

Review of National Outcomes: call for evidence

June 2023

About Carnegie UK

At Carnegie UK, our mission is to improve collective wellbeing. We do this by working with partners across the UK and Ireland to tackle threats to wellbeing and to grow support for a wellbeing approach to decision making.

Carnegie UK has a long-standing research and policy interest in outcomes-based 'wellbeing frameworks'. In Scotland, we have been supportive of the National Outcomes and the National Performance Framework. For more than ten years we have hosted roundtables, conducted research, and advocated for the framework publicly. More recently, we have submitted evidence to the Finance and Public Audit Committee in inquiries on the [National Performance Framework](#) and on [effective government decision making](#); to Sarah Boyack MSP's draft members bill on [Wellbeing and Sustainable Development](#); and we have published our briefing, [Five steps to put wellbeing at the centre of policymaking in Scotland](#).

In each of these, we have made the case for transforming the National Performance Framework into Scotland's Wellbeing Framework. We believe that it can be used as a tool to put wellbeing at the centre of policy making, and through this to improve the lives of current and future generations.

Our response to the current Review of National Outcomes builds on the evidence cited above and covers the following areas:

1. The National Outcomes
2. The National Indicators
3. Using the National Outcomes
4. A national conversation

1. The National Outcomes

Are there any changes to the current set of 11 National Outcomes that you would propose? If so, in summary, what would these be?

Carnegie UK believes that revisions to the National Outcomes should only happen as a result of meaningful citizen engagement. In 2016-2017, in collaboration with Carnegie UK and Oxfam Scotland, the Scottish Government asked citizens [What Sort Of Scotland Do You Want To Live In?](#) A series of discussion groups and street stalls were held, which informed the development of the current 11 National Outcomes. This process constituted a basic level of citizen engagement. Now more than six years later, in the absence of efforts to engage people in a conversation about the sort of Scotland they want to see, we do not propose significant changes to the current set of National Outcomes (barring the one addition we recommend below).

The current set of National Outcomes provides a holistic vision for national wellbeing that is comparable and consistent with other regional and international outcomes frameworks (see, for example, the Future Generations Act, the North of Tyne Wellbeing Framework). To a greater or lesser extent, it covers the social, economic, environmental and democratic outcomes that we all need to live a good life. While there are areas for improvement, the real challenge is not the content of the National Outcomes but their implementation as a decision-making tool. Therefore, our recommendation to this Review would be to focus its efforts on how government will ensure the effective use of implementation of Scotland's National Outcomes over the next five years (we discuss this in more detail later in our response).

As part of a renewed focus on implementation of the outcome-based approach, we would reiterate our calls to rename the framework. The National Outcomes have a statutory basis, which is obscured by subsuming them within a broader non-statutory performance framework. The National Performance Framework language does not resonate with citizens, nor does it suggest an aspirational, outcome-based approach. Changing the title from the National Performance Framework to one that better reflects the ambition of the approach would provide a clearer articulation of what the National Outcomes should do for the people of Scotland and have greater relevance to citizens.

The other repeated challenge raised with us by stakeholders within the public sector and third sector is the number of National Outcomes. In our experience, very few people, including those close to the framework, can accurately remember all 11. A reorganising under more memorable language may be beneficial in implementation. In our work, we use four broad domains of wellbeing Social, Economic, Environmental and Democratic. We recommend Scottish Government consider revisiting the goals approach from the 2007 iteration (Smarter, Healthier, Greener, Wealthier, Safer, Stronger) or making a direct connection with the UN approach through summary language such as People, Planet, Prosperity and Place.

Are there new National Outcomes that should be included in the National Performance Framework, if so why should they be included?

In the absence of a more fundamental rethink of the National Outcomes, Carnegie UK supports Oxfam Scotland's campaign, [A Scotland that Cares](#). As a signatory, we join a broad coalition of individuals and organisations in calling for a new, dedicated National Outcome focused on care and carers in Scotland to end the invisibility of care in the National Outcomes.

Our 2016-17 engagement with communities (What Sort of Scotland Do You Want To Live In?) found significant concern about care and support for those who need it, but this did not translate into a National Outcome at that time.

We recognise that care, in all its forms, is a critical issue for wellbeing, and is currently absent in Scotland's National Outcomes. Everyone needs care at some point in their life: as a child, in older age, or due to ill health or disability. Our collective wellbeing depends on the wellbeing of our carers, the people they love and care for, and the communities they live in. It is therefore vital that Scotland values and invests in care, and the introduction of a new National Outcome is an important step towards doing that.

In terms of making space for a new outcome, we would note that some of the National Outcomes, are not actually population outcomes (for example, economy, international and human rights) and seem to have been selected to fit service and directorate interests rather than a focus on outcomes for citizens.

2. The National Indicators

Are there any changes you would propose to the wider National Performance Framework or set of National Indicators?

Our overall comment relates to what the National Indicators are. The National Indicators should be population indicators that show whether life in Scotland is improving or not, rather than performance indicators, which are used to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of specific services. Performance indicators for directorates and services should exist at the level below the National Indicators (and of course these do exist for many directorates and services). The merging within the National Indicators is a further example of confusion about what the NPF is for. In particular, we question the value of the following indicators, all of which measure **processes** and **inputs** that relate to broader outcomes for citizens:

- Quality of children's services, public services, GPs
- Community ownership
- Growth in the cultural economy
- Scotland's Population
- People working in arts and culture
- International exporting
- Engagement in extra-curricular activities
- Skill shortage vacancies
- The number of businesses
- High growth businesses
- Innovative businesses
- Physical Activity
- Journeys by active travel
- Access to superfast broadband
- Spend on research and development
- Entrepreneurial Activity

We would like to make three further points in relation to the National Indicators.

