



A route map to an Enabling State



Sir John Elvidge

Foreword

The Carnegie UK Trust has been a supporter and advocate of community led initiatives and ‘bottom up’ approaches to decision making and development throughout our 100 year history. Whether it was our early support for rural community councils or more recently community ownership of land, our Trustees have long recognised the power of community led activity to transform wellbeing.

Enabling State

It has been increasingly apparent that traditional models of public service delivery can not solve our most complex social problems. In recent years we have seen policymakers and politicians take a growing interest in ‘bottom up’ ways of working that give citizens and communities more control. A new more responsive and engaged type of state is emerging which we have described as an ‘Enabling State’.

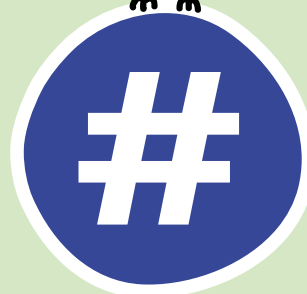
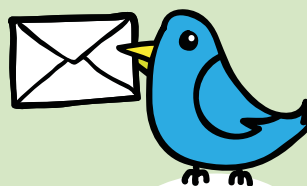
Progress, however is not linear. As our own research *The Rise of the Enabling State* shows, this shift is occurring in a piecemeal way, transformative language is being appropriated by those with vested interests and the narrative of the changing role of the state is at risk of being conflated with that of austerity and public service retrenchment.

Eight Steps

In this document Sir John Elvidge presents the Enabling State and sets out eight steps that governments can take to improve the wellbeing of all sections of our society, to support individuals and communities to achieve positive change and ensure that the most vulnerable people are not left behind.

We hope that this route map provokes ideas for you in your area of work. We welcome your thoughts, comments and feedback. Please get in touch with Jenny Brotchie, Policy Officer at jenny@carnegieuk.org or tweet [@CarnegieUKTrust](https://twitter.com/CarnegieUKTrust), [#enablingstate](https://twitter.com/enablingstate).

Martyn Evans
CEO, Carnegie UK Trust



Why change is required

In December 2012 we published *The Enabling State: A Discussion Paper*¹. It marked the first stage of the Trust's research into the changing relationship between the state, citizens and communities in the UK and Ireland.

This initial paper set out three basic propositions:

1 Our welfare state has largely served us well



2 ...but, it has failed the same, disadvantaged minority over and over again



3 This is not a problem of reduced resources (it predates the 2008 crisis)



And four further propositions were advanced:

1 The state is excellent at providing standardised services but, its ability to improve wellbeing in all circumstances is limited

2 Certain areas of our wellbeing can be best improved through our interactions with friends and family and through community activity

3 If we are to continue to improve wellbeing a fundamental rethinking of the state's relationship to citizens and communities is required

4 The state should continue providing the public services that it excels at. It must also take on a new role that of the 'Enabling State' empowering and supporting communities, individuals and families to play a more active role in improving their own wellbeing.



The limitations of the state in improving our wellbeing

Since publishing *The Enabling State: A Discussion Paper* we have had discussions in all parts of UK and Ireland about the ideas which the document was designed to test. We have also had discussions about the ideas with those from various other countries, from China to North America to both Northern and Southern Europe.

