



# Working Together for Wellbeing

The report of the Northern  
Ireland Embedding Wellbeing  
in Local Government Programme

**Summary Report • September 2021**

## Acknowledgments

The Embedding Wellbeing in Northern Ireland programme involved a very large number of people. Carnegie UK would like to acknowledge the support we received from friends and colleagues across the UK, Ireland and internationally in developing and delivering this programme.

We are indebted to our Advisory Group, ably chaired and guided by Aideen McGinley, who all voluntarily gave their time and considerable expertise to the programme.

The people who gave the most to the programme were of course the lead officers from the three councils, whose support for community planning and commitment to public service was demonstrable throughout:

- Catherine McWhirter, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
- Jennie Dunlop, Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon District Council
- Rachael Craig and Colm Doherty, Derry City and Strabane County Council.

The writers of this report hope we have done some justice to the depth of work you have carried out under the banner of this programme.

We would also like to acknowledge the work of Lauren Pennycook, who acted as programme manager for the majority of the project; and Alison Manson who provided high quality and calm corporate support throughout.

ISBN 978-1-912908-74-5



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# Background

Carnegie UK is the UK's leading wellbeing foundation with a 100-year history of inspiring, supporting and promoting wellbeing through philanthropy. We use our expertise to effect change that improves people's lives and work in partnership with individuals and organisations from all sectors to advance the ideas, evidence and practices that make a difference to wellbeing.

Over the past 10 years, knowledge of wellbeing policy and practice has increased substantially. Carnegie UK has been part of this international movement, contributing to learning about the concept of wellbeing by developing a SEED framework that outlines what wellbeing means across different aspects of our lives (see Box 1).

In 2015, the report of the Carnegie Roundtable on Measuring Wellbeing in Northern Ireland influenced the outcomes-based approach and focus on wellbeing in Northern Ireland's draft Programme for Government. Around the same time, the reform of local government in Northern Ireland gave the 11 newly created local authorities the responsibility for leading community planning processes. Community

Plans identify priorities for **improving the social, economic and environmental wellbeing** of local districts and their residents, beyond local government electoral cycles into the long term.

Community Plans have the potential to act as local wellbeing frameworks. Independent analysis commissioned by Carnegie UK found that all of the Community Plans had adopted the language and substance of wellbeing, but that local government was charged with responsibility for delivery with little support. The political situation destabilised and in 2017 the Assembly was suspended. Therefore in 2017, Carnegie UK committed to providing what support we could to develop the potential of community planning to improve wellbeing in the region.

## Box 1: Carnegie UK Definition of Collective Wellbeing

Wellbeing means everyone having what they need to live well now and in the future. It is a multi-dimensional approach to social progress that gives **equal weight** to **Social, Economic, Environmental and Democratic** outcomes.



**Figure 1: The three Project Partners**

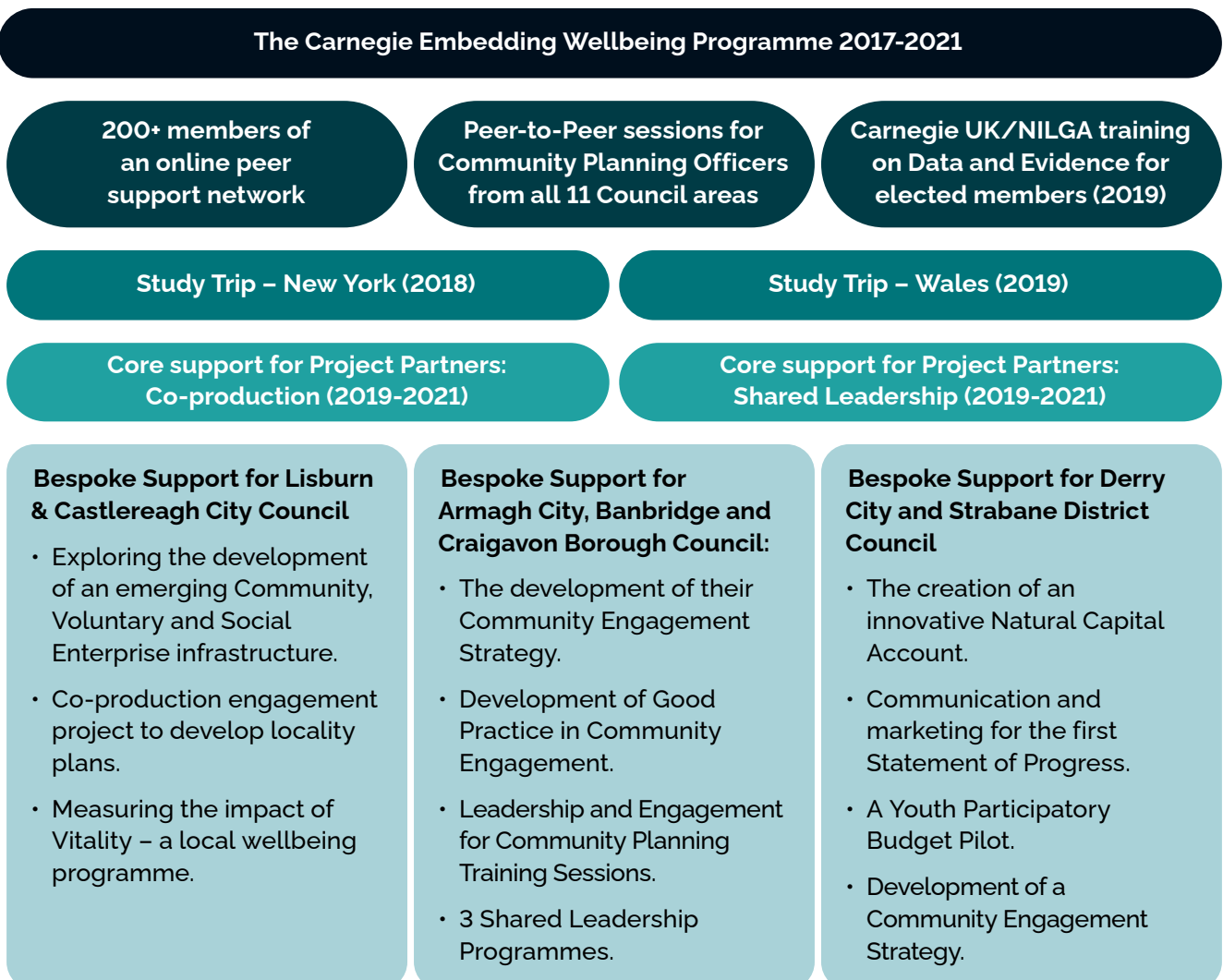


The subsequent **Embedding Wellbeing in Northern Ireland** project provided financial and in-kind support to Community Planning Partnerships in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council; Derry City and

Strabane District Council; and Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council. The three areas were selected by the Advisory Group following an open call which all 11 councils responded to. Over the course of the three-year programme, Carnegie UK and the three Community Planning Partnerships developed a peer-to-peer support model that built on existing strengths, and focused on learning from each other and from international best practice to overcome shared challenges.

