

# Finance and Public Administration Committee

16th Meeting, 2022 (Session 6), Tuesday 24 May 2022

## National Performance Framework: Ambitions into Action

### Purpose

1. The Committee is invited to take evidence from the following witnesses in relation to its inquiry on the National Performance Framework: Ambitions into Action:

#### Panel

- Mirren Kelly, Chief Officer – Local Government Finance – COSLA, and
- Tim Kendrick, Community Manager (Development), Fife Council

#### Round-table session

- Amy Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Projects and Participation, Children in Scotland,
- Keith Robson, Senior Public Affairs Manager, Open University in Scotland,
- Jamie Livingstone, Head, Oxfam Scotland,
- Vicki Bibby, Director of Strategic Planning and Performance, Public Health Scotland,
- Neil Ferguson, Head of Corporate Functions, Revenue Scotland.
- Elle Adams, Programme Manager, Scotland CAN-B, and
- Paul Bradley, Policy and Public Affairs Manager, Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations.

2. Written submissions from the witnesses are attached at Annexe A. All 38 written submissions can be accessed on the [Committee's inquiry page](#). SPICe has also produced a [summary of views](#) received.

### Background

3. According to the Scottish Government, the [National Performance Framework](#) (NPF), introduced in 2007, “describes our ambitions, providing a vision for national wellbeing across a range of economic, social and environmental factors”<sup>1</sup>. It sets out the “strategic outcomes which collectively describe the kind of Scotland in which people would like to live and guides the decisions and actions of national and local government”. The NPF states that “to achieve the outcomes, the NPF aims to get everyone in Scotland to work together, including national and local government, businesses, voluntary organisations, and people living in Scotland”. There are 11 national outcomes, which are measured for progress against 81 national indicators.

---

<sup>1</sup> [National Performance Framework Alignment - A changing nation: how Scotland will thrive in a digital world - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

SPICe produces a monthly snapshot of how Scotland is performing against these indicators, the latest version of which was published on [9 May 2022](#).

4. Part 1 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015<sup>2</sup> requires the outcomes in the NPF to be reviewed every five years, with the next review due to begin later this year and conclude in 2023. This Committee is expected to be the lead committee for that work, although other committees will also have an interest in any changes proposed to the outcomes relevant to their remit.

5. Previous work by the Committee has raised questions over the extent to which the NPF is used to shape policymaking, spending choices and priorities. In its [Pre-Budget Report](#), published on 5 November 2021, the Committee pointed to the upcoming review of the national outcomes as an opportunity to “reposition the NPF at the heart of government planning, from which all priorities and plans should flow”. It went on to ask the Scottish Government to consider how the NPF could be more closely linked to budget planning. A response to this specific question is outstanding.

6. The Auditor General for Scotland’s blog on ‘[Christie 10 years on](#)’, published on 7 September 2021, raised issues around accountability and delivery. It argued that “Scotland is suffering from a “major implementation gap between policy ambitions and delivery on the ground”. He suggested that “there’s a mismatch between the Scottish Government’s vision of a more successful Scotland – where poverty is reduced, and economic growth is sustainable – and how we assess public sector performance”, adding “I am not convinced that public sector leaders really feel accountable for delivering change”.

7. Since creation of the NPF in 2007, Scotland’s fiscal arrangements have changed considerably, with further devolution of powers, shared funding arrangements (City and Region Deals), and replacement EU funds (UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Community Renewal Fund and Levelling Up Fund) passed directly to local authorities. While public sector bodies, including local authorities, are required under the 2015 Act to have regard to the national outcomes in carrying out their functions, the Act does not apply to governance structures for City and Region Deals or replacement EU funds.

8. When asked whether Scottish Government priorities, such as the NPF, are considered in decisions on targeting replacement EU funds, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, during evidence to the Committee on [24 February 2022](#), said that “we will take the Scottish Government’s priorities into account, because we want to reach agreement wherever possible”. He added that, where UK and Scottish Government priorities differ, resolution to the satisfaction of both governments, “ideally would be done through open, regular dialogue and honesty on our part about where we might diverge”.

## National Performance Framework: Ambitions into Action

9. The Committee’s inquiry into the [National Performance Framework: Ambitions into Action](#), which was launched on 1 March, aims to establish how the NPF and national outcomes shape Scottish Government policy aims and spending decisions, and in turn, how this drives delivery at national and local level. It is therefore looking at

---

<sup>2</sup> [Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act: summary - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

the processes, structures, cultures and behaviours that support delivery of the NPF, rather than the outcomes themselves, which will be the subject of the Scottish Government's statutory review to start later this year.