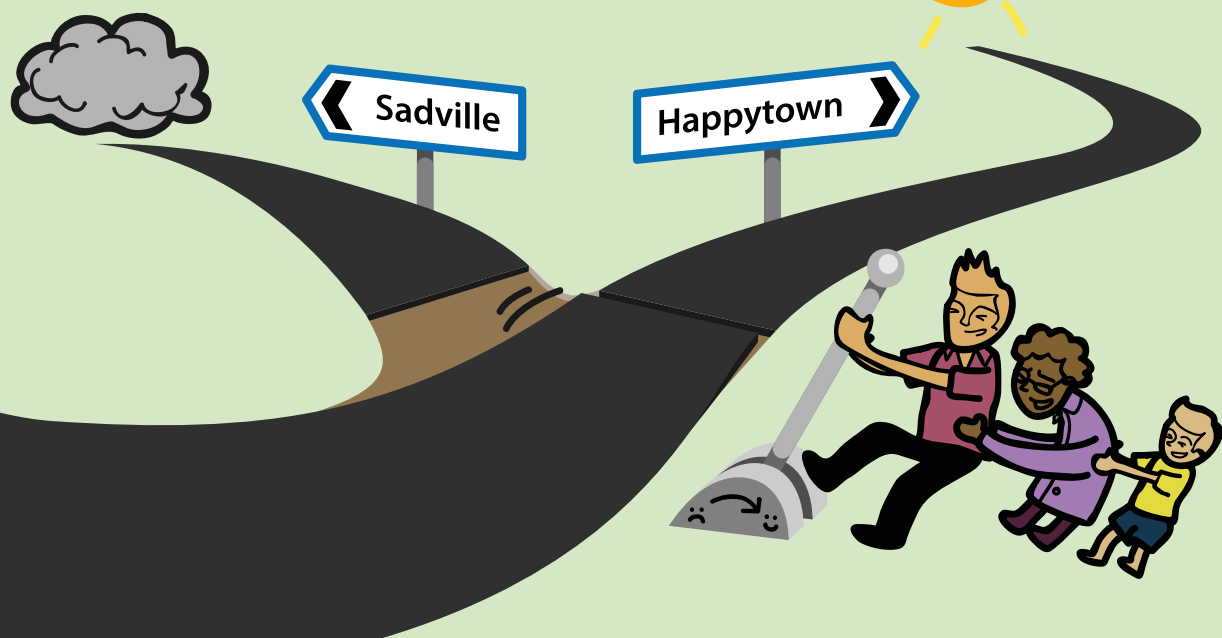
Here is what we believe we can say with confidence on the basis of a year and a half of talking to people and gathering from them insights from different places and practical examples of what is happening.

There is clear evidence that people wish to be in control of their own lives. There is also evidence that feeling in control is a factor in better physical and mental health. So it goes with the grain of both our individual and our collective interest to seek to maximise that control.

We are surrounded by examples of people making a success of the control they do have and taking decisions about their lives, and the lives of their families and communities, which extend that control.

Facilitating

Our health is the best example. The healthiest people, physically and mentally, are those who manage their own activity levels, eating and drinking and social activities most fully. People also derive great benefit from the support and advice of others, often those who understand particular health issues from direct personal experience. Day to day the state does most to help us by facilitating those behaviours, rather than by taking responsibility to itself.



Health is also the best example of the other dimension of the relationship between citizens and the state. At moments of acute need in relation to our health, the NHS is usually at its best; and it remains, for most people, the defining success of the post-war welfare reforms. No-one argues that we can fend for ourselves when we need life-saving surgery.

Families

Education has interesting similarities and differences. We know that the young people who emerge from the first 20 years of life best equipped for the remainder of their lives are those whose families have engaged most with their learning, in the widest sense. Stimulating their language skills by talking to them as babies and toddlers, engaging with them in play and developing their physical skills through activities, passing on social values and supporting the development of social skills are all part of what we commonly mean by 'good parenting'.

Encouraging

Those activities overlap with what we conventionally call education and the balance is struck in different places in the lives of different young people. Some families engage actively with encouraging more formal learning. Some teachers and other school staff find themselves seeking to fill gaps in parenting and socialisation. The interesting thing is that there is little disagreement which of those is better for the young person. Disagreement arises in the UK only over what are seen as extreme versions of the balance: home schooling or community-run schools. In some other countries, even those approaches would not be regarded as unusual or remarkable.



Something which health and education have in common is that goods and services which give us an extended sense of making choices which we control are increasingly provided commercially. We go to the chemist's shop and self-provide for a whole range of health purposes. We buy software with some educational benefit for children to use on home computers or mobile devices. How we spend our money is usually a strong clue about what we want more of. It tells us a lot more than we can deduce from our broad voting behaviours about the precise relationship we want between ourselves and the state. There are many, many times more variations in what individuals, families and communities want than there are political parties setting out manifestos to seek our votes.

It is one thing to know that the boundary between what we want to control ourselves and what we wish

the state to provide is moving, but it is another to map the boundary. A major gain from the past year and a half has been the help that people in various parts of the UK and Ireland have given us with identifying examples of what is happening.