Project design and delivery was supported by an Advisory Group that included representatives from the Northern Ireland Executive, the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, civil society, and key stakeholders from the wellbeing and outcomes community based outside Northern Ireland. A full list of activities is shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Project activities**





## Case study 1

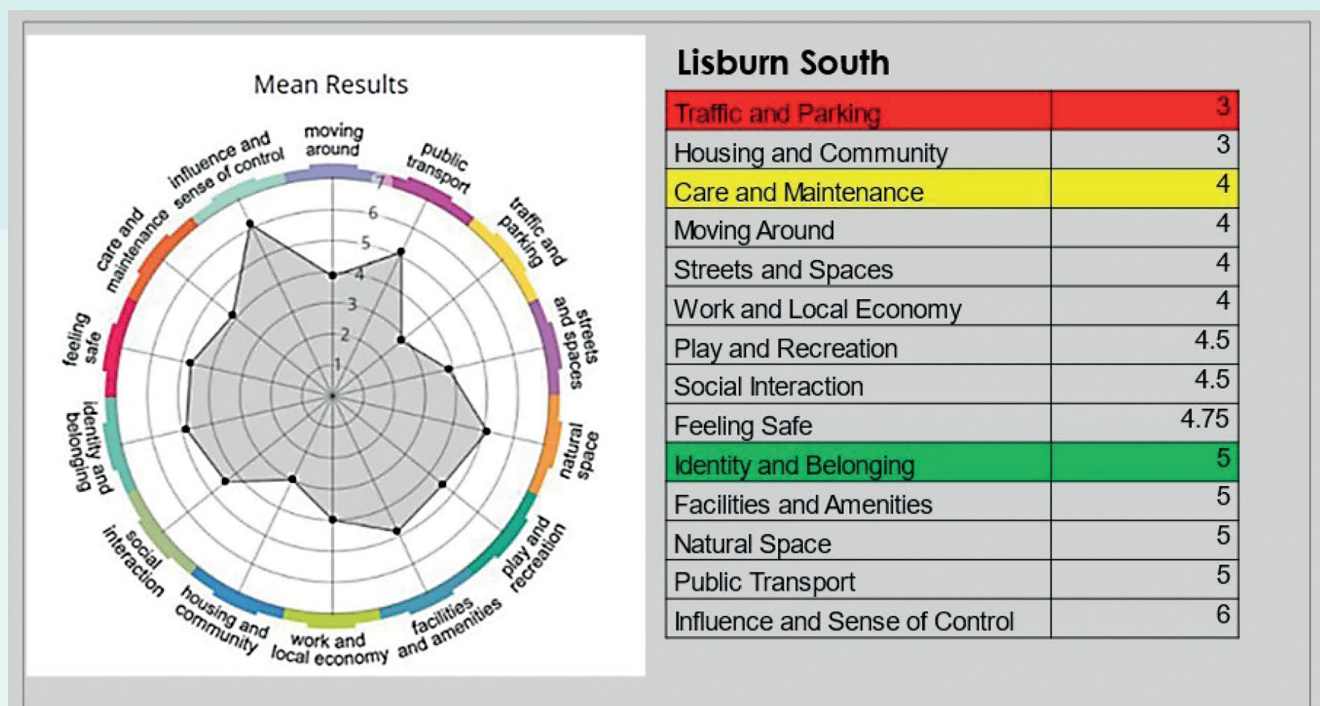
### Community engagement in locality planning

Locality Planning is seen as an integral part of the Lisburn and Castlereagh Community Planning framework and requires localised collaboration by statutory partners and with the community.

The Community Planning Partnership requested support for the development of two pilot DEA (District Electoral Area) Plans. In providing this support, Community Places emphasised the need for localised collaboration by statutory partners and with the community. The partners were asked to detail their services, programmes and plans for each DEA to inform the plan development<sup>1</sup>.

Using the 'Place Standard'<sup>2</sup> tool for community engagement, Community Places prepared a Plan for each of the DEAs with each setting out:

- The vision and outcomes of the council-wide strategic Community Plan and how it links with DEA Locality Plans;
- The engagement process used to develop the Plan;
- The assets of the area identified during the engagement process;
- The areas and issues for improvement and suggested actions from the engagement; and
- Next steps for wider community consultation and final adoption by the Partnership Board.



1 Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (2019) *Locality Plan for Lisburn South and Castlereagh East* Available online at <https://www.lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk/resident/community-planning/locality-plans>

2 The Place Standard (Online) *How Good is Our Place?* Available online at <https://www.placestandard.scot/>

# What we learnt about Co-production

Community Places led a programme of work on co-production in community planning that involved background research, stakeholder engagement and work across community planning processes in the three local authority areas. A final learning workshop with key stakeholders and participants from the three councils drew together the key learning from this process.

Community Places also supported activity within each of the council Partners, reflecting their priorities (see case study 1). This included developing a toolkit for good practice on co-production. *The Guide to Applying Co-production* is concerned with how partnerships can best apply the principles of co-production through:

- A common understanding of the characteristics of 'good partners'
- An agreed definition of co-production and its principles

- A charter of co-production commitments
- 12 practical steps to applying the principles in all meetings between partners
- A template for ongoing evaluation and reflection on progress.

The toolkit is available on our website at [www.carnegieuk.org](http://www.carnegieuk.org).

Two Participatory Budgeting projects were also held under the auspices of the Embedding Wellbeing Programme (see case study 2).

