

The Enabling State: Where are we now?

England Report card assessment

July 2019

Context

Five years ago, the Carnegie UK Trust published *The Rise of the Enabling State* (Wallace, 2013). A review of over 180 policy sources, the report identified seven interconnected policy shifts evident across the UK. Together, these changes constitute a move from a *traditional* Welfare State to an *Enabling* State: a state that aims to take a whole of government approach, seeking to empower individuals and communities. Figure 1 provides an overview of these changes, detailing what each shift entails: Each is complex, interdependent and far from risk free.

Five years on from the Rise of the Enabling State, the gap between ambition and implementation feels as great as ever. The demographic and budgetary pressures on public services are continuing and increasing. The need for more personalised, responsive public services and for citizens to have a voice is stronger than ever. The failure to translate this into a reality has never been more obvious.

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About the review

The intention of this review was to identify:

- What are the significant, inspiring examples of progress – the rising stars in policy development?
- Where has progress stalled, and why?
- What are the shared challenges – where should collaborative learning focus?

To assess progress we carried out a desk based review of policy and practice developments since 2013.

To analyse developments consistently across each jurisdiction, we used a framework of indicators related to each of the seven policy shifts highlighted in *Figure 1*. The assessment framework and a full description of our methodology can be found in the full report. After reviewing developments against the indicators, we made an overall progress assessment regarding the policy area in each jurisdiction (producing a 'report card'). We have also produced an overview report drawing together the analysis across the UK.

Figure 1: The shift from Welfare State to Enabling State – the seven interconnected policy shifts



An uneven and uneasy paradigm shift

Five years on from the *Rise of the Enabling State* our review of policy developments in the four jurisdictions re-affirms our 2013 analysis: there is a paradigm shift from a Welfare State to the Enabling State, which involves seven interdependent policy areas across the UK.

There have been a number of important developments since 2013 and the policy landscape and rhetoric has moved considerably. The shift toward an Enabling State involves multiple policy areas unpicking existing structures and ways of working that is buffeted continually by external pressures and drivers. As a result, progress is uneven and non-linear.




































Overall, the challenges associated with the shift to the Enabling State are much more evident now than in 2013, particularly as the government have begun to implement



Enabling State policies. But progress has not been linear. The step changes have not occurred in all areas or in all jurisdictions.

There is a risk in this context that showing unsteady progress as clearly as we have here is viewed as evidence of failure rather than as evidence of how much has already been achieved and how to move forward.

The scale of the budgetary and demand pressures facing public services are significant and in many cases the evidence shows they are hampering and undermining transformation. These are the circumstances in which the shift to the Enabling State is taking place. We hope that this report inspires those involved in policy development and decision-making across the UK to ask what their neighbours are doing, and what they can learn from those experiences.

Table 1: UK summary

Policy Shift	England	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales
 1. From targets to outcomes				
 2. From top down to bottom up				
 3. From representation to participation				
 4. From silos to working together				
 5. From crisis intervention to prevention				
 6. From recipients to co-producers				
 7. From public to third sector				

Key:  Rising star  Steady progress  Green shoots  Vulnerable

1. From targets to outcomes



Current assessment

Rhetoric has outstripped performance on outcomes in England, with weak Government business planning and mainstream thinking on outcomes still geared toward a new Public Management Model. Nonetheless, valuable outcomes frameworks do exist for major health and social care areas, and fresh thinking on how to create outcomes collaboratively is developing. Moreover, the Government has announced a new commitment to 'collaborative commissioning', which seems to recognise the complexity of outcomes, and may represent a major shift if it comes to fruition.

What we hope to see

Development of an outcomes framework which encourages more collaborative approaches to addressing complex problems, as well as a learning-by-doing culture.