Results

It reminded us about lots of activity which we take for granted as part of our social fabric, parents helping out with sports teams or other group activities or older people organising social clubs for themselves and their neighbours, but also gave us insights into people taking more control of other areas of community life, including communal ownership of land and buildings and such high-profile recent developments as food banks.

The common thread is that people believe that they can deliver better results than central or local government, or than a private sector or voluntary sector organisation working under contract to government. The power of the evidence is that often the results suggest that they have been right to believe that.



The rise of the Enabling State

This way of seeing the world crosses conventional party political boundaries. All the main parties have a long established thread of their political thought which is a recognisable version of these ideas, although they use different language from each other to express them. Similarly, it does not seem to us that the actions necessary to move forward imply an inclination towards one political party's thinking rather than that of another.

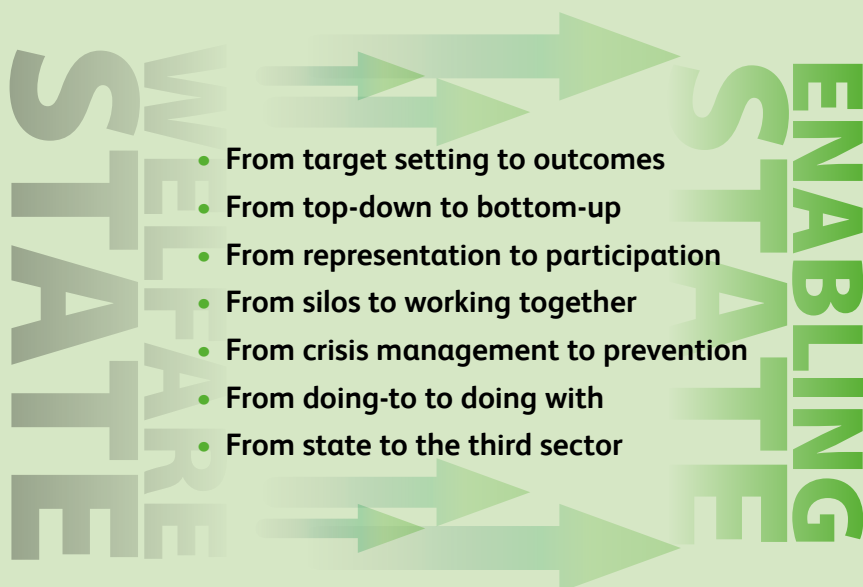
Policy Innovations

We have charted a common shift in thinking evident in each of the five jurisdictions of the UK and Ireland. In our policy and evidence review *The Rise of the Enabling State*² we identified seven policy innovations that encapsulate the move toward a more Enabling State:

- From target setting to outcomes
- From top-down to bottom-up
- From representation to participation
- From silos to working together
- From crisis management to prevention
- From doing-to to doing with
- From state to the third sector

And in *The Enabling State: From Rhetoric to Reality*³ we highlighted practical examples of public service approaches that give citizens and communities more opportunity to shape the services that they receive and greater control over their own wellbeing.

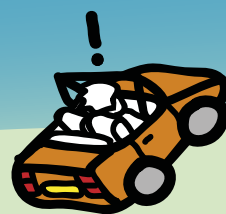
We have also seen from our international research with Wales Public Services 2025 *Weathering the Storm?* and from discussions with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) that this shift is not confined to the UK and Ireland. It is also occurring in other OECD countries.



A bright future?



**NEW
ROAD
LAYOUT**



The shift toward the enabling state has the potential to deliver a bright future in which the state successfully creates the conditions in which individuals and communities are equally able to take action to improve their own and others' lives. In this bright future we see improved outcomes for all sections of our society.

Risks

But all substantial change involves risks, even though not changing also risks failure to improve results.

Those risks may arise not from the intended change but from distortion of what is intended. That is certainly true

of the risk which comes first to the minds of a number of those we spoke to in the consultation – the risk that some might seek to use these ideas as a fig leaf to cover a desire to cut spending on public services despite the fact that we see a strong and effective public sector as a vital component of our proposals.

There are risks which do genuinely arise in pursuing the intended approach:

- **Unequal capacity to engage:** localism, the social economy and co-production rely on capacity within communities. There are inequalities in social capital within and between communities, even though some of the most impressive examples we have been able to identify have emerged in communities with high concentrations of disadvantage.
- **Implementation deficit disorder:** an Enabling State involves a difficult challenge for the public sector in changing approaches and developing new techniques and skill. Politicians and public sector managers have not always been able in practice to implement change successfully even though they are aware of the change which is needed.
- **Role of markets and the business sector:** the private sector is a participant in some of the choices which we already make about the extent to which we take control of aspects of our lives. Its future role is to some extent outside the public sector's ability to plan or control and developments in that may be challenging to adapt to.

For some we spoke to, the involvement of the private sector is, in principle, a source of suspicion or distrust. That is one example of aspects of the proposals where perceptions of risk depend partly upon differences in starting attitudes. One person's vibrant localism and responsiveness to different needs may be another's concern about 'postcode lottery'. One person's pluralism of sources of choice and support for citizens may be another's fragmentation of services and loss of accountability; your 'no-one is in charge' may be how you see my 'we have more choice and control in our own lives'.

This document is an attempt to move towards a brighter future by addressing the questions, which, in our discussions, were universally agreed to be the hard ones:

- “What would a society which believes that these ideas are right do in order to make them a stronger part of how we live?” ...and...
- “how can we mitigate some of the risks?”

The 8 steps to enabling wellbeing

We know that people can and do change the way things happen on their own initiative. We also know that the state can provide a powerful helping hand, often a hand that lets go rather than one which holds on.

In the eight steps below, we set out how we as a society can have more of a good thing, without placing at risk or disadvantage those who cannot or do not want to take more control of their own lives.

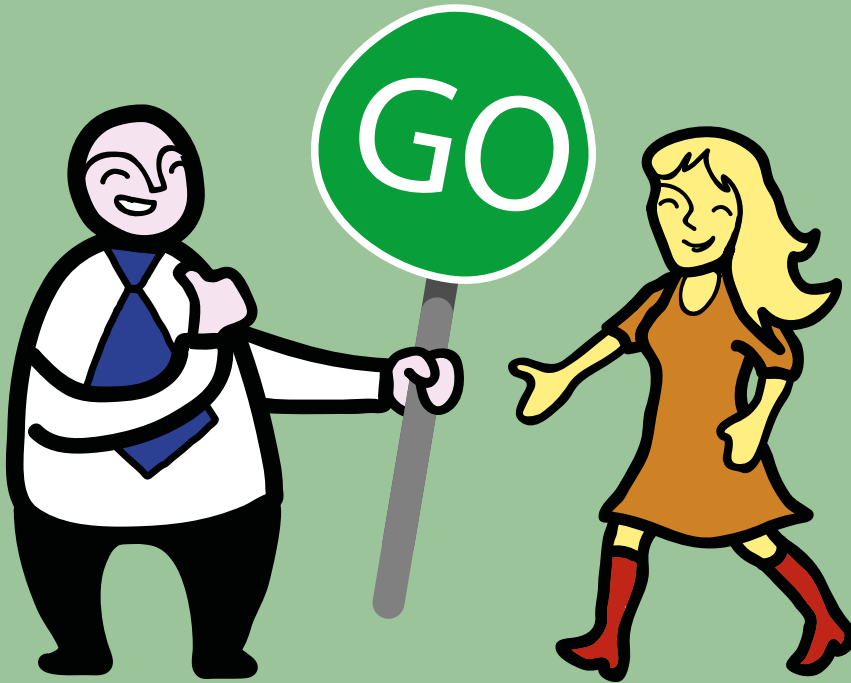
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Getting out of the way – The obvious first step, although not necessarily the easiest, is for government to stop doing those things which discourage or prevent individuals, families and communities from exercising control over their own lives or contributing to their shared wellbeing. One reason this is not straightforward is that current practice usually stems from benign motives.

EXAMPLE

In the Republic of Ireland, the state is stepping back from traditional approaches to care of people with mental health issues, dementia and disabilities within institutional settings. The change is being led by independent organisation **Genio**. Genio provides grants to help public and third sector organisations to start delivering support outwith the institutional setting. Training and support is available to professional staff and Genio is co-ordinating research and evaluation to build an evidence base for 'what works'.





2 Giving permission – We need to create a stronger presumption in favour of the benefits of control and engagement. This would have the double benefit of signalling clearly to people that government wishes to encourage their efforts to extend responsibility across more aspects of their lives and to engage supportively with others.

EXAMPLE

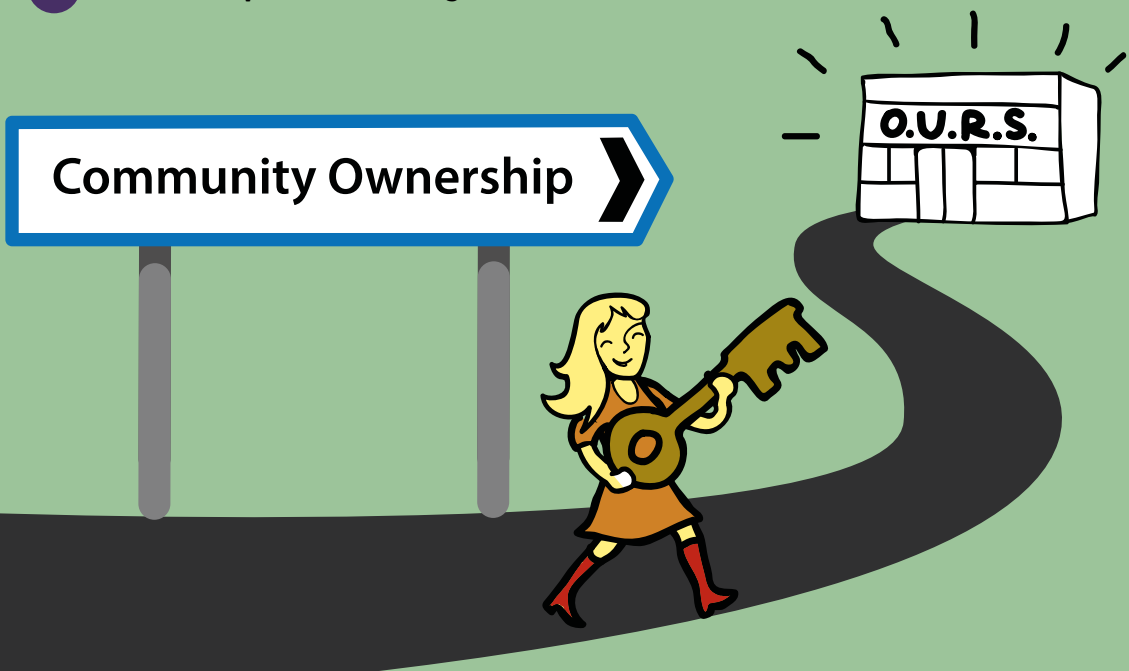
Young people in Torfaen face a number of challenges. Levels of deprivation in the area are higher than average⁴ and there are particular problems with homelessness and anti-social behaviour⁵. At Bron Afon Housing Association, local young people are being given the opportunity to make a difference to their local area. The **Bron Afon Youth Forum** is supported by a Housing Association officer but it is the young members who set the agenda. Concerned about peers who fall into homelessness, the forum has been instrumental in securing a new transitional housing unit designed to bridge the gap between the local homeless hostel and rented accommodation. Alongside this, the forum is delivering a number of activities designed to prevent homelessness including peer mentoring and teaching skills such as cooking on a budget.

3 Helping people to help each other – A further step is for government to facilitate mutual support within and between communities. Some of this can be as simple as helping to bring people together to share experiences, some of it might involve supporting charities or voluntary organisations to help foster that mutual support.

EXAMPLE

Often the state first comes into contact with vulnerable people when they fall into crisis. **The Local Area Co-ordination** approach in England aims to connect members of the community together to prevent vulnerable people from reaching that point. Local workers – known as Local Area Coordinators – work within the community to build networks of support. This might be as simple as combating isolation by connecting people to others with a shared interest, or helping them to get involved in a community activity. It could also involve working with a person's family and friends so that they are able to support them. Unlike traditional approaches the starting point is to identify with the individual what they can do to improve their own wellbeing and achieve their own aspirations with support from within their local community.