**Figure 3: Priorities for Co-production in Northern Ireland**







## Case study 2

### YOUth Making it Happen

YOUth Making it Happen! is the first youth-led Participatory Budgeting project in Northern Ireland. The Youth Co-Design Panel participated in a series of planning and design workshops to develop the PB process. They made key decisions on themes, eligibility criteria, timeframes, budget allocation, branding and marketing, and evaluation and learning.



Dedicated YOUth Making It Happen! web pages<sup>3</sup> on the Grow Derry Strabane Community Planning site and an engaging video were developed with input from the co-design panel<sup>4</sup>.

The PB initiative launched on 08 September 2020 and young people were invited to submit ideas to decide how the £20,000 PB Fund should be allocated. Ideas were submitted through a short initial application, followed by a second stage video submission. The Co-Design Panel agreed that ideas should focus on supporting young people related to six themes: Arts and Culture; Community and Environment; Education and Skills; Equality and Inclusion; Safety; and Sport, Health and Wellbeing.

**46** applications and **33** Stage 2 videos were received. Videos were uploaded to the Consultation Hub for the online vote, with young people aged between 12 and 25 years asked to vote for the three projects they wanted to see delivered in their local growth area. The online vote was open for a week from 30 November to 06 December 2020. In total, **842** young people voted for their priorities across the council area.

The winning projects represented a range of themes including drama, culture and arts; improvements to green spaces and rivers; fitness, health and wellbeing; gifting and intergenerational activities; and education and skills.


3 Derry City and Strabane District Council (2020) *YOUth Making It Happen?* Available online at <https://growderrystrabane.com/youthpb/>

4 Derry City and Strabane District Council (2020) *YOUth Making It Happen – Why Get Involved* (video) Available online at [https://youtu.be/WpZucFv\\_B\\_k](https://youtu.be/WpZucFv_B_k)



## Lessons Learned

The following six lessons recognise the progress that has been made in terms of good practice in engagement and co-production; but also highlight the support needs of partners, in particular the community and voluntary sector, and areas for development. Each lesson is broad and they do not aim to capture everything that is required in order to deliver effective co-production and engagement. However, building on evidence from the symposia run by Community Places, the three council programmes and the final learning workshop, they emphasise the need for further support in co-production, engagement and wellbeing – and, critically, the relationship between them.

- **Lesson 1:** Building the enabling environment for co-production means putting in place the legislation, technical capacity and resources (including time) to ensure that it delivers meaningful wellbeing outcomes.
  - **Lesson 2:** Making engagement work in practice means committing to agreed principles and operating standards and guidance to ensure each actor can deliver outcomes in a collective and reinforcing way.
  - **Lesson 3:** Inclusive structures are needed to embed co-production at a strategic and operational level and to ensure that engagement is the basis for prioritising issues, delivering programmes (across themes and geographic areas), measuring progress and building a partnership culture.
  - **Lesson 4:** Alignment and integration of budgets is required to ensure co-production leads to improved outcomes for the communities most affected by decisions..
  - **Lesson 5:** Community Planning must be driven by the commitment to making positive change in the quality of people's lives.
  - **Lesson 6:** The success of co-production and engagement is dependent on interpersonal relationships, a continuous process of shared learning, and soft and formal networks that need to be nurtured and developed over the life of the community planning process.
- 

# What we learnt about Shared Leadership

The Centre for Effective Services (CES) developed and delivered a shared leadership programme that aimed to increase impact within individual Community Planning Partnerships and encourage collaboration and the sharing of power, resources and decision making, as well as impacting on community planning practice across Northern Ireland.

The shared leadership programme, which was co-designed with programme leads in each council, began by developing indicators to act as a self-assessment and feed into programme evaluation, and by developing a tailored action learning programme according to identified support needs. The indicators (Box 2) can be used by all community planning partners to better understand their progress towards shared leadership.

There is a need for further testing and refinement of the Shared Leadership indicators. Ongoing benchmarking, and space for discussion, are areas that need greater attention across CPPs.

During the course of the Shared Leadership project the participants themselves used the survey and identified that they were able to make progress on the first six of the indicators. For the remaining indicators, it may be that more

## Box 2: Indicators of Shared Leadership

The project partners, working with the Centre for Effective Services, developed 12 indicators of successful shared leadership. These were designed to be administered in a survey of community planning partners to assess the level of shared leadership.

1. Ownership of community planning as a way of working
2. Resources to deliver community planning
3. Infrastructure in place to deliver community planning
4. Public seeing benefits
5. Partners seeing benefits
6. Evidence of reconfiguration
7. Evidence of sharing
8. Chair managing the CPP business beyond meetings
9. Implementation plans being expedited
10. Political energy and support
11. Accountability and review mechanisms in place and meaningful
12. CPP members have decision making authority

significant structural changes are required to maximise the impact of Community Planning.

Action learning<sup>5</sup> is a method of collaborative learning where a small group of participants (an 'action learning set') meet regularly to reflect on real work issues. Its basic philosophy is that the most effective learning takes place when dealing with real problems to solve. Action learning enhances the way in which people learn, by drawing on actual experience to make sense of challenges and develop effective strategies for implementation. Its effectiveness can be measured through practical results and application to real life challenges.