10. The Committee's call for views, which closed on 14 April, sought to establish:

- the extent to which the national outcomes shape how organisations work,
- awareness around which national outcomes organisations contribute to,
- the level of empowerment for organisations to try something novel to achieve relevant national outcomes,
- where accountability lies for actions and decisions that impact on the national outcomes,
- if and how national outcomes are reflected in everyday decision-taking, including on spending priorities and provision of funding to others,
- whether organisations need to demonstrate how they contribute to delivery of the national outcomes in order to secure public funding
- where the national outcomes sit within a range of priorities and demands on bodies,
- the extent of collaboration across organisations to deliver national outcomes, and
- areas of good practice, improvement and practices that work less well.

11. The Committee held its first evidence session in relation to the inquiry on [29 March](#), hearing from representatives of the Scottish Leaders Action Group on its report on [Improving Accountability and Incentives to deliver the NPF outcomes and live the values](#). The panel told the Committee that “the current status of accountability against the NPF is patchy” and “there is not yet a golden thread that provides consistent end-to-end accountability for delivery of the NPF outcomes”. They stated that “typically, the NPF is not actively used to shape scrutiny, provide sponsorship, undertake commissioning of work or shape the allocation of funding”. The panel went on to suggest that the barriers to delivering an effective system of accountability are: “behavioural, structural, procedural, financial and political”. However, their main message was one of empowerment, arguing that “all leaders can act now”. They highlighted that Scottish Government sponsor teams, auditors/regulators, political leadership, and parliamentary and local government committees have a particularly important role to play in “reinforcing behavioural change”. Finally, the panel argued that the Scottish Parliament and its committees could look to further improve its scrutiny of progress towards delivering the national outcomes.

12. On [17 May](#), the Committee heard from Dr Ian Elliott and Dr Max French from the University of Northumbria, and Jennifer Wallace of Carnegie UK. At this session it was noted that the NPF was originally intended to be a ‘decision-making framework’ which encouraged collaboration and “stretched the vision”, however “the golden thread between the NPF and delivery gets lost”. It was argued that renaming the NPF to the National Wellbeing Framework would better reflect the aims of the document and capture the interest of the public. Learning lessons from Wales where the Future Generations Commissioner has specific powers to request information and clearer processes for delivery in place, would provide greater accountability. Witnesses suggested that the value statement in the NPF is important and has ‘buy-in’, but that a “radical decluttering” of national indicators was needed. Scotland's National Strategy

for Economic Transformation, with only two references to the NPF and no alignment to the national outcomes, was highlighted. Witnesses argued that the national outcomes should instead be the starting point in government strategies rather than added at the end as part of 'retrofitting'. They noted confusion as to who 'owns' the NPF now it has moved to a 'whole of society' approach and that more alignment with local priorities was needed to achieve greater local 'buy-in'.

13. As well as formal evidence-gathering through a call for written views and oral evidence, the Committee has held three engagement events as part of this inquiry. The first, with senior [Scottish Government officials, took place on 3 May](#), and visits to Dundee and Glasgow followed on 10 May, where Committee Members held discussions with representatives of local authorities, other public bodies, business organisations and the voluntary sector. All three sessions were intended to hear the experiences of participants on how the NPF influences their day-to-day roles and the approaches of their organisations. A note of key issues discussed at the engagement events in Dundee and Glasgow is attached at Annexe B.

## Next steps

14. At its next meeting on 31 May, the Committee will hold its final evidence session on its NPF inquiry with the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery, John Swinney MSP.

Committee Clerking Team  
May 2022

# Written Submission from COSLA

COSLA welcomes the opportunity to provide views in response to the specific questions set out below by the Scottish Parliamentary Finance and Public Administration Committee. COSLA would further welcome a future opportunity (post-election) to provide oral evidence to the Committee on some of the wider aspects concerning the *Ambitions into Action* Inquiry and expand on experience to date.

The questions presented in this call for views seem to focus primarily on the more practical or operational aspects of the way outcomes are accommodated by the governance arrangements of responding bodies across Scotland.

In view of this, and the fact that COSLA is a co-signatory of the current National Performance Framework in 2018, the responses set out below relate largely to the way COSLA shape its policy making and decision taking as a body, rather than an attempt to duplicate the work the Scottish Parliamentary Committee will do when it comes to summarising the views of individual councils (and other bodies) responses to this call. These will likely comprise a range of approaches and practices adopted by individual councils across Scotland according to their local partnership and internal configurations.

## **1. To what extent do the National Outcomes shape how your organisation works?**

COSLA worked in partnership with the Scottish Government on the development and launch in June 2018, of the revised National Performance Framework (NPF) and has embedded the eleven outcomes, set out therein, within the priorities listed in the COSLA workplan. Ultimately, the priorities to which COSLA works are agreