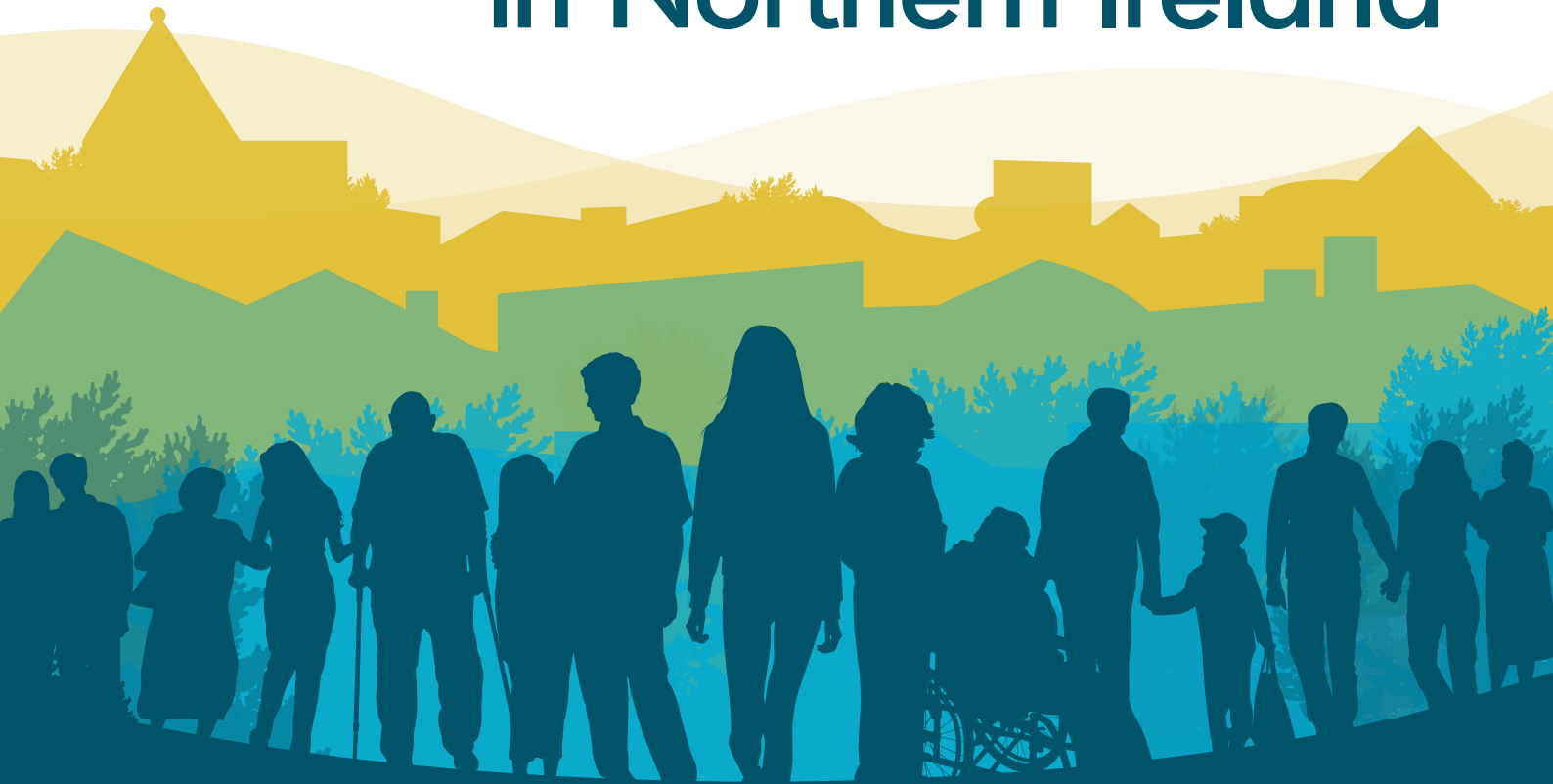




Embedding a Wellbeing Framework in Northern Ireland



A contribution from Carnegie UK Trust to inform discussions around the Programme for Government consultation

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Enabling Wellbeing

Thought leadership

Embedding Wellbeing
in Northern Ireland 2021




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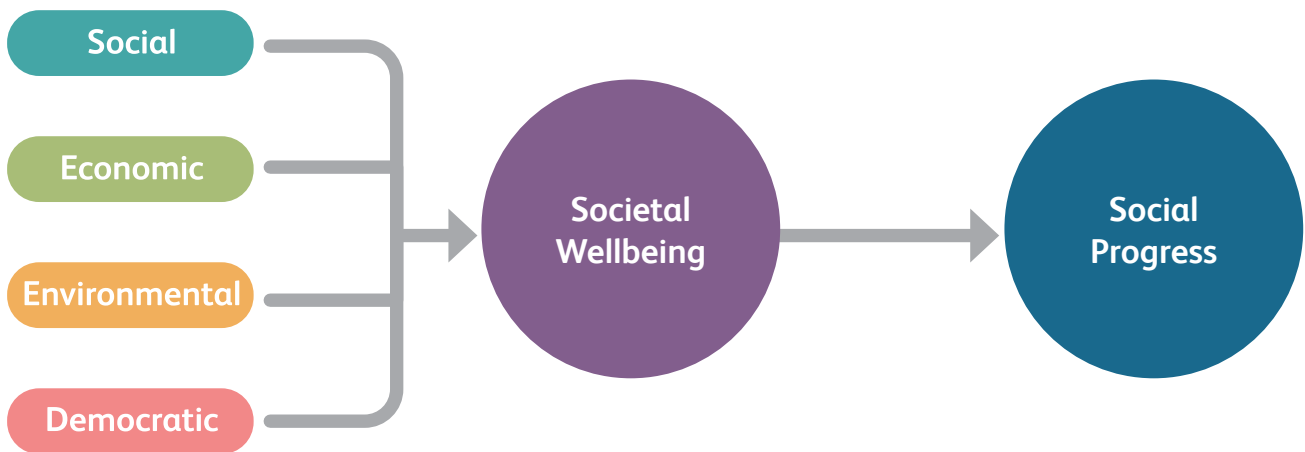
Background: Carnegie UK Trust's approach to wellbeing