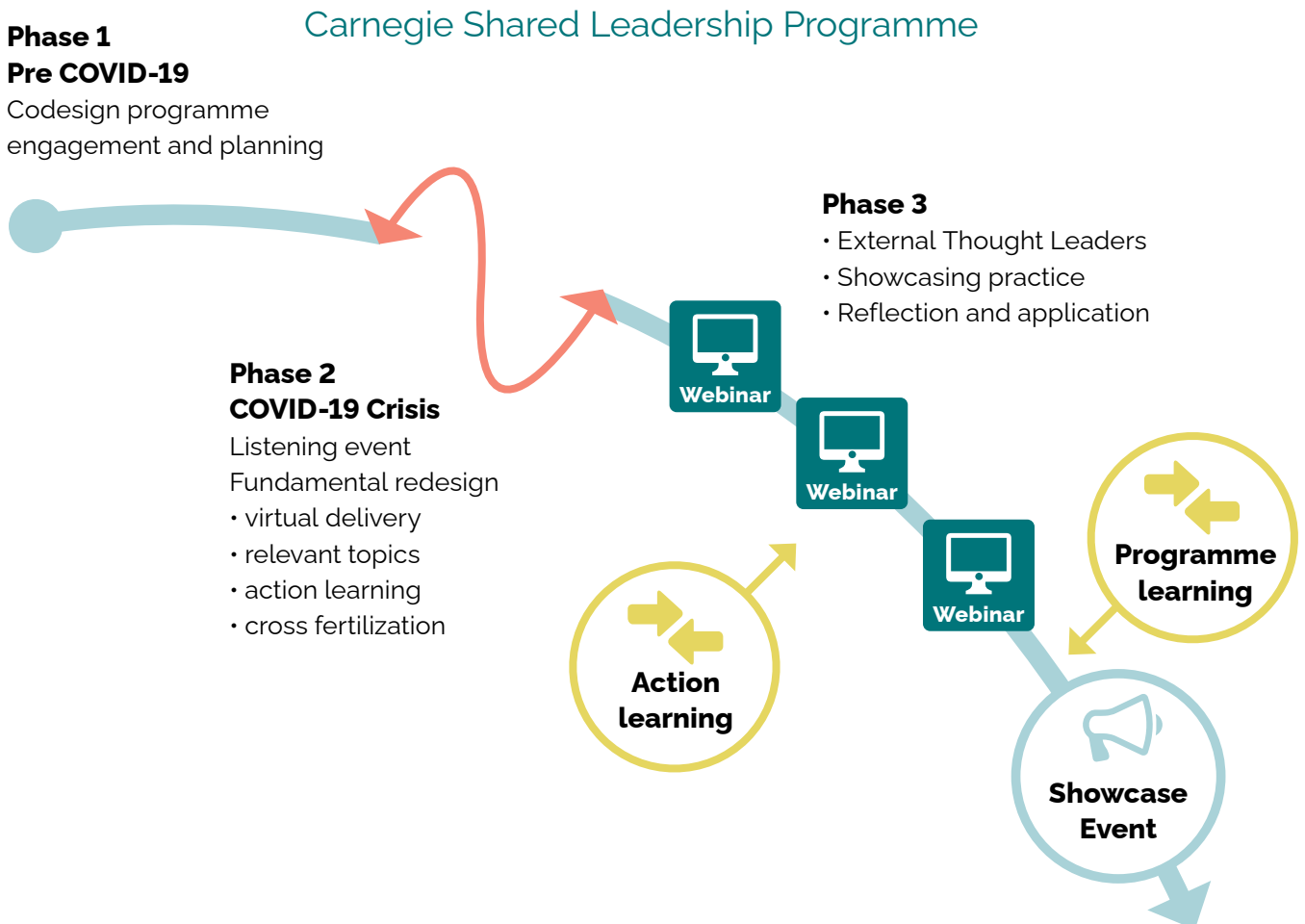
Based on feedback and redesign with participating organisations, it was agreed to run the action learning webinar series on the themes of:

1. Community wellbeing
2. Addressing inequalities
3. Partnering with communities
4. Partnering with government.

During the action learning sessions a number of areas for improvement were identified. Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council invested in follow up activity on shared leadership which is summarised in case study 3.

5 Revans, R. (2011) *The ABC of Action Learning*. Routledge. Available online at <https://www.actionlearningassociates.co.uk/action-learning/reg-revans/>

**Figure 4: Revised Shared Leadership Programme**





## Case study 3

### ABC: Shared Leadership in Practice

“Connected” is the first Community Plan for the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough with a clear focus on delivering sustainable outcomes that improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of the Borough’s people and place.

In response to the pandemic, ABC’s Community Planning Partnership came together to develop a 12-month COVID-19 Response and Recovery Plan (the COVID-19 Plan) to reduce the impact of the virus across the Borough. An intensive, community-focused engagement and research exercise identified the Plan’s 5 main priority areas and 28 collaborative actions to maximise the Partnership’s response to the community’s existing and emerging needs, and to strengthen their partnership working and delivery.

In essence, the Programme provides the “back at base” tangible and strategic support to leaders as they drive forward the delivery of better outcomes that respond to the community’s changing wellbeing needs, aspirations and expectations in collaboration with others across all sectors and policy areas.

The overarching aim of the Programme is to build a strong cadre of connected, confident, collaborative and resilient leaders of positive change. It operates across 3 interlinked levels: network, group and project.

- 1. The ABC Peer Network** (the Peer Network) is a collective space that is open to everyone involved directly and indirectly in delivering the COVID-19 Plan across organisations, sectors and policy areas to come together.
- 2. Participation in the Planning Group** is by self-selection following an invite issued to all Peer Network members wishing to join a small group responsible for convening and chairing the Peer Network meetings.

- 3. The COVID-19 Plan** incorporates 5 priorities and some 28 collaborative actions that collectively contribute to the Borough’s response and recovery from the pandemic over the next year.

The Programme is realistic and open about the leadership challenges and complexities that cross-sectoral and collaborative working presents. It also recognises the real short and long-term benefits to be accrued from the provision of deliberative, strategic and adaptive one-to-one and group-based approaches that together help to release the potential of shared leadership in practice.

**Outcomes and learning:** The Programme has empowered individuals and provided them with opportunities to exercise leadership roles in the Peer Network, and within their respective projects and areas of expertise.

**Connections and networking:** The Peer Network provided a safe, supportive, creative space where partners could meet up, get to know each other better, and build their sense of trust and solidarity. It has proved valuable and necessary in building the connectedness and resilience that enables leaders to better coordinate and develop ideas.

**Co-design and shared decisions:** Partners have demonstrated the openness and capability to work collaboratively to co-design, develop and implement new and more coordinated approaches to their work, and to negotiate the sharing of skill sets, decision-making and information with others across different organisations and sectors.

**Pooling and maximising resources:** The Programme participants have demonstrated a growing level of openness and trust in each other to both share financial, human and in-kind resources across their respective organisations and sectors, and also to make joint funding submissions to departmental COVID-19 programmes to deliver better outcomes together.

## Areas for improvement in Shared Leadership

### i) Roles and Relationships with Central Government

The relationship between central government and Community Planning Partnerships arose throughout the programme. There appear to be several key factors at play here, namely:

- How central government departments are structured to collaborate with each other on issues of common concern or interest to CPPs.
- CPP participants reported a perceived internal disconnect between senior and middle grade civil servants with regard to commitments and undertakings with CPPs. This is particularly related to how information is shared within departments so that CPPs experience a consistent approach from departments on CPP issues.
- How community planning is reflected in central government planning through the allocation of resources, shared accountability, cross cutting governance, coordination of partner involvement and the positioning of CPPs within the Programme for Government.

