as a 'report card' or accounting device, but as a democratic mandate for the NTCA to pursue its agenda as a strategic, collective and long-term endeavour. Wellbeing frameworks can be used to gather intelligence - for example by understanding differences in key wellbeing outcomes amongst regions or social groups - to set priorities for action and inform strategic planning. Wellbeing frameworks can also help upscale the ambitions of governance, shifting attention from the detail of delivery to the upstream, preventative actions which could better address wellbeing outcomes. The most advanced international examples like New Zealand's Living

Standards Framework have set precedents in integration with strategic planning and financial allocation, showing the depth of integration which is possible. With the expansion of powers to regions announced through the Levelling Up White Paper, the NTCA will have the opportunity to embed the wellbeing framework at the core of its strategic decision making processes for using substantial new powers.

The NTCA has established a distinctive reputation as a forward-thinking authority with a leader in the area of inclusive and holistic growth and introducing discussion of poverty and inequality into the national conversation around devolution. The distinctive messaging and 'soft power' of the wellbeing framework could support branding and priority signalling, as can be seen for instance in the approach to communications taken in support of Scotland's National Performance Framework (French and Wallace, 2022). As the first UK Combined Authority to have developed and embedded a regional wellbeing framework, the NTCA and Mayor can set an agenda which might prompt other Combined Authorities to consider how they also might engage with collective wellbeing.

Responding to the Levelling Up policy agenda

Secondly, the wellbeing framework may help respond to the opportunities offered by the evolving policy context surrounding devolution. The focus of devolution under the current and previous UK governments has primarily addressed capital investment and economic growth, and concerned between-region disparities in productivity, employment and other economic indicators. The recent inclusion of wellbeing as one of the 12 missions in the Levelling Up White Paper indicates a broadening of

this approach, with a clear concern for the socioeconomic determinants of wellbeing. In holding a robust and localised wellbeing framework, the NTCA reported finding itself in a positive position to give tangibility to this mission and respond quickly.

'When the levelling up missions came out there was that thing of saying, "well, we've got a wellbeing framework," and I'm not suggesting for a minute that we've got a wellbeing framework therefore we don't need to do levelling up but it was a very big deal to be able to go in there and go "tick." NTCA representative

This changing policy emphasis is an affirmation of the NTCA's approach with the RWNT; it may also create an opportunity for the NTCA to leave a mark on the devolution agenda. Having a robust dashboard based on Carnegie UK's SEED framework, the North of Tyne Wellbeing Framework takes a more holistic vision of wellbeing than the personalised and subjective understanding in the Levelling Up White Paper. The advantage of this is it makes visible the multiple dimensions of inequality between groups within and across regions, providing more nuanced and potentially more actionable data, and it advances a more holistic and interconnected view based on a balance between indicators, ensuring wellbeing is approached in the round. The NTCA's approach to implementation could in time demonstrate to other regions how a wellbeing framework can help demonstrate the impact of policies and funding allocation on inclusive growth and collective wellbeing. The NTCA's wellbeing approach could therefore provide an important response to the Levelling Up agenda which is rooted in an inclusive and evidence-based approach to regional governance.

Embedding a collective regional mission

Thirdly, the wellbeing framework could help build a collective sense of purpose and mission for the region, extending through the NTCA and outward across the range of public bodies and stakeholders from the community and voluntary sector and commercial sector. Wellbeing outcomes provide a high-level and holistic organising basis through which to approach collaborative working, and are often used as shared goals which cut across traditional institutional boundaries (e.g. French 2021). The wellbeing framework could help pull together actors from local authorities, public bodies, and other sectors within a shared narrative of better and more equitable regional wellbeing.

The NTCA can show it 'walks the talk' by taking an ambitious approach to implementation, giving the approach credibility and legitimacy, and making it more compelling for the range of partners in the region to adopt the framework and follow suit. However, embedding this would likely also require facilitating an ongoing conversation cutting across different implementing organisations and following through on the NTCA's approach to integrate the wellbeing framework with a broad communications strategy. In this way the wellbeing framework could support the NTCA's stakeholder relations, and, in the words of one interviewee, 'open the door to an inclusive economy' to a range of partner organisations in the region.

Using wellbeing data for policy advocacy

Wellbeing frameworks often produce a fear of unfair accountability where actors are blamed for movement in indicators which results from external forces beyond their control. In the NTCA's case, wellbeing outcomes might well be influenced more by national policies than any regional actor. Poor wellbeing outcomes can be publicised not to chastise regional actors for doing what they can, but to spotlight the lack of suitable powers available. In this way a wellbeing framework can be a policy advocacy tool, used to bargain for the requisite powers needed to respond to wellbeing effectively. Going forward, a close coupling between the wellbeing framework and a communications strategy seems important to manage this communication process and ensure that negative and even worsening data, are not taken as a signal of failure, but as evidence of a need for policy change and greater autonomy.

'[It's about] continually making that connection: 'it's not possible to do [Levelling Up], if you have ever growing numbers of children and people in the North East going into poverty (...) we will do what we can to address this issue, but as advocates for our residents in North of Tyne, we also need [national government] to do your part'. Call for evidence participant

Implications for developing wellbeing frameworks and future Wellbeing Roundtables

The RWNT led a wide-ranging deliberative process which established a wellbeing framework with broad support in the region. Through strong partnership working between Carnegie UK and the NTCA and careful design choices in the recruitment and convening of the RWNT, the critical transition of ownership of the wellbeing framework to the RWNT was achieved successfully through Cabinet endorsement in January 2022. While it is too soon to evaluate implementation outcomes and subsequent impact of the process, there is a clear implementation pathway for the wellbeing framework in place within the NTCA and some early evidence of integration both vertically within the NTCA and horizontally by other regional authorities.

