

## Response to Scottish Parliament Finance and Public Administration Committee Consultation – Scottish Government Review of National Outcomes

June 2024

Carnegie UK has a longstanding interest in the National Outcomes and the National Performance Framework. We believe that they can and should be used as a key tool to put wellbeing at the centre of policy making in Scotland to improve the lives of current and future generations. However, in order to make this a reality, there is a series of key steps which still needs to be taken.

### What are your views of this updated purpose for the National Performance Framework?

We strongly welcome the proposed updated purpose: **'To improve the wellbeing of people living in Scotland now and in the future'**, and are pleased to see this progress, framing the NPF as Scotland's wellbeing framework. This effectively captures the spirit and intentions behind the National Outcomes and brings it closer into line with international comparators. However, the change in purpose alone is not enough. We do not believe that the outcomes framework as it is currently being used is sufficient to deliver this vision.

We are disappointed with the decision to retain the 'National Performance Framework' title because we do not feel it is clear or engaging. It reflects the framework's origins as an internal document, primarily for the use of policy makers. It does not indicate a framework owned by the people of Scotland or assist with the communication of the vision to those outside the public service network. We do not share the concerns listed by the Scottish Government around the potential negative impact of a change of name; effective internal communications could easily ensure that public bodies were aware of the change, and there are significant gains to be made in adopting a name which is not only externally engaging but is also a more accurate description of the actual purpose of the Framework. We have previously recommended a change of name to 'Scotland's Wellbeing Framework' and continue to recommend that this change is made.<sup>1</sup>

### What are your views on the Scottish Government's consultation on the proposed National Outcomes?

We believe it is incumbent on the Scottish Government to undertake meaningful and proactive citizen engagement around the National Outcomes as part of the statutory review process. Public consultation should be used to ensure the National Outcomes fully and transparently reflect the priorities of the people of Scotland and ensure collective ownership. (Oxfam

<sup>1</sup> [https://d1ssu070pg2v9i.cloudfront.net/pex/pex\\_carnegie2021/2023/05/06112133/Review-of-National-Outcomes-Call-for-Evidence.pdf](https://d1ssu070pg2v9i.cloudfront.net/pex/pex_carnegie2021/2023/05/06112133/Review-of-National-Outcomes-Call-for-Evidence.pdf)

Scotland 2024). Our recent Engaging Democracy research highlights the positive impact that engagement in decision making can have on democratic wellbeing, and further highlights proper accountability, clarity and transparency, and ongoing involvement and sharing of information with participants as key tenets. The format of the 2023 consultation was not designed to engage a wide cross-section of the people of Scotland, and deep, purposeful engagement with citizens was not a priority within the National Outcomes review process. Inevitably, this meant that many of those traditionally furthest from the policy process did not have an opportunity to contribute.

## To what extent do the proposed National Outcomes support joined-up policy making in Scotland?

Although the outcomes as conceived were intended to support joined up working across Scottish public services and civic society, we are not yet seeing a consistent, comprehensive and effective outcomes-based approach in practice. Deep-seated protectionist behaviours and narrow incentives continue to dominate and must be challenged and replaced. Accountabilities must go beyond single services or organisations. Success will require a 'big tent' approach of genuine mutual respect and trust between spheres and tiers of government in Scotland. In order to fulfil the vision of this framework, it will be necessary to find ways of spanning organisational, financial and political boundaries.<sup>2</sup>

The sheer number of National Outcomes does not aid coherence; we note that in Wales the wellbeing framework consists of seven wellbeing goals, or outcomes, which are significantly easier to communicate, remember and therefore embed.

We believe that the National Outcomes should be embedded in new legislation: a Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill, as is currently being consulted on by the Scottish Government. This has potential to drive better joined up policy making in Scotland 'by transforming the National Performance Framework into the golden thread of Scottish policy'.<sup>3</sup>

The National Outcomes come with legal duties for public bodies to "have regard for" the outcomes in carrying out their functions. However, experience has shown that the existing duties are too weak to establish the National Outcomes as key drivers of decision making; they are currently not based on a strong participatory process, and accountability for compliance with the framework is weak or non-existent. Some duties are also not streamlined with others, creating a complicated, and sometimes contradictory, landscape of duties for public bodies. A key goal of the proposed Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill is to strengthen and streamline duties to promote the National Outcomes and to ensure that the outcomes are developed in a more democratic way.<sup>4</sup>

2 <https://www.heraldscotland.com/politics/viewpoint/24319473.national-outcomes-review-gives-john-swinney-tool-govern/>

3 <https://www.weallscotland.org/post/over-150-campaigners-call-on-scottish-government-to-pass-world-leading-legislation>

4 [https://d1ssu070pg2v9j.cloudfront.net/pex/carnegie\\_uk\\_trust/2024/02/05114119/Guidance-for-responding-to-the-Wellbeing-and-Sustainable-Development-Bill.pdf](https://d1ssu070pg2v9j.cloudfront.net/pex/carnegie_uk_trust/2024/02/05114119/Guidance-for-responding-to-the-Wellbeing-and-Sustainable-Development-Bill.pdf)

## What should the implementation plan contain to make sure that the National Outcomes are used in decision-making?

Setting outcomes and duties on their own is not enough. To achieve collective wellbeing in a way that is sustainable requires a future generations approach and different ways of working for public bodies. They need to learn to work in a way that is based on long-term thinking, that is collaborative and reaches across silos, that can effectively resolve trade-offs and deal with complexity, and that considers impacts both local and global. Investment in good working relationships and mutual understanding remains important, but this must be accompanied by effective alignment of harder-edged incentives; accountabilities; processes and systems with the outcomes. Otherwise, the wellbeing framework will continue to be effectively adjacent to the design and delivery of policy and public services, rather than fundamental to them.

This should be the focus of the implementation plan, with an emphasis on areas where insufficient progress has been made since the Framework was first introduced in 2007.

However, we remain of the view that without improved legislative underpinnings and associated accountabilities, an implementation plan alone is unlikely to be effective.

Ways of working (which could be those articulated in the Christie Commission: power, prevention, partnership and performance) should be given a statutory basis and accompanied with more comprehensive support, training and toolkits for implementation.<sup>5</sup> We believe that the current proposal to introduce a Future Generations Commissioner could challenge the behaviours, cultures, and perverse incentives that are currently barriers to the success of a wellbeing approach. This role could also support delivery of the aforementioned training, development and support (as well as scrutiny) that would be needed to truly embed these ways of working.<sup>6</sup>

There remains great unharnessed potential in an outcomes-led approach in Scotland. Done well, this could be used to improve the wellbeing of Scotland's people now and in the future. It is important that the Scottish Government now takes the range of steps necessary to make this a reality.

5 [https://d1ssu070pg2v9j.cloudfront.net/pex/carnegie\\_uk\\_trust/2024/02/05114119/Guidance-for-responding-to-the-Wellbeing-and-Sustainable-Development-Bill.pdf](https://d1ssu070pg2v9j.cloudfront.net/pex/carnegie_uk_trust/2024/02/05114119/Guidance-for-responding-to-the-Wellbeing-and-Sustainable-Development-Bill.pdf)

6 <https://carnegieuktrust.org.uk/blog-posts/should-scotland-establish-an-independent-commissioner-for-future-generations/>