Participants were enthusiastic about the promise of community planning and for the approach to be supported and utilised more widely. However, participants widely expressed a view that involvement from statutory partners needed to be embedded in the day to day operations and workplans of each organisation, that it is "partnerships and action groups who are responsible for implementing community planning more than central government" and that it should not be left to the enthusiasm of individuals or organisations, but rather organised through central government: "Community planning needs to play a stronger role in day [sic] jobs which can be pushed by central government".

The Programme for Government was cited as an important vehicle for a shared vision, coordination

and planning in Northern Ireland. There was disappointment that community planning did not feature as a valuable implementation mechanism for the Programme for Government. It was suggested that the Programme for Government needed a bottom-up approach, looking at shared leadership at local level to find methods that work in local communities.

There was a concern about central government, especially as churn in CPP representation becomes more widespread, with a resultant loss of knowledge and relationships.

The CPPs' understanding of what is going on at a local level was also cited as invaluable to central government

### ii) Relationships within CPPs

The theme of building relationships was also reflected when participants talked about their own CPP, where they were keen to understand the role and scope of each other's organisations and how they could each contribute to the Community Plan, as well as ensuring adequate sharing of accountability and resourcing.

It was stated in several different engagements that there are core organisations who have successfully taken work forward together, whereas others have yet to successfully engage. The value of these relationships was clearly understood as important to CPP governance.

Whilst there is a legislative imperative for statutory bodies to engage in community planning, many participants noted that current CPP involvement is not considered part of normal job roles, leading to several respondents asking to have community planning as a measurable part of everyone's job, rather than forming an additional piece of work.

It was also acknowledged that the local authorities carry the greatest burden of organising and resourcing the CPP. Some considered that government had not fully engaged with local government and statutory bodies on how

community planning should be implemented. The lack of adequate resources was also referenced repeatedly with concerns raised about the ongoing impact of a lack of appropriate resourcing.

The role of the community and voluntary sector was another significant topic for discussion during the programme, as well as in post programme learning. There was a recognition that the sector can offer 'on the ground' engagement and delivery as well as new innovative models of practice. However, there are still issues to overcome in relation to the community and voluntary sector's position in CPPs.

It has also been noted that voluntary and community organisations are not reflected in the legislation in the same way as statutory partners. This has led to a sense of an uneven playing field. There was no appetite for a 'one size fits all' approach to the structure of local community and voluntary sector representation with participants citing the need to be responsive to local needs.

The value of good relationships within CPPs to enable joint working and action was stressed repeatedly.

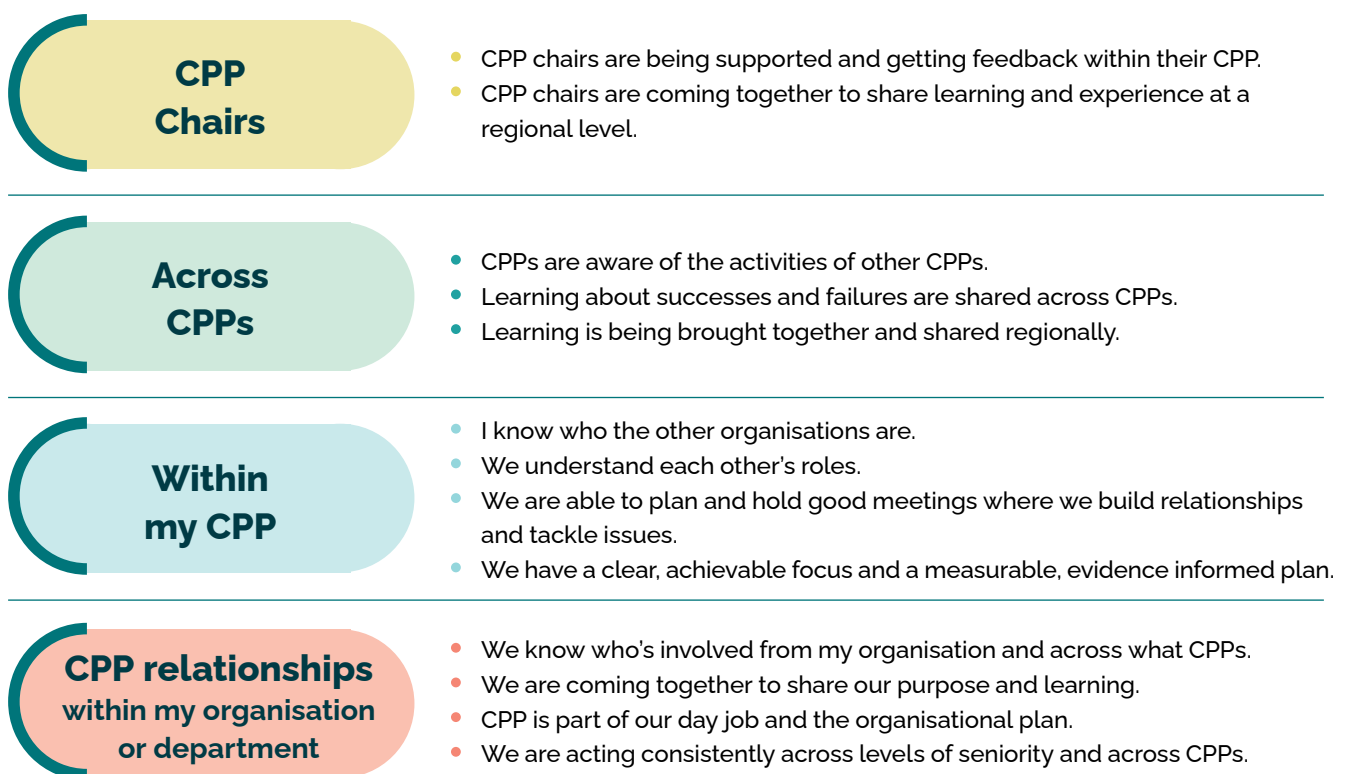
### iii) Relationships across CPPs

Participants related the need to continue to build relationships and share learning across all CPPs. There was a call for "more collaboration with the other eleven partnerships to help reduce overlap and duplication" as well as a comment on the "importance of sharing knowledge to improve outcomes with other partners to work collaboratively".