The Carnegie UK Trust welcomes the focus on societal wellbeing in the Programme for Government 2021-2025. Our experience of working with partners in Northern Ireland for a number of years is that there is a real appetite and enthusiasm for approaches that build a whole-of-government approach between departments and agencies, and across tiers of government. This short paper highlights our knowledge about societal wellbeing and outlines the emerging findings and recommendations from our current work with the Community Planning Partnerships in the region.

Since 2011, the Trust has published international case studies of how governments and civil society organisations measure wellbeing in France, the USA, and Canada¹; made recommendations on next steps for the Scottish National Performance Framework²; produced guidance on wellbeing

frameworks for cities and regions³; and convened an international roundtable discussion on the successes and challenges of developing high-level strategies based on wellbeing and translating this into practice⁴. This expertise has led us to develop a framework for societal wellbeing that brings together the key outcomes required for a flourishing society.

We define societal wellbeing as comprising Social, Economic, Environmental, and Democratic (SEED) outcomes. To us, societal wellbeing means everyone having what they need to live well now and in the future. More than health and wealth, it includes having friends and loved ones, the ability to contribute meaningfully to society, and the ability to set our own direction and make choices about our own lives. A wellbeing approach to government balances SEED outcomes and provides



a

1 Carnegie UK Trust, 2012. *Shifting the Dial: From wellbeing measures to policy practice*. Available at: <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/shifting-the-dial-from-wellbeing-measures-to-policy-practice/>.
2 Carnegie UK Trust, 2013. *Shifting the Dial in Scotland: How Scotland performs on wellbeing and what it should do next*. Available at: <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/shifting-the-dial-in-scotland/>.

3 Carnegie UK Trust, 2016. *Sharpening our Focus: Guidance on wellbeing frameworks for cities and regions*. Available at: <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/sharpening-focus-guidance-wellbeing-frameworks-cities-regions/>.
4 Carnegie UK Trust, 2017. *From a shared vision to inclusive implementation: Innovation approaches to developing government frameworks on wellbeing*. Available at: <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/shared-vision-inclusive-implementation-innovation-approaches-developing-government-frameworks-wellbeing/>.

a mechanism for understanding interlinkages and making trade-offs between the different domains of wellbeing.

We were delighted that many of the recommendations from the Carnegie Roundtable on Measuring Wellbeing in Northern Ireland⁵ were adopted and implemented through the draft Programme for Government in 2016 and the subsequent Outcomes Delivery Plan. Since then, the Trust's Embedding Wellbeing in Northern Ireland project has provided financial and in-kind support to three Community Planning Partnerships to implement a wellbeing approach in their practice. We have been working in-depth in the following local authority areas: Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council; Derry City and Strabane District Council; and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, and have strengthened our strategic partnership with the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA), in regard to all councils and wider policy engagement.

The project has provided the Community Planning Partnerships with support on co-production and shared leadership, which were identified as ways of working that are key to the success of the Community Planning process; improving wellbeing outcomes; and strengthening the 'golden thread' between the tiers of government.

The project will conclude later in 2021. However, as the current consultation on the Programme for Government asks for innovative ideas and approaches to inform different ways of working, and seeks to see problems in a new light, we are putting our key learning points out in the public domain early. We are aware of good practice across all of the 11 Community Planning Partnerships and hope that our learning from this project can support the Northern Ireland Executive and its partners in the development and implementation of the new wellbeing framework.

5 Carnegie UK Trust, 2015. *Towards a Wellbeing Framework: Short Report*. Available at: <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/towards-a-wellbeing-framework-short-report/>.

6 ways of working

Based on the learning from our current project and our wider work on wellbeing and public sector reform, we have identified six ways of working that could help the Executive to shift from talking about a wellbeing approach, to delivering and embedding it in practice through the new Programme for Government.

The current context of the COVID-19 pandemic provides an opportunity for the Northern Ireland Executive to create and deliver a holistic approach which is informed by the learning from the collaborative response to the crisis between central government, local government and other partners. We have given examples of best practice locally, nationally, and internationally and support the commitment from the First and Deputy First Minister to harness the "emerging positives".

There is appetite for change amongst the public, whose perspectives should be recognised as an asset within this conversation.