The RWNT incorporated several important changes to previous Carnegie UK Wellbeing Roundtables in Scotland and Northern Ireland. The RWNT was undertaken as a partnership approach by Carnegie UK and the NTCA, which bolstered commitment and may have pre-empted some of the implementation challenges evident in the devolved nations (French and Wallace, 2022). The RWNT's broadened approach to external engagement was also important in bringing the process authenticity and influence. The community engagement approach was particularly well received, with interviewees suggesting this lent the RWNT legitimacy and credibility, attracted interest from local and regional governments, and led to substantive changes in the composition and framing of the wellbeing framework.

By adopting the SEED model of collective wellbeing and orchestrating a tightly facilitated meeting schedule, the RWNT was able to develop its wellbeing framework in just four meetings over a six-month period. While this schedule was challenging, and for some too time-pushed, it did lend the process a sense of momentum and impact which kept Roundtable members actively engaged and, for many, activated their desire to remain ambassadors for the ongoing regional wellbeing approach. This did however require a high degree of trust in the expertise and impartiality of Carnegie UK to convene the process effectively.

While the RWNT achieved all of its immediate goals, it did encounter challenges. Some of these were unavoidable. Most significantly, the impossibility of face-to-face contact during this stage of the COVID-19 pandemic impaired the ability of the NTCA to establish close working relationships amongst Roundtable members and affected the level of commitment some members were able to offer. We also identified numerous points of learning from the RWNT which we pose as suggestive adaptations for future Wellbeing Roundtables to consider. We therefore conclude this report by listing nine such 'learning points', which might serve to inform future applications of a Wellbeing Roundtable approach, and to assist other convening organisations seeking to develop their own wellbeing frameworks.

Learning points

Learning Point 1.

Help Roundtable members to manage their commitments to the Roundtable process.

At times Roundtable members struggled with attendance and commitment (e.g. pre-reading briefing papers), substantially due to additional demands from the COVID-19 pandemic. While this will be less of a factor in future Roundtables, there may still be value in clarifying role commitments at recruitment. It may also be more effective to factor pre-reading commitments into meeting days so this time can be more easily protected.

Learning Point 2.

Help facilitators navigate community engagement activities.

Facilitators sometimes struggled to marry the requests of their facilitation guides with their particular community engagement context. It may help to clarify which elements of the facilitation guide are essential to the effectiveness of the Roundtable, and which are optional or adaptable to meet the demands of context. It could also benefit facilitators for a pre-engagement 'onboarding' workshop to answer questions and set expectations for the facilitator role.

Learning Point 3.

Consider adopting complementary methods to community engagement beyond the workshop model.

The workshop approach to community engagement had many positives, however it did not lead to outreach to individuals or communities most subjected to marginalisation (e.g. socially, geographically, or culturally). Future roundtables might consider approaches to community outreach, community reporting and utilising social networks to reach a broader range of people.

Learning Point 4.

Provide tailored feedback on the impacts of community engagement.

While community engagement participants were kept well informed of the development of the RWNT, they were less clear about how they themselves contributed to this. This might be improved by making community engagement more visible in final reports – e.g. using direct quotations and referencing community engagement evidence in the framework indicator justifications. More than this, validating and empowering feedback might better reach these groups by more accessible formats. One suggestion was a short video to community engagement participants explaining their contribution and explaining what this will mean to the region.

Learning Point 5.

Leave behind a transparent and accessible public record of deliberations.

Call for evidence respondents were unaware of the usage of their contributions and interested external actors could not easily follow the progress of the Roundtable. Briefings, and meeting summaries could be made public to leave a transparent and accessible public record of deliberations. Submissions to the call for evidence and community engagement could also be made public to provide a validating record of contribution for others beyond the Roundtable membership.

Learning Point 6.

Focus community engagement activities on environmental and democratic wellbeing.

Community engagement and survey evidence focused on economic and social domains of wellbeing. While this may reflect experience and priorities, this might be counteracted by more targeted invitation to community groups concerned with local environmental and democratic facets of wellbeing.

Learning Point 7.

Establish an 'ambassador' role as an expectation of Roundtable membership.

Some – but not all – Roundtable members described advocating for the Roundtable and wellbeing framework in their own organisations, both during and after the Roundtable meetings. Future Wellbeing Roundtables might consider formalising a 'wellbeing ambassador' role and expressing this as an expectation of Roundtable membership. This could be made the subject of a briefing paper and discussion in a final Roundtable meeting.

Learning Point 8.

Consider convening an additional Roundtable meeting on implementation.

Roundtable meeting discussions were focussed on making the stream of decisions necessary to arrive at a credible and authoritative wellbeing framework, however discussion of how it could be used did not feature strongly. There is a need for Roundtable members to be exposed to the possibilities for utilisation – e.g. exposure to examples of successful usage which might be adapted, strategies to advocate for the framework in their own organisations, or possibilities to use it in a collaborative context for horizontal integration.

Learning Point 9.

Consider the appropriateness of reconvening the Roundtable to reassess the wellbeing framework and review implementation progress.

Many interviewees outwith the NTCA were unaware of the usage or prominence attached to the wellbeing framework. One suggestion was to establish a communications strategy to publicise developments and maintain a sense of momentum following the Roundtable meetings. Another suggestion was to reconvene the Roundtable - perhaps annually - to scrutinise the process and provide both momentum and direction to the developing wellbeing approach.

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