Participants recognised the value of the Shared Leadership programme in this regard: "this programme has helped bring partnerships together".

The programme developed relationship based outcomes for Community Planning Partnerships to consider going forward (figure 5).

Figure 5: Relationship based outcomes within and across CPPs



# What we learnt about Data and Evidence

A repeating theme during the programme was the importance of data and evidence for the planning process and in communicating with the public. Obtaining good quality monitoring data which demonstrates where change has occurred is challenging.

The issues involved in local government use of data are:

- **Data quality:** There is a need to demonstrate the value of good quality data and show the implications for decision-making.
- **Data sharing:** official statistics and administrative data often not at the right level for effective use, or partners being unwilling or unable to share their data.
- **Data communication:** Using data to inform elected members and the wider public on wellbeing in the local area.

There has been significant investment in the Labour Force Survey and Safe Community Survey which involved doubling their sample sizes during the period that this programme was in place. This has provided reliable, high-quality statistics at local government level for important indicators such as economic inactivity, employment, victims of crime, workforce qualifications, underemployment and life satisfaction. The Labour Force Survey is particularly important for local government.

Throughout the Embedding Wellbeing in Northern Ireland programme, we observed difficulties in accessing quality and timely local data. The NISRA statisticians who worked with local government (on a commissioned basis) were valued by the Community Planning teams but the model proved unsustainable particularly due to the impact of COVID-19.

A further issue relates to how wellbeing data is collated to improve decision making. Analysis often presents data in different categories and units. We were pleased to be able to support the Derry City and Strabane District Council Natural Capital Account (see case study 4). Natural capital accounting is an approach to estimating the economic benefits provided by greenspaces, particularly for public health and wellbeing. A Natural Capital Account (NCA) can help inform and improve decision-making by framing public green and blue spaces as economic assets.





## Case study 4

### Natural Capital Account: Derry City and Strabane District Council

The NCA was developed by Vivid Economics, in coproduction with Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC) and its Green Infrastructure (GI) Stakeholders, which form part of the Community Planning Partnership.

Natural capital describes components of the natural environment (including greenspaces) that provide economic benefits for people. These benefits can include cleaner air and water, improved physical health, mental health and wellbeing, carbon storage, temperature regulation and flood risk regulation.

The NCA assigns a monetary value to key services provided by greenspaces. This makes it easier to compare benefits with ongoing spending, investment and with spending on other public services. Without such an account, the benefits and value for money are seldom explicit.

We found that:

- Derry City and Strabane District Council supplies more than £75 million in benefits to residents each year through its 223 greenspaces.
- Greenspaces will provide £1 billion in benefits over the lifetime of Derry City and Strabane District Council's Green Infrastructure (GI) Plan (2019- 2032). This value could increase if parks are enhanced to encourage more, longer and active visits.
- There are more than five million visits to Derry and Strabane recreational greenspaces each year. Visitors benefit from mental wellbeing and physical health improvements. The town of Strabane and non-urban areas of the region have fewer greenspace options compared to residents in Derry City, but this could increase if the study were extended to include all publicly accessible greenspaces. These benefits are provided at low cost.
- It only costs £1 to deliver over £22 of benefits. Greenspaces provide over £500 of benefit per adult resident per year.

*These figures were provided prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and it is estimated that they now hold an even greater value.*

During the programme the project partners, and wider Community Planning colleagues, developed their skills and capacity for engaging the public with data. The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 requires Community Planning Partnerships to produce a statement of progress on a two-year reporting cycle. The statement of progress has to be meaningful and understandable to local people, who are the intended audience. They should reflect what the Community Planning Partnership is trying to achieve for the recipients of local public services and be engaging and inspiring in a way that goes beyond the usual services and communications.

A peer-to-peer learning event provided an opportunity for officers from across the 11 council areas to outline their experience of producing statements of progress. Community Planning Partnerships have trialled a range of different tools and delivery mechanisms in communicating their statements of progress to citizens in line with the statutory requirement. A range of accessible outputs, such as engaging reports, infographics, and video clips were used to reflect on progress made and to provide a focus for the future. The messages in the statements of progress were also taken

to the places and spaces where citizens spend time, such as public transport, cinema or leisure centre, and social media. Multiple communication routes created an opportunity for dialogue, in contrast to the traditional one-way communication style of government, and an opportunity to redefine the relationship between government and citizens.

The stakeholders summarised their learning on communicating data to the public in the following ways:

- There needs to be a culture change in communicating with the public using data. It was felt that local government is further ahead on the journey on a number of key processes, such as community engagement and the use of data, than their colleagues in central government.
- There needs to be a recognition of the importance of gathering and sharing stories of change and qualitative evidence as well as data.
- Leadership is required to allow data to be published even when it is challenging.

# What next for Community Planning in Northern Ireland?

2021 is a pivotal time for community planning in Northern Ireland. Shortly after this report is published, Community Planning Partnerships will issue their second Statements of Progress and a review is promised into the functioning of community planning.

After the experience of the pandemic response, the future of community planning as a model is perhaps less in doubt than it might have been. The benefits of joint working across public services and with communities have been seen in action, and while the pandemic may have been a baptism of fire, it provided proof of concept.

Our experience of working alongside Community Planning Partnerships has provided Carnegie UK with a unique opportunity to explore and develop recommendations on how community planning could be strengthened in the Northern Ireland context.

## 1. Funding

Our programme has highlighted the capabilities of local government as delivery agents of change when they are adequately resourced. While the support the Executive has provided to local authorities to respond to and recover from the COVID-19 crisis is welcome – and recognises that councils are instrumental in understanding and responding to the needs of communities – community planning, as a long-term process and statutory requirement, needs greater stability of financial support.



### Recommendation 1

**All statutory Community Planning Partners (including agencies and central departments) should contribute to a fund for the administration of community planning, to ensure the Partnerships' ability to deliver on improving local wellbeing outcomes over the course of the current Plans.**

## 2. Powers and Responsibilities

The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 does not bestow key policy areas to local government, nor does it provide a sufficient legislative 'push' behind the community planning process and the ways of working required to improve local wellbeing outcomes.