1

Fully commit to an outcomes-based approach

2

Collaborating for outcomes

3

Budgeting for outcomes

4

Strengthening local wellbeing approaches

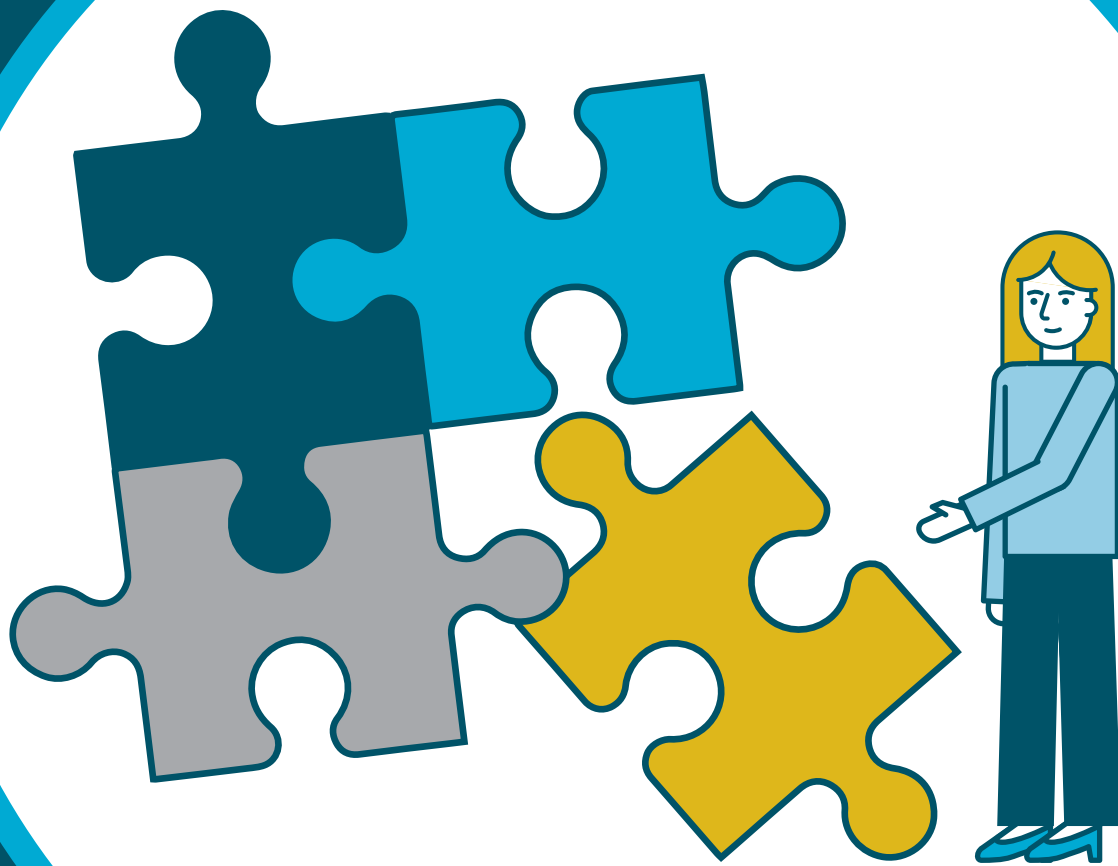
5

Data for outcomes

6

Citizen engagement and open government

1. Fully commit to an outcomes-based approach



Northern Ireland's journey towards a wellbeing outcomes approach has been intermittent. At this point in time, a strong indication of commitment to societal wellbeing as a whole of government approach is required.



RECOMMENDATION 1

Place the wellbeing outcomes approach on a statutory footing.

Legislation

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. During the three-year suspension of the Assembly and Executive, there was no agreed framework. This created difficulties as the extent to which regional or local government were expected to embrace a different way of working was not clear.

A statutory basis would elevate the outcomes approach from one of many initiatives to become a framework for all aspects of governance in Northern Ireland. Public organisations should have a duty to consider and make progress towards the outcomes, and the outcomes themselves should be subject to high-quality engagement and dialogue with citizens every four years (in line with the assembly session).

Enshrining an approach which improves wellbeing in law would safeguard it against further interruptions in governance and electoral cycles. This has been achieved in Scotland through the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and in Wales through the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. In addition, we believe it would add legitimacy to the actions of civil servants and improve collective accountability.



CASE STUDY

Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2014

In 2015, three months before the UN introduced the UN Sustainable Development Goals and following a consultation period known as the Wales We Want National Conversation⁶, Wales passed the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015⁷. The Act places a legislative duty on public bodies, such as local authorities, health boards, national libraries and museums, to put long-term sustainability at the heart of their approach, working collaboratively and utilising concepts such as prevention, integration, inclusivity and long-term, strategic thinking.

The introduction of the Act also saw the creation of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, currently Sophie Howe. The Commissioner works to protect the interests of the future generations and to support public bodies to progress on achieving the outcomes defined within the well-being goals. Local Well-Being plans also placed a duty on Public Service Boards to set objectives for local areas.

6 Sustain Wales, 2021. *The Wales We Want National Conversation*. Available at: <https://www.cynnalcyrmru.com/project/the-wales-we-want/>

7 Welsh Government, 2015. *Well-being of Future Generations Wales Act (2015): The Essentials*. Available at: <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/150623-guide-to-the-fg-act-en.pdf>.

Collective Leadership



RECOMMENDATION 2

Ministers should demonstrate collective leadership in ensuring the delivery of the wellbeing outcomes approach.

Collective, horizontal leadership is critical for the delivery of a wellbeing framework and outcomes-based approach; *by definition* it requires new approaches to administrative leadership and practice⁸. Throughout the Trust's work in Northern Ireland, the need for stronger collective leadership 'at the top' has been highlighted as an area for improvement. This leadership is required to strengthen joined up working horizontally between departments, and vertically with other tiers of government and public services. Community Planning Partnerships, required to work horizontally at a local authority level, themselves have experienced confusion about the lack of joined up thinking at a broader, regional level.

The Trust noted in the current consultation on the draft Budget⁹ that there is a lack of consistency in the way that the outcomes approach is

8 What Works Scotland, 2017. *Outcomes based approaches in public service reform*. Available at: <http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/OutcomeBasedApproachesinPublicServiceReform.pdf>.

9 Department of Finance, 2021. *Budget Consultation*. Available at: <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/consultations/budget-consultation>.

embedded in departmental approaches, with some departments identifying multiple outcomes, some identifying one outcome, and others failing to refer to the outcomes approach at all. Collective leadership, with the outcomes framework at the centre, would ensure that in future, all budget documentation is aligned to the outcomes.



CASE STUDY

The Partnership Panel

We welcomed the reconvening of the Partnership Panel¹⁰. The Panel provides a structured, political relationship between central and local government, creating opportunities for innovative working between Ministers and councillors. Importantly, it facilitates the formation of joint policies that will help to deliver the wellbeing outcomes in the Programme for Government. We would welcome an early commitment from the Partnership Panel towards the outcomes in the Programme for Government. An effective Partnership Panel would create the horizontal and vertical connections required to make the outcomes approach a success, and to enable others to see the 'golden thread' of the Northern Ireland outcomes approach.

10 Northern Ireland Executive, 2020. *Northern Ireland Minister Ní Chuilín to reconvene Partnership Panel*. Available at: <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/node/45725>.

2. Collaborating for outcomes



The outcomes-based approach required by Community Planning and the Programme for Government necessitate more joined up working at local and regional level. Given the extent of silo-based working in Northern Ireland, specific interventions are required to secure this change.



RECOMMENDATION 3

Legislate for a Duty to Co-operate requiring agencies and tiers of government to work together on Community Planning to maximise the impact and effectiveness of new and existing legislation. This should be extended to the delivery of all public services.

During the NICVA Draft PFG Outcomes Engagement event,¹¹ it was indicated that there will be dedicated ‘owners’ with responsibility for each of the nine outcome areas. In recognition that the outcomes are not mutually exclusive and are intrinsically linked, delivery of the wellbeing approach requires a more collaborative way of working between departments to achieve change.

11 NICVA, 2021. *Draft PFG Outcomes Framework Engagement Event*. Available at: <https://www.nicva.org/event/draft-pfg-outcomes-framework-engagement-event-registration-closed>.

Legislate for a Duty to Co-operate

The Trust’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.



GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES

There are good practice examples of a different way of working. For example, the Children’s Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015¹² includes a requirement for cooperation between children’s authorities and service providers to improve the well-being of children and young people. COVID-19 has shown us some signs of what is possible. For example, in response to COVID-19, town and city centre recovery programmes are currently operating across three Executive departments to support a ‘revitalisation programme¹³’. However, this should be the norm, not the exception.

12 Children’s Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2015/10/contents>.

13 Department for Communities, 2020. *Ministers provide a further £11.6m for town and city centre recovery*. Available at: <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/news/ministers-provide-further-ps116m-town-and-city-centre-recovery>.

Attendees at the Embedding Wellbeing in Northern Ireland Co-production Symposium¹⁴ 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.

As non-statutory bodies, the CVS sector would not be included in the duty to collaborate, except where they are providing public services under contract to a public body. Our experience is that the Community and Voluntary Sector are committed to involvement in design, as well as delivery, of public services, as demonstrated in their response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Partnership between the Department for Communities and councils, and among councils and community groups was seen in action during the initial phase of the pandemic and has also been recognised during wider emergency situations, demonstrating their important role¹⁵.

14 Community Places, 2019. *Embedding Wellbeing in Northern Ireland Report of Coproduction Symposium*. <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/embedding-wellbeing-in-northern-ireland-report-of-co-production-symposium/>

15 Department for Infrastructure, 2020. *Mallon praises community partnership in face of Storm Francis and urges caution as warnings remain in place*. <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/news/mallon-praises-community-partnership-face-storm-francis-and-urges-caution-warnings-remain-place>.



GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

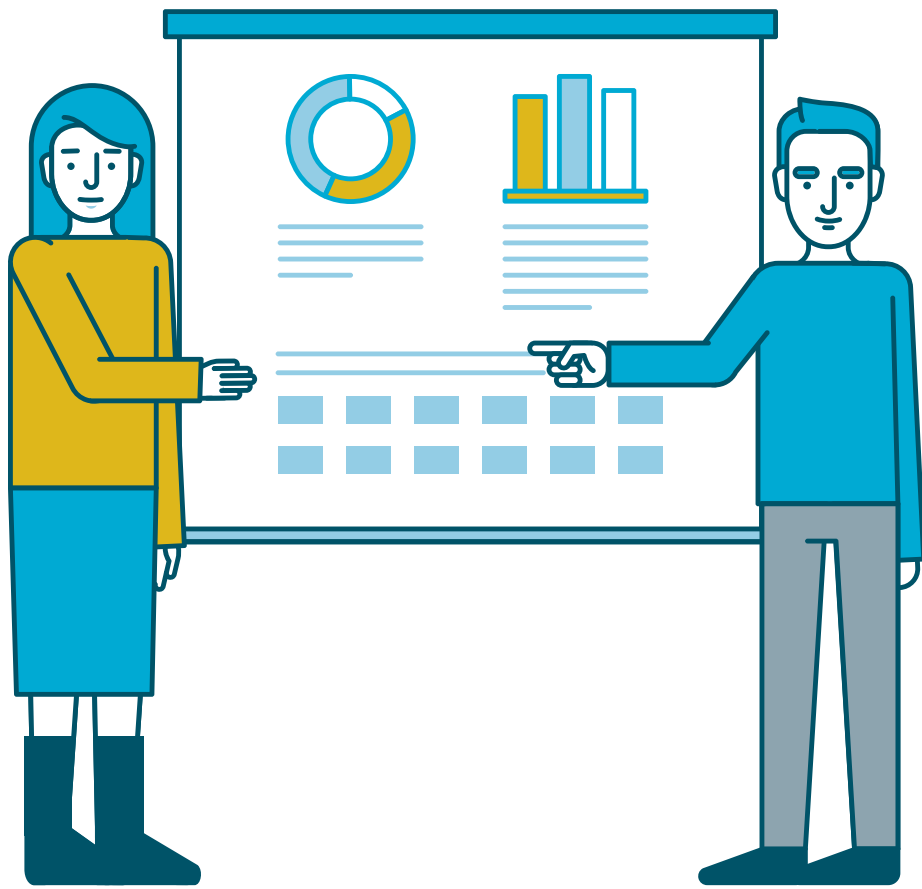
Lisburn and Castlereagh

Working to embed the approach of collaborative working, Lisburn and Castlereagh successfully developed a local project designed to improve speech, language and communication among children. The project involves cross-sectoral partnerships between statutory, voluntary and community agencies to improve outcomes for children, young people, and families. Action to improve speech and language among young people was considered important due to it being an indicator of educational achievement; behaviour; mental health; employability; criminality; and the cycle of disadvantage.