2. From top down to bottom up



Current assessment

England remains highly centralised with government resources and power, operating at a considerable distance from the lives of most citizens. (e.g. New Deal for Communities, Big Society, Localism Act 2011) Earlier development has been stalled on the agenda of the current Government. Localism initiatives have often been treated as peripheral to the main business of central government. Devolution deals transfer more powers to local areas. Local authorities are struggling to deliver ongoing and significant budget cuts with social care and children's services particularly under pressure. There have been calls for Local Authorities to have greater revenue generating powers.

What we hope to see

A renewed effort to achieve devolution of powers and resources to local levels can and a reversing on the hollowing out of the local state.



3. From representation to participation



Current assessment

A policy ambition for Participatory Budgeting has not been realised. The Brexit vote shone a light on significant inequalities in the UK and exposed deep disengagement with politics in some sections of society. While the Civil Society Strategy signals a renewed interest in participatory democracy it is within the context of significant public sector funding pressures with many local authorities having significantly cut back on their spending on local data gathering.

What we hope to see

Fresh and sustained efforts to increase opportunities for meaningful participation.



4. From silos to working together



Current assessment

Overall, it has become increasingly evident that competitive and territorial behaviours in health and social care succession of structural changes has been accompanied by attempts to shift culture and practice away from internal market competition towards collaborative commissioning, design, and delivery. The new Civil Society Strategy also potentially signals a shift toward greater collaboration. However, the complexity of these changes is bewildering, and it is not yet clear, especially given the relentless financial and service pressures, whether these new collaborative models will be allowed to flourish, and whether or not they will actually produce service improvements.

What we hope to see

Investment in building common leadership to deliver shared goals, backed up by a shift in incentives toward working across boundaries and over the long-term; with continued efforts to shift procurement and commissioning away from competitive contract-bidding models, towards collaborative commissioning, design and delivery.



5. From crisis intervention to prevention



Current assessment

There is increasing emphasis on prevention, particularly in health and social care, seen most recently in the publication of the vision for health and social care: *Prevention is Better than Cure* but also evident elsewhere, for example, the duty to prevent homelessness in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Knowledge about What Works in prevention is growing thanks to the What Works Centres. At the same time however, lack of funding for new initiatives and major cutbacks in existing measures, due to short-term budget pressures, has created a wider negative environment and suggests action is needed to improve incentives for investment in prevention.

What we hope to see

Clear commitment to long-term preventative goals, with much greater investment in prevention and social infrastructure, and government spending models which stimulate and reward preventative actions, including longer-term planning and pooled budgets, accompanied by a stronger national network of practitioners committed to preventative design.



6. From recipients to co-producers



Current assessment

Co-production is gaining ground amongst major services in England in the sense that it is widely advocated. Where it exists however, it is manifested in many different ways (and with scope for confusion about what it is) and activity tends to remain marginal. Although some forms, such as Tenant Management Organisations, are very well established, new forms such as direct social care payments appear to be running into problems. The need for genuine co-production is evidenced by the small proportion of people who feel they have influence over services. The Civil Society Strategy potentially creates further momentum though it is early days.

What we hope to see

More efforts are needed to encourage and celebrate co-production which goes beyond lip-service and which demonstrates that user participation in design and delivery can be successfully applied across the board.



7. From public to third sector



Current assessment

The main direction of travel has been from the state to the private sector in relation to outsourcing but new efforts are being made to improve access for the voluntary sector, though the efficacy of these remains unproven. The Civil Society Strategy sets out plans to reform commissioning in favour of charities and indicates that government is exploring ways to improve long term funding for community led enterprise. Growth in community ownership has been modest since 2013. Volunteering has recently been in decline, despite efforts to increase it, but levels still remain high. The independence of the voluntary sector, an essential ingredient to strong partnerships, remains under threat, despite recent rhetoric to the contrary.

What we hope to see

The independent inquiry into the future of civil society and the Government's civil society strategy are an opportunity to enhance and accelerate a shift in favour of the third sector, not least those parts of the third sector which can achieve greater participation by citizens and communities. This must be accompanied by a shift away from seeing the voluntary sector as an instrument of government policy to seeing it as a genuine partner.

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