### Recommendation 2

**As part of an Augmentation Review, the Northern Ireland Executive should amend the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 to include regeneration among the portfolio of powers for local government thereby completing the transfer of the necessary powers required to address inequalities to the local level.**

### 3. Building Relationships between Central and Local Government

Naming local authorities as the lead partner for community planning in legislation has created the perception that community planning is owned by the local authority, or one department within it. However, local authorities do not have the resources and are not the appropriate body to deliver on a number of outcomes in the Community Plans. A more mature, strategic approach is required across all partners.



#### Recommendation 3

**The First Minister and Deputy First Minister should issue a directive to all departments, statutory bodies, and arms-length bodies to participate fully in the community planning process.**



#### Recommendation 4

**Departmental Permanent Secretaries and Chief Executives of arms-length bodies should ensure that those representing their organisations at community planning meetings have sufficient authority to commit resources (human and financial) to actions designed to deliver on agreed CPP outcomes.**

### 4. Pooled Budgets

A key barrier for achieving Community Planning Partnership outcomes was the continued difficulties in arranging pooled budgets for agreed priorities and activities. During the emergency phase of COVID-19 we observed examples of partners being more flexible with their approach to funding. The challenge now, in the recovery phase, is to ensure that flexibility is retained where it can be seen to improve wellbeing outcomes for local populations.

The Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 empowers councils, departments and agencies to make contributions to a pooled fund to provide services for children's wellbeing. Given the wide definition of children's wellbeing used in the Act, this would apply to many of the activities under Community Planning Partnerships where children are direct and indirect beneficiaries. This approach should be trialled through demonstration projects, to gain evidence of the outcomes that can be achieved when resources are pooled.



#### Recommendation 5

**The Department of Finance should urgently issue regulations on pooled budgets under the Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 and make it clear how this can be applied to a broad range of public service areas.**



#### Recommendation 6

**The Department of Finance, working with NILGA and the Community Planning Officers Network should identify a number of pathway projects on pooled budgets resulting in high quality guidance that can be applied across all public services.**

## 5. Building Relationships with the Community and Voluntary Sector

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the CVS has demonstrated its flexibility, resilience, and ability to reorient and deliver services critical to citizens' wellbeing, at speed. There is an opportunity in a post-COVID society, in the delivery of the new Programme for Government, and in the review of community planning in 2021, to develop a new relationship between the Northern Ireland Executive, Community Planning Partnerships and the CVS which utilises partners' relative strengths and draw on the organisations best placed to deliver services to improve citizens' wellbeing.

There were consistent calls for a legislative right for the community and voluntary sector to be represented on Community Planning Partnerships. There was however no sense that a 'one size fits all' would work for all 11 partnership areas. The duty for ensuring appropriate representation for the sector should fall to the Community Planning Partnership, particularly in ensuring representation from smaller and more geographically remote organisations.

### ✓ Recommendation 7

**Community Planning Partnerships should co-design, co-deliver and co-manage public services with the Community and Voluntary Sector at all levels of service delivery, as part of a new relationship and way of working with the sector.**

### ✓ Recommendation 8

**Community Planning Partnerships should invest in building the capacity of Community and Voluntary Sector Panels (or other appropriate engagement mechanisms) to allow their members to share leadership in the delivery of the Community Plan, and to co-produce services within it.**

### ✓ Recommendation 9

**Community Planning Partnerships should review the model used to secure community and voluntary sector representation in community planning, to ensure that it supports the flexibility and responsiveness of the sector and capitalises on the energy in local communities realised during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

## 6. Building Relationships with Citizens

The draft Programme for Government and the New Decade, New Approach agreement also committed to co-design and co-production, placing citizens at the heart of design and delivery of public services, and fostering collective responsibility. These important principles can enhance public engagement and bring decision-making closer to communities. It is important to ensure that co-design and co-production is not seen as an 'added extra', but that it is the fundamental basis on which policy is developed and delivered.

### ✓ Recommendation 10

**Community Planning Partners should co-ordinate their citizen engagement strategies and activities, including Participatory Budgeting, to avoid duplication, ensure coherence, and maximise the impact on collective wellbeing.**

## 7. Improving Leadership in Evidence

The long-term nature of many community planning outcomes requires good quality, consistent data to be gathered over a number of years, enhanced by the requirements to publish Statements of Progress. Data availability and access were key issues faced by Community Planning Partnerships over the time period of the programme. Carnegie UK believes that the enhanced use of data could help Community Planning Partnerships to better inform the public of progress and ask relevant questions on how to improve the wellbeing of citizens across the local authority areas.



### Recommendation 11

**NISRA and NILGA should work together to review support to local Community Planning Partnerships on sourcing and analysing data, including consideration of a pool of statisticians that CPPs could access.**



### Recommendation 12

**The Northern Ireland Executive should provide guidance on the sharing of administrative data that can support the delivery of Community Planning, to ensure that local partners apply legislation on data protection appropriately and consistently.**

## 8. Space to Reflect and Learn

There are considerable opportunities for the Community Planning Partnerships to learn from each other in the implementation phase of community planning. Community planners reported the value of the community planning network as a source of support as they sought to develop their community plans and undertake new ways of working. Within the Embedding Wellbeing in Northern Ireland project, the interest of those involved in community planning in learning from their counterparts in other local authority areas and organisations has been demonstrated through the extensive uptake of participation in peer-to-peer learning events, and in the over 200-person membership of an online platform designed to share learning on improving wellbeing outcomes.



### Recommendation 13

**The current Community Planning Officers Network should be supplemented with a larger network to provide a supportive environment in which all members of the Partnerships (including non-statutory members) can discuss key areas of community planning to improve their practice.**

# What next for Wellbeing in Northern Ireland?

Northern Ireland has once again been through a period of significant and deep disruption. When the next Northern Ireland Assembly is elected and takes its seats, there will be the opportunity to fully review the Programme for Government. At that point, there will be a choice – to continue to seek a different way of working through the wellbeing approach, or to fall back to the old system of silos and departmental priorities.

The original ethos of the Carnegie UK work in Northern Ireland was to explore whether wellbeing provided a strong enough narrative to provide a space for policy development that was above the day-to-day reality of a mandatory coalition. While clearly this has not emerged in the period of instability from 2016 to 2021, we believe it still remains the right path for Northern Ireland.

Throughout this project we have sought not only to provide information in real time to Community Planning Partnerships to support their work, but also to the wider policy community. We have tested and reflected with others on what the best next steps are for wellbeing in Northern Ireland. In none of these conversations did anyone, at any point, advocate abandoning the wellbeing approach. Instead, the message was of a job left incomplete that needed to be picked up as a matter of urgency.