The project is aligned to Community Planning and the draft Programme for Government by undertaking a preventative approach. The difference Community Planning has made to the project was considered to be as below:

- It provided a platform to progress the project;
- It helped to establish a steering group of 26 members of community, voluntary, statutory and private partners, such as Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, the Public Health Agency/Health and Social Care Board, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, Surestart, libraries, schools, and churches;
- It facilitated a co-ordinated and consistent approach by a partnership of key stakeholders;
- It allowed a public health campaign, with 12 key, simple messages disseminated monthly; and
- It provided training opportunities.

3. Budgeting for outcomes



The budget is the mechanism through which the intentions of the Programme for Government are given form. As such, the connection between the wellbeing outcomes and the budget should be clear and transparent.



RECOMMENDATION 4

Align budgets with outcomes in the Programme for Government.

The development of the Programme for Government 2021-2025 provides an opportunity to establish – for the first time since the draft PfG was formed five years ago – the wellbeing vision of the Northern Ireland Executive. It is an opportune moment to synchronise the funding system of government with this ambition. In acknowledgement that no department can deliver wellbeing outcomes alone, budgets should be aligned with outcomes in the new Programme for Government.

Unlike traditional budget processes, outcome budgeting helps to make a clear link between spend and the agreed societal outcomes which the Government seeks to address. This could accompany the anticipated move to multi-year budgeting cycles, as outlined in the New Decade New Approach (NDNA) commitment. The current budgeting system does not allow for suspension of projects (e.g. suspension of capital projects, and injections of extra cash to respond to COVID-19, for example). The inability to carry from one year to the next means that Departments have struggled to spend money in some areas. A wellbeing budget helps identify areas where progress is stalling, or where particular groups are left behind. We recognise that this is a complex change to the financial system of the Executive and the currently siloed nature of departments¹⁶. However, global

¹⁶ Institute for Government, 2019. *Governing without Ministers: Northern Ireland since the fall of the power-sharing executive*. Available at: <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/governing-without-ministers-northern-ireland.pdf>



CASE STUDY

Community Crisis Intervention Service, Derry

Working to an outcomes-based approach without the necessary financial foundations to support implementation can lead to a failure of collective responsibility, and services critical to citizens' wellbeing falling between the policy planes, as the following case study examples demonstrates.

In a bid to improve challenging mental health outcomes in Derry City and Strabane, the Western Health and Social Care Trust; Health and Social Care Board/Public Health Authority; Derry City and Strabane District Council; Ulster University; and Foyle Search and Rescue, came together to develop a 24-hour crisis response service.

In the first six months of the Community Crisis Intervention Service, there were 141 interventions which generated approximately €230,000 in savings to the health service. Despite this, and the service contributing to outcomes such as 'We enjoy long, healthy, active lives' and 'We care for others and we help those in need' in the draft PfG, a lack of long-term, sustainable funding for the service has jeopardised its future.

Mental health continues to be considered as the exclusive responsibility of the Department for Health, despite being more broadly linked to social, environmental, economic and democratic wellbeing outcomes.

innovators such as the New Zealand Government and its development of a Wellbeing Budget¹⁷ and the Scottish Government's exploration of budgeting for children's wellbeing¹⁸ offer two examples from which the Executive could draw learning.

The experiences of those working in local government and their partners of collectively resourcing actions to achieve the outcomes in their Community Plans offers some useful learning for the implementation of the new Programme for Government. The relatively recent nature of Community Planning, along with limited financial infrastructure to pool budgets has meant that capacity to collectively resource activities has been limited. The Partnership structures to some extent reflect the complexities of the current financial system of the Executive, such as different decision-making and accountability arrangements, organisational cultures, and planning and performance systems.

However, there are examples of collective, relatively low resource and low risk, projects developed and financed by the Community Planning Partnerships since the launch of their plans in 2017¹⁹ that could be explored further. The Participatory Budgeting Fund developed in Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon offers one such example.

- 17 The New Zealand Treasury, 2020. *Wellbeing Budget 2020: Rebuilding together*. Available at: <https://www.treasury.govt.nz/publications/wellbeing-budget/wellbeing-budget-2020>.
- 18 Brock, Flemig, Trebeck & Wallace, 2020. *Children's wellbeing and the Scottish Budget*. Available at: <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/childrens-wellbeing-and-the-scottish-budget/>
- 19 Carnegie UK Trust, 2019. *Embedding Wellbeing in Northern Ireland: Peer to peer learning event on collective resourcing*. Available at: <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/embedding-wellbeing-in-northern-ireland-peer-to-peer-learning-event-on-collective-resourcing/>.



CASE STUDY

Tak£500 Participatory Budgeting Fund, Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon

The TAK£500 Participatory Budget Fund²⁰ created by Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Community Planning Partnership empowers residents to decide how public funds are used to address needs in their community. Communities were invited to submit ideas for projects based on the themes in the 'Take 5 Ways of Wellbeing'. The Fund offered resources of up to £500 per project, with members of the community deciding on the successful entries.

ABC's Participatory Budgeting working group has broad, cross-sectoral membership with 16 partner organisations pooling their resources and expertise to work towards shared outcomes. Ten Community Planning partners contributed to the Fund, totalling over £32K and funding over 66 projects designed to improve mental health and wellbeing outcomes.

- 20 Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, 2020. *Tak£500*. Available at: <https://www.armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk/take500/>.