4 Giving people help to do more – Facilitating mutual support is one form of building capacity in individuals, families and communities, of both boosting their confidence in their ability and adding to that ability. Government also has scope to boost capacity by transferring assets to communities or giving them scope to acquire assets. Land and buildings are the most common forms of assets and our body of evidence about what is already happening includes many examples of the benefits which communities can create through control of the land around them or the houses in which they live.

EXAMPLE

In Scotland, the community ownership movement has been particularly successful. The Development Trusts Association Scotland estimates that 75,891 assets are owned by 2,718 community-controlled organisations in Scotland with an estimated combined value of just over £1.45 bn.

Half a million acres of land are now in **community ownership** in Scotland resulting in repopulation, new homes, new businesses and a new sense of confidence, energy and opportunity.

The Scottish Land Fund has provided communities with the financial means to buy land or assets and has helped provide equal access for all communities to financial capital to purchase land.

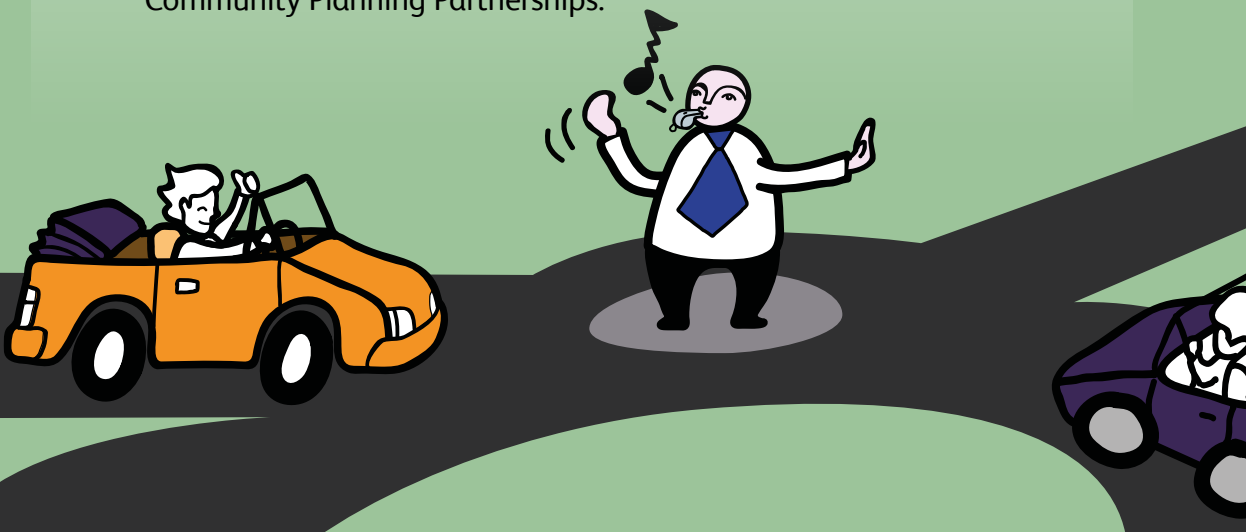
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Giving people rights – Legislative or financial frameworks which give communities the ability to acquire assets can make a valuable contribution, reinforcing permission and encouragement with a degree of certainty which people can rely upon in taking more ambitious steps.

EXAMPLE

In England and Wales, the **Localism Act 2011** contains a number of new rights and powers for communities. In Scotland, the forthcoming **Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill** offers a range of similar rights. Both contain provisions for a new Community Right to Buy allowing communities to register an interest in local assets of community value. In Scotland, this will be an extension of the Community Right to Buy, currently available to rural communities, under the 2003 Land Reform (Scotland) Act. There will also be new provisions that will make it easier for communities to take on ownership of public assets.

