The Enabling State: Where are we now?

Northern Ireland 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

WELFARE STATE		ENABLING STATE
target setting	→	outcomes
top-down	→	bottom-up
representation	→	participation
silos	→	working together
crisis management	→	prevention
doing to	→	doing with
state	→	third sector

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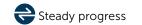
There is a risk in this context that showing unsteady progress as clearly as we have here is viewed as evidence of failure rather than as evidence of how much has already been achieved and how to move forward.

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	Green shoots	Steady progress	Rising star	Rising star
2. From top down to bottom up	Vulnerable	Vulnerable	Green shoots	Vulnerable
3. From representation to participation	Green shoots	Green shoots	Steady progress	Steady progress
4. From silos to working together	Green shoots	Steady progress	Steady progress	Steady progress
5. From crisis intervention to prevention	Green shoots	Green shoots	Green shoots	Rising star
6. From recipients to co-producers	Green shoots	Vulnerable	Green shoots	Green shoots
7. From public to third sector	Green shoots	Vulnerable	Steady progress	Vulnerable

Key: ⭐ Rising star   ⇄ Steady progress   🌱 Green shoots   🖐 Vulnerable

1. From targets to outcomes

Current assessment

Despite the gridlock at Stormont, there remains leadership-level commitment to the outcomes-based approach, particularly from the Head of the Civil Service, David Sterling, and the other nine Permanent Secretaries, with Senior Responsible Owners and others charged with Programme for Government delivery. The Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 2014 made councils responsible for community planning and puts wellbeing at its heart. It is too early to determine if the inclusion of outcomes-based approaches has been effective in improving outcomes for citizens and communities.

What we hope to see

Further embedding of the culture of outcomes shaped by the wellbeing agenda, with or without the restoration of devolved institutions; alignment of government procurement, funding and audit systems to support outcomes focus for the wellbeing of citizens; continued cooperation between NI Executive and local government in the delivery of community planning.

2. From top down to bottom up

Current assessment

Local government reform in 2015 saw the number of local authorities reduce from 26 to 11 with new powers granted in economic development, tourism and planning. Reform promised increased access for citizens to decision-making, although it is still unclear if this has been the case. The trend of increasing local decision-making powers can be seen in the announcement of a City Deal for Belfast and another proposed deal for Derry/Londonderry. The decision not to transfer regeneration powers to local government was seen as a backwards step by local government. This could be reviewed as Community Planning becomes embedded.

What we hope to see

Continued devolution of powers to most appropriate decision-making level as envisaged in the Review of Public Administration; opportunities offered by City Deals maximised by cross party support, to review the decision not to transfer regeneration powers to local government.

3. From representation to participation

Current assessment

Participation is not well established in Northern Ireland though there have been recent initiatives aimed at increasing citizen participation including community planning and attempts to establish a Citizens' Assembly.

What we hope to see

Increased emphasis placed on encouraging citizens to contribute to, and participate in, local decision-making processes.

4. From silos to working together

Current assessment

A widespread commitment has seen progress in integrating public services, although much more needs to be done particularly in relation to health and social care. Barriers to further integration and reform, and indeed the success of current measures, include the present political vacuum and also the frequent change in departmental ministers - itself in part a result of political instability - which often results in an absence of continuity in strategic planning.

What we hope to see

Further commitment to integration and cooperation in public sector.

Implementation of recommendations on the transformation of health and social care contained in the Bengoa report.

Alignment of public sector procurement, funding and audit processes with outcomes-based approach.

5. From crisis intervention to prevention

Current assessment

While there is an increasing emphasis on early intervention in policy initiatives, especially around children and young people the narrative on prevention is not yet well established in Northern Ireland. The strong focus on outcomes in the Draft Programme for Government does have the potential to further encourage a shift towards preventative services and early intervention. This is best demonstrated in the Children's Services Cooperation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 and strategies around Children and Young People and Child Poverty, although the outworking of this has yet to be seen.

What we hope to see

Government resource allocation decisions prioritising preventative measures.

6. From recipients to co-producers

Current assessment

To date, co-production has struggled to gain any significant foothold in the delivery of public services at both national and local level in Northern Ireland. While it is recognised as having enormous potential, it remains an opaque concept for many. The new Co-production Guide for Northern Ireland launched by the Department of Health represents a new commitment to co-production within health and social care.

What we hope to see

Lessons from co-production pilot projects shared and applied through Programme for Government implementation structures and Community Planning Partnerships delivering Community Plans at a local level.

7. From public to third sector

Current assessment

While there has been progress on social clauses in public services contracts primarily in the construction sector, there is more to be done to ensure that social value is embedded in government procurement and, critically, funding and audit processes.

What we hope to see

The independence of the third sector valued and supported by government in practice as well as principle.

Acknowledgements

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