4. Strengthening local wellbeing approaches



Many of the activities of government that impact on wellbeing are planned and delivered on a local basis yet further work is required to ensure all the levers are available to support Community Planning Partnerships in their place-making role.



RECOMMENDATION 5

Provide ring-fenced multi-year funding for Community Planning, to ensure the Partnerships' ability to deliver on improving local wellbeing outcomes both over the course of the current Plans and into 2030-2035, and to support the delivery of societal wellbeing outcomes in the Programme for Government.

The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 requires local government and its statutory partners to pioneer innovative new ways of delivering public services in Northern Ireland. Yet despite the need to execute new powers; to work within new partnership structures; and for new, professional skill sets to deliver new services, Community Planning **as a policy function** did not receive dedicated funding from the Northern Ireland Executive.

Consequently, small Community Planning teams have been developed to support Northern Ireland's 11 Community Planning Partnerships to improve community wellbeing outcomes in as far into the future as 2030 or 2035. In seeking to manage the improvement of outcomes over such a long period of time and extensive geographical area, some Partnerships have undertaken a locality planning approach to Community Planning²¹, resulting in a number of second tier plans for delivery in smaller areas, thus increasing workload. In some cases, a lack of dedicated funding has led to capacity issues to operationalise Community Planning and to take advantage of opportunities to innovate and extend activities which will improve local wellbeing outcomes.

21 Department for Communities, 2020. *Ministers provide a further £11.6m for town and city centre recovery*. Available at: <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/news/ministers-provide-further-ps116m-town-and-city-centre-recovery>.

In the absence of funding from the Executive, the financial implications of the Community Planning process have fallen to local government to absorb. The Trust's own programme, Embedding Wellbeing in Northern Ireland²², has provided essential funding for activities such as shared leadership training and community engagement. These are critical to the success of Community Planning Partnerships but the cost of such important, multi-agency programmes of activity should not be borne by one partner alone. The Trust's programme has highlighted the capabilities of local government as delivery agents of change when they are adequately resourced. The financial pressure Northern Ireland's councils face due to the COVID-19 pandemic is severe²³. While the support the Executive has provided to local authorities to respond to and recover from the COVID-19 crisis²⁴ 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, requires greater stability of financial support. The Programme for Government, and the review of Community Plans in 2021, both present an opportunity for the Executive to reaffirm the legitimacies of different actors, and their role in improving wellbeing outcomes at different tiers of government. This will ensure that they are resourced to deliver.

22 Carnegie UK Trust, 2019. *Embedding Wellbeing in Northern Ireland*. Available at: <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/project/embedding-wellbeing-in-northern-ireland/>.

23 News Letter, 2020. *NI Councils facing 'probable' collapse as pandemic wreaks financial chaos*. Available at: <https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/politics/ni-councils-facing-probable-collapse-pandemic-wreaks-financial-chaos-2843793>.

24 Department for Communities, 2020. *Ni Chuilin Welcomes further funding for councils*. Available at: <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/news/ni-chuilin-welcomes-further-funding-councils>.



RECOMMENDATION 6

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

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

for an 'Augmentation Review' following the establishment of the 11 new local authorities and the consolidation of their services. However, following local government reform, no such review has yet taken place, partly due to the incomplete nature of the reforms, and the wider policy and political vacuum in the absence of the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The omission of regeneration from the portfolio of local government both renders the transfer of necessary powers incomplete and undermines the ability of Community Planning to address inequalities at the local level. Compared to other parts of the UK, local government in Northern Ireland has limited powers.



5. Data for outcomes



The long-term nature of many outcomes requires good quality, consistent data to be gathered over a number of years, supported by interim monitoring.



RECOMMENDATION 7

The Northern Ireland Executive should provide dedicated resources to Community Planning Partnerships to facilitate greater use of data and evidence to inform decision making at a local and national level.



RECOMMENDATION 8

Ensure that the proposed indicator website is co-designed with citizens and communities, based on engagement with those groups as well as public service providers and experts, and able to provide data at hyperlocal, local and regional level.

A wellbeing framework, such as outlined in the draft Programme for Government, is an approach that enables governments to measure each of the SEED domains of wellbeing (social, environmental, economic and democratic), and to monitor whether they are moving forward in improving outcomes for society. There are strong examples in Scotland and Wales, as well as further afield in Australia, New Zealand, Mexico and at city and state level in the USA.

Wellbeing frameworks tend to include a mission statement putting wellbeing at the centre; a set of outcomes, and a larger set of indicators that measure progress towards these outcomes. Through the Programme for Government, the Executive has made good initial progress in stating their mission to improve wellbeing and

set outcomes. This framework should now be complemented with the development of a set of indicators in partnership with NISRA and following a public conversation (see citizen engagement section, below).

Outcome indicators measure the effect of policymaking on people's lives rather than the inputs or activities that governments carry out²⁵. Due to the substantial change of circumstances for many since the previous Draft PfG indicators consultation as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Trust strongly advises that there is a public consultation on the indicators and that the proposed website is co-designed with citizens to meet their needs, as well as the needs of planners and policy makers.

The long-term nature of many outcomes requires good quality, consistent data to be gathered over a number of years, supported by interim process monitoring. The increased use of data facilitates the early identification of inequalities and problems to be identified and responded to before they become too entrenched and difficult to resolve or mitigate.

Our project work has highlighted that the enhanced use of NISRA data and 'what works'²⁶ evidence could help Community Planning Partnerships to ask relevant questions on how to improve the wellbeing of citizens across the local authority areas. Data may also help elected representatives to take a more holistic view of community wellbeing, beyond the wards they are elected to represent.

25 Carnegie UK Trust, 2016. *Sharpening Our Focus: Guidance on Wellbeing Frameworks for Cities and Towns*. Available at: <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/sharpening-focus-guidance-wellbeing-frameworks-cities-regions/>.