Both pieces of legislation also give communities new opportunities to get involved in shaping and running local services. In the Localism Act, the Community Right to Challenge gives community groups the right to express an interest in taking over the running of a local service and, provisions for Neighbourhood Planning and Community Right to Build give communities a greater say in the development of their local area. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill includes proposals to allow communities to make a participation request to be more involved in the delivery of a local service. Communities will also be engaged more closely in identifying and prioritising national and local outcomes as a result of new duties that will be placed on Ministers and Community Planning Partnerships.





6 Making enabling the ‘new normal’ – The presumption in favour of control and engagement should be built into new government policies, as a step on from removing older policy blockages to those ways of living our lives.

EXAMPLE

As our population ages finding effective ways to support an active and independent third age is increasingly important. When the social enterprise **Participle** set about designing a new service for older people their first port of call was to speak to older people themselves and find out what mattered to them. They told Participle that they wanted to stay socially connected and to contribute to the local community. The Circle Movement emerged. An online membership scheme, Circle connects local older people through monthly social events and offers access to practical help. Members also have the opportunity to volunteer their own time and energy.

7

Investing in disadvantaged communities – not everyone who wishes to play a more active role in improving their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of their local community has an equal opportunity to do so. Inequalities exist within and between communities in terms of access to financial resources and in softer resources such as education and social networks. To give everyone a fair chance to engage with a more enabling state additional support must be available for disadvantaged communities.

EXAMPLE

Hawkhill is a self-contained community in Alloa in Scotland. Problems of poor health, low levels of education, poverty and high levels of anti-social behaviour are major challenges. **The Violence Reduction Unit** and **NHS Clackmannanshire** are working together in a new way to support local people improve their confidence, skills and networks. The external staff bring vital connections to wider, social and professional networks, which are often missing in our most deprived areas, while the local community determines the agenda, leads activities and builds relationships with partners such as the local prison and supermarket.





8 A focus on wellbeing – A strategic focus on the environmental, social and economic outcomes that matter rather than process or input creates the conditions for a more holistic, flexible and preventative approach to public service delivery that is crucial to a more enabling approach.

EXAMPLE

The **National Performance Framework (NPF)** in Scotland sets out the Scottish Government's Purpose, five Strategic Objectives and 16 National Outcomes. Scotland Performs is a dashboard of 50 national indicators that tracks performance against the NPF. The NPF and Scotland Performs were introduced in 2007 and marked a move away from more traditional approaches to public sector performance management. The abolition of government departments at the same time meant that national government was united in the pursuit of shared national outcomes. The NPF also provides a link between national and local government with each local council and public sector partners (the Community Planning Partnership) working toward local Single Outcome Agreements. The Trust's own international research⁶ looking at public service reform in six small countries suggests that the outcomes approach supported by the NPF has helped Scotland achieve a more holistic approach to public service reform that was not evident in other small countries.

Alongside these changes to help those who want to have more control of and engagement in their communities and their family and individual lives, we need to ensure that support is there for those who do not or cannot make that choice. So those who work in the public sector, or those parts of the voluntary sector acting on behalf of the public sector, need to build on the best examples of being ready to provide help and support when it is needed.

This fits with much of the most positive thinking about improvement of public services – matching services better to our individual circumstances, treating the success of many public services as a shared effort between those providing them and those receiving them. Our goal should be better public services for those who need or want them, alongside more freedom for those who prefer to do more themselves.

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About the Author

Sir John Elvidge was Permanent Secretary of the Scottish Government from 2003 to 2010. He had previously worked in the Cabinet Office and the Scottish Office and works in an advisory role with several governments in Europe, China and North America. He is an Adjunct Professor at Shanghai Jiao Tong University and works with the University of Oxford on programmes for leadership and public policy for overseas governments. He retired in June 2010 and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and an Associate of the Institute for Government. His report Northern Exposure: Lessons from the first twelve years of devolved government in Scotland was published by the Institute for Government as part of its Inside Out series. Sir John was appointed as a Carnegie Fellow on the Enabling State project in the summer of 2012 and has led our work in this area. He became a Trustee of the Carnegie UK Trust in May 2014.

The Carnegie UK Trust works to improve the lives of people throughout the UK and Ireland, by changing minds through influencing policy, and by changing lives through innovative practice and partnership work. The Carnegie UK Trust was established by Scots-American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie in 1913.

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This report was written by Sir John Elvidge

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