1. Within the National Indicators there are significant data gaps and data lags. For 13 of the 81 indicators performance is to be confirmed (including loneliness and the quality of public services) and a further 6 indicators are still in development and so there is no data. Even where data exists, some is not current. For example, the most recent data on issues as diverse as social capital, workplace learning and Scotland's carbon footprint goes back to 2020 or earlier. The quality of the current data set presents real challenges for decision makers trying to use it to set wellbeing priorities and appraise policy interventions.
2. Through our work on indexing wellbeing, we are aware that many indicators of wellbeing measure similar phenomena. In our own work, we use factor analysis to identify indicators which are not adding to our understanding of the domain of wellbeing. We would recommend that the Scottish Government carries out a statistical analysis on the National Indicators to explore which provide most insight into the National Outcomes.
3. As we wrote in our report on the Scottish Approach to Evidence and in oral and written evidence to the Finance and Public Audit Committee, there is a need to change the way that we gather and understand data. This includes going beyond simply evaluating public services to understanding the outcomes and experiences for citizens and communities. It also includes paying greater attention to dimensions of inequality, recognising that population level data sets often ignore the experiences of marginalised groups. Both of these drivers would require blending the existing national indicators with a much greater emphasis on coproduced and qualitative evidence in order to truly understand progress towards delivering National Outcomes.

We recommend that the Scottish Government consult on the criteria for inclusion in the National Indicator set and that this includes that data be timely, adds new insight, be relevant to citizens and be outcome focused.

3. Using the National Outcomes

What are the main obstacles and barriers in the further implementation of the National Outcomes?

The 'implementation gap' in relation to the National Outcomes has been well documented, most recently in the Finance and Public Audit Committee's report, [Ambitions into Action](#). Our experience is that the National Outcomes are often referred to in reporting post hoc, rather than being used to inform and direct decision making in the first place.

Carnegie UK would like to see Scottish Government using the Review of National Outcomes as an opportunity to really embed the National Outcomes as a decision-making tool across government. There are a number of ways that we believe they could do this, which we outlined in [Five steps to put wellbeing at the centre of policy making in Scotland](#) and subsequent written evidence. Some of these are things that can be addressed in this Review, and others through alignment with proposed Wellbeing and Sustainable Development legislation.

First, one significant barrier to implementation is the lack of guidance that clarifies how public bodies should use the National Outcomes to guide decision making, in the context of a myriad of other policy frameworks. While there are some areas where the National Outcomes are

more visibly embedded, there are many places where other statutory duties or non-legislative frameworks are seen to take precedence.

Other countries in the wellbeing movement have used legislation to bring forward statutory guidance that supports public bodies to embed a wellbeing approach into systems and processes. Examples include updating public finance manuals in order to allow public bodies to align spending to wellbeing priorities; and introducing statutory “ways of working” that hold public bodies accountable to principles such as prevention, integration and long-termism. Our long-standing view is that the National Outcomes need to be accompanied by clear guidance that gives public bodies the tools to use wellbeing data to identify priorities, allocate budgets and appraise outcomes. Moreover, there is an opportunity for Scotland to take forward a similar approach to that of the Future Generations Act, by formalising the Christie Commission principles into statutory guidance and holding public bodies to account on the ways in which they have sought to embed the ‘four Ps’ in the pursuit of a wellbeing approach (prevention, performance, public participation and partnership).

Secondly, it is evident that the existing duty in the [Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#), that public bodies must “have regard to the national outcomes”, has not been strong enough to deliver their ambition. There is a need, then, to strengthen duties and accountability mechanisms in order to further the implementation of the National Outcomes. At Carnegie UK, we have been advocating for the use of Wellbeing and Sustainable Development legislation to achieve this; and we have published our [support for Sarah Boyack MSP's private members' bill](#). The proposed duty to “promote sustainable development and wellbeing in policy development and implementation” is more positive and tangible than the existing duty. It would require public bodies to demonstrate what they are doing to contribute to Scotland's national outcomes, which can be measured locally and by national indicator data sets.

In addition, Carnegie UK supports proposals to use Wellbeing and Sustainable Development legislation to establish a Commissioner with statutory powers to support and scrutinise progress towards the National Outcomes. This follows the example of the Future Generations Commissioner in Wales, which has had a real impact in providing visibility and accountability to national ambitions towards wellbeing. Therefore, despite the obstacles to implementation which have been documented, there is an opportunity for Scotland to align the National Outcomes with forthcoming Wellbeing and Sustainable Development legislation in order to enhance the delivery of a national approach to collective wellbeing.

4. A national conversation

Finally, we have made several references in our response to the importance of citizen engagement. Carnegie UK's [wellbeing tests](#), which distil our core evidence on the conditions that enable collective wellbeing, foreground the importance of promoting dialogue between citizens and giving people voice and choice. Recently, in our work to develop a [Wellbeing Framework for the North of Tyne](#), we gained practical learning about the ways in which considered community engagement can enhance the quality, relevance and legitimacy of a wellbeing framework.

Given what we know about the importance of citizen engagement, we were disappointed that the Scottish Government has not done more to include and involve a wider range of voices in this Review of Scotland's National Outcomes. As a result, we are working with a coalition of

like-minded organisations to develop and test a model for citizen conversations, which we hope will demonstrate what is possible in future Reviews or indeed in informing upcoming legislation on Wellbeing and Sustainable Development.

We will submit a separate, collective response that details our learning from testing this model. However, we wanted to reiterate here our strong belief that the people of Scotland should have a say in what is included in their National Outcomes, and that the processes for this should have depth and breadth, and include a plurality of voices, particularly those who are furthest from the policy making process.