26 What Works Wellbeing, 2021. *What Works to improve wellbeing?* Available at: <https://whatworkswellbeing.org/>.

6. Citizen engagement and open government



Part of the appeal of a wellbeing outcomes approach is that it provides a framework for governments that reflects what citizens want and need, and a framework for citizens to hold governments to account. Further attention to these issues is required in Northern Ireland.



RECOMMENDATION 9

Host a full public conversation on societal wellbeing in a post-COVID-19 society.

Undertaking good quality citizen engagement provides the Executive with the opportunity to improve citizen understanding of and support for its work and to improve trust and relationships between communities and central government.

The benefits of extensive citizen engagement and deliberative methods are well known²⁷. However, they will only be achieved if the Executive is clear in its communication as to the purpose of its engagement; how feedback from citizens will be used; and how the Executive will continue to communicate with those who took part in the process.

In implementing the Programme for Government, the Executive should build on international best practice on citizen engagement – such as the International Association for Public Participation Spectrum of Public Participation²⁸ – to inform its engagement strategy. Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Community Planning Partnership²⁹ and Derry and Strabane Community Planning

27 Involve, 2021. *Why involve people now?* Available at: <https://www.involve.org.uk/resources/knowledge-base/building-back-how-do-we-involve-communities-covid-19-response-and-1>

28 https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/pillars/Spectrum_8.5x11_Print.pdf

29 Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, 2019. *Involving Communities*. Available at: <https://www.armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk/resident/involving-our-communities/>

Partnership have committed to embedding the spectrum and the Scottish National Standards for Community Engagement³⁰ in engaging their communities at the local level.

To transform decision making and address inequality, it's 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 need 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 should involve a conversation about the wellbeing indicators that will be used to measure progress against the outcome framework, recognising the changing context in which citizens are living their lives as a result of the pandemic.

While the PfG consultation is to be welcomed in such difficult circumstances, it is limited in its intentions to involve the public in decision making on a continuous basis. We welcome the perspective that the PfG is a 'live document' as well as the inclusion of citizen engagement mechanisms in the New Decade, New Approach agreement. We would welcome more open discussion on how to build citizen engagement into mainstream public policy exercises so that it is core to the work of the NI Executive. There are opportunities to build on the Citizen's Assembly approach and to explore connectivity with the outcomes in the Programme for Government.

30 Scottish Community Development Centre, 2021. Available at: <https://www.scdc.org.uk/what/national-standards>



GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES

The Executive could explore the range of approaches to citizen engagement undertaken by its near neighbours in Scotland, such as the Open Government in Scotland Action Plan³¹; Citizens' Assembly of Scotland³²; policy circles and engaging with those with lived experience³³; and National Expert Groups³⁴, as it seeks to support the delivery of the commitments on engagement in the New Decade, New Approach agreement.

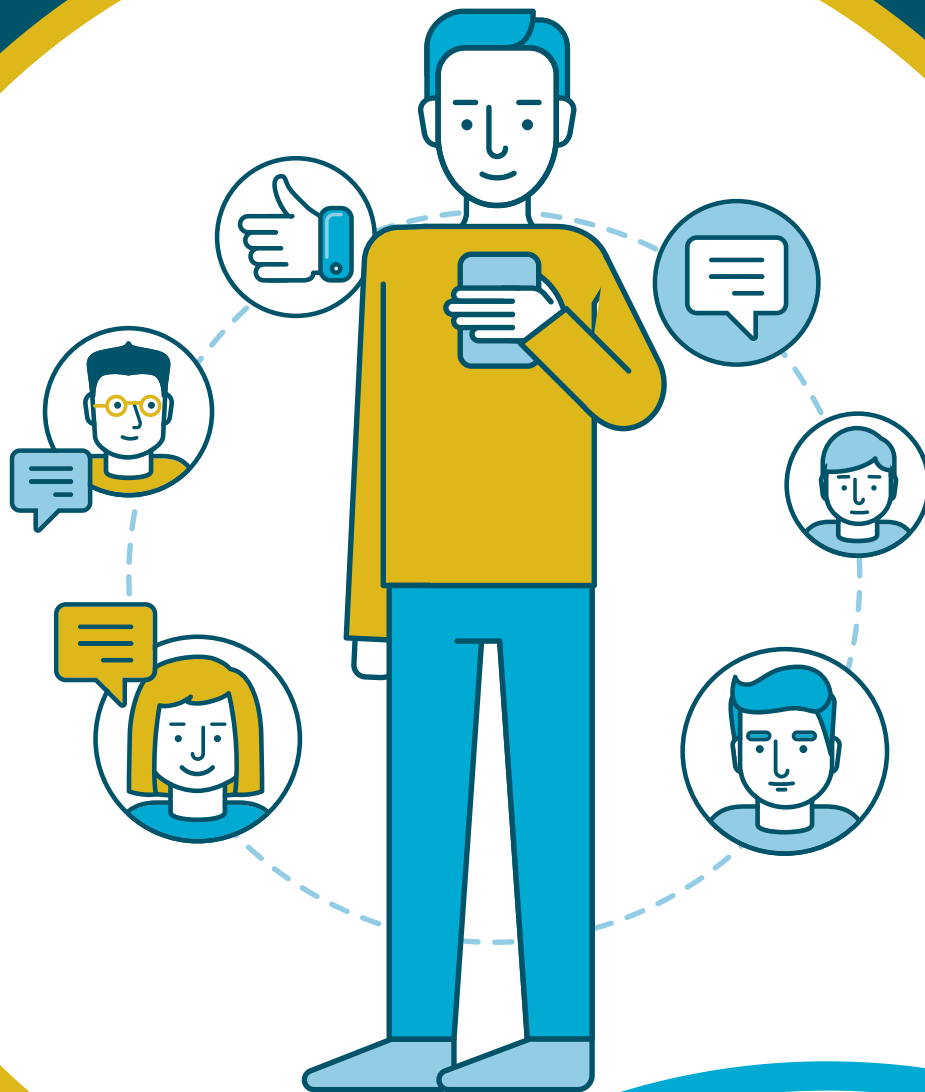
The Citizens' Assembly for Northern Ireland, which took place in 2018, was well received by the public, enabling them to debate and put forward their aspirations for social care for older people³⁵. Learning from this process, alongside that of others (such as the Civic Innovation Programme³⁶ and the Citizens' Assembly in Ireland which has been very influential in engaging citizens in a number of social issues which have since been legislated for) could be utilised and built on as part of forging plans to undertake an Assembly each year.

The Compact Civic Advisory Panel could be brought forward to guide and support the Executive on the delivery of impactful citizen engagement around the Programme for Government, and more broadly.

Our forthcoming project report, to be published later in 2021, will provide practical examples of the wellbeing approach in action.

- 31 Scottish Government, 2019. *Open Government in Scotland Action Plan*. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-open-government-action-plan-2018-20/>
- 32 Citizens' Assembly of Scotland, 2021. Available at: <https://www.citizensassembly.scot/>
- 33 Scottish Government, 2020. Covid-19 Social Renewal Advisory Board <https://www.gov.scot/groups/social-renewal-advisory-board/>
- 34 <https://www.gov.scot/groups/national-expert-group-on-digital-ethics/>
- 35 Citizens' Assembly for Northern Ireland, 2019. Available at: <https://citizensassemblyni.org/>
- 36 The Community Foundation, Northern Ireland. *People powered change is the focus as new Civic Innovation Programme Launches*. Available at: <https://communityfoundationni.org/news/people-powered-change-is-the-focus-as-new-civic-innovation-programme-launches/>

Recommendations



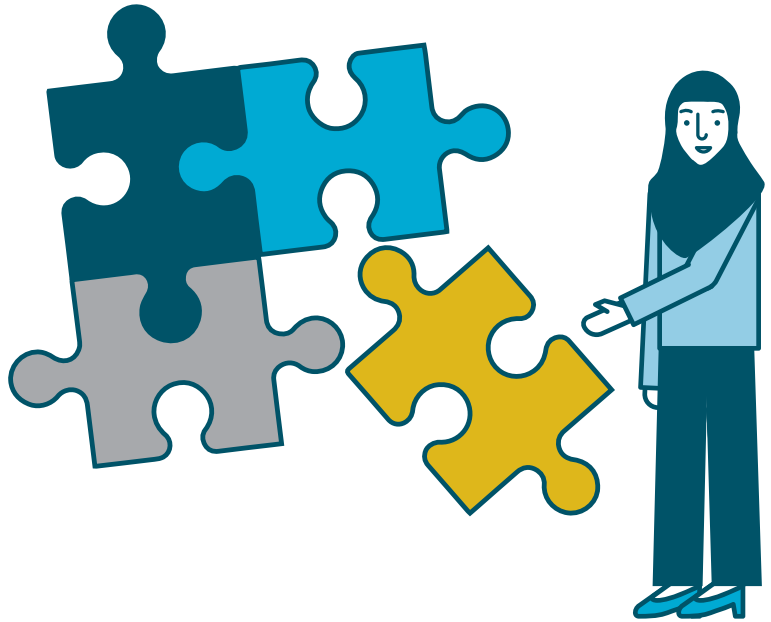
Recommendations

✓ RECOMMENDATION 1

Place the wellbeing outcomes approach on a statutory footing.

✓ RECOMMENDATION 2

Ministers should demonstrate collective leadership in ensuring the delivery of the wellbeing outcomes approach.



✓ RECOMMENDATION 3

Legislate for a Duty to Co-operate requiring agencies and tiers of government to work together on Community Planning to maximise the impact and effectiveness of new and existing legislation. This should be extended to the delivery of all public services.

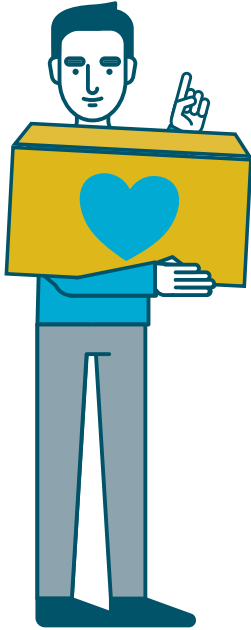
✓ RECOMMENDATION 4

Align budgets with outcomes in the Programme for Government.



✓ **RECOMMENDATION 5**

Provide ring-fenced multi-year funding for Community Planning, to ensure the Partnerships' ability to deliver on improving local wellbeing outcomes both over the course of the current Plans and into 2030-2035, and to support the delivery of societal wellbeing outcomes in the Programme for Government.



✓ **RECOMMENDATION 6**

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



✓ **RECOMMENDATION 7**

The Northern Ireland Executive should provide dedicated resources to Community Planning Partnerships to facilitate greater use of data and evidence to inform decision making at a local and national level.



✓ **RECOMMENDATION 8**

Ensure that the proposed indicator website is co-designed with citizens and communities, based on engagement with those groups as well as public service providers and experts, and able to provide data at hyperlocal, local and regional level.

✓ **RECOMMENDATION 9**

Host a full public conversation on societal wellbeing in a post-COVID-19 society.

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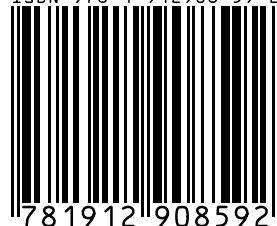
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