## 1. Re-commit to the Wellbeing Approach

Political support is key to ensuring the long-term change which community planning seeks to achieve over the course of a generation. This requires commitment, maturity and understanding from politicians in local and central government to ensure those charged with delivering community planning have the support and resources to do so.

The development of the new Programme for Government is an opportunity to articulate the golden thread between the New Decade, New Approach Agreement, the Programme for Government and Community Plans, and wider global commitments, such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals, to deliver wellbeing outcomes.

### Recommendation 14

**All Northern Ireland Executive Ministers should demonstrate collective leadership in ensuring the delivery of the wellbeing approach.**



## 2. Host a Full Citizens' Assembly on Collective Wellbeing in a Post-COVID-19 Society

To transform decision making and address inequality, it is important that the engagement strategy enables all citizens of Northern Ireland to feel their voices and opinions are recognised, heard and valued. For this to be achieved, the public needs to see these reflected in the Programme for Government. We recommend that the Executive hosts a full public conversation on societal wellbeing in a post-COVID-19 society, as an initial step. This could include a Citizens Assembly on the indicators and outcomes in the framework. Any initial engagement should be followed up with a longer-term strategy for ongoing engagement about collective wellbeing.



### Recommendation 15

**The Northern Ireland Executive should hold a Citizens' Assembly on collective wellbeing in a post-COVID-19 society and build a strategy for ongoing public engagement in the framework and recovery.**

## 3. Legislate to Protect the Wellbeing of Current and Future Generations

The outcomes approach currently sits in the Programme for Government policy processes. From our international experience, we know that the Northern Ireland Executive is unique in locating the framework solely in this planning document, creating confusion about its status.

A statutory basis would elevate the outcomes approach from being one of many initiatives to becoming a framework for all aspects of governance in Northern Ireland. Enshrining an approach which improves wellbeing in law would safeguard it against further interruptions in governance and electoral cycles.



### Recommendation 16

**The Northern Ireland Executive should legislate, as a matter of urgency, to protect the wellbeing of future and current generations by placing the wellbeing outcomes and indicators on a statutory footing.**

## 4. Legislate for a Duty to Co-operate

Carnegie UK's project work has highlighted that there are varying levels of commitment to community planning as a policy vehicle by statutory partners and government departments, which raises wider concerns about collaborating for outcomes in the Programme for Government.

Attendees at the Embedding Wellbeing in Northern Ireland Co-production Symposium identified a legislative framework, similar to the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, which strengthened the legitimacy of partnership working with politicians, civil servants and communities, as a priority for improving the implementation of community planning and the outcomes-based approach. This already exists for children's authorities in Northern Ireland under the Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 which could be extended to maximise impact.



### Recommendation 17

**The Northern Ireland Executive should introduce a Duty to Co-operate for services for the whole population, requiring departments, agencies and councils to work together to improve social, economic, environmental and democratic wellbeing outcomes.**

## 5. Build a Multi-sectoral Leadership Community to Deepen Wellbeing Practice

The lack of cross-sectoral knowledge exchange that we identified at local level is replicated for Northern Ireland as a whole. Our conversations confirmed that there is no clear space for leaders (broadly defined) to come together and talk about social progress and the barriers to improvement.



### Recommendation 18

**The First Minister and Deputy First Minister should launch and fund a multi-sectoral leadership forum that brings people together across sectoral groupings and professional boundaries to explore how partners work collaboratively to improve wellbeing.**

# Endnotes – Reflections from the Carnegie UK Team

The Embedding Wellbeing in Northern Ireland programme was conceived in the midst of two connected crises – the Brexit vote in 2016 and the collapse of the Assembly in 2017. It continued in the face of a third unprecedented crisis, the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Each of these three upheavals hit local government, and community planning, hard. Each of them required new knowledge to be generated, stretched already strained resources and took a personal toll on those working to improve lives in their communities.

And so our final reflections are not on the structures and processes of policy making. We have said enough about those. Our endnotes are about relationships. The relationships between the community planning officers at the heart of this project deepened as the requirements of the job changed around them. The relationships between local government officers and community groups and citizens shifted as they all came together to do what they could in the face of unprecedented need.

As each of these relationships was tested, it was strengthened, and helped to build what some people call resilience. That each of our project partners was able to rise to the challenges of shared leadership and co-production within such a difficult era is testament to their commitment and skill as public servants.

Other relationships did not come together. There are fundamental power differentials between the centre and the local in Northern Ireland. Our view is that the days of command and control are over. The current and next leadership in Northern Ireland should look to local Community Planning Partnerships for guidance on how to work together, for the collective wellbeing of all their people.

**Table 1: Advisory Group**

Name	Organisation
Aideen McGinley (Chair)	Trustee, Carnegie UK
Colm Bradley	Director, Community Places
Paul Braithwaite	Programme Leader, Building Change Trust
Siobhan Carey/ Tracey Power	Chief Executive, Northern Ireland Statistics Agency
Nicola Creagh	Department for Communities, Northern Ireland Executive ( <i>Oct 2018 to Nov 2020</i> )
Kieran Donnelly	Comptroller and Audit General, Northern Ireland Audit Office
Katrina Godfrey	Director of the Programme for Government and Executive Support, Northern Ireland Executive ( <i>until September 2018</i> )
Sorcha Hassay	Department for Communities ( <i>from March 2021</i> )
Nancy Hey	Director, What Works Wellbeing
Helen Johnston	Senior Policy Analyst, National Economic and Social Council
Brenda Kent	Independent consultant
Derek McCallan	Chief Executive, Northern Ireland Local Government Association
Majella McCloskey	Senior Manager, Centre for Effective Services
Pamela McCreedy	Local Government Auditor, Northern Ireland Audit Office ( <i>until April 2021</i> )
Joanne McDowell	Northern Ireland Director, Big Lottery Fund Northern Ireland
Dawn Snape	Assistant Director, Wellbeing, Inequalities, Sustainability and Environment (WISE) Division, Office for National Statistics
Jennifer Wallace	Head of Policy, Carnegie UK
Louise Warde-Hunter	Deputy Secretary, Department for Communities, Northern Ireland Executive ( <i>until February 2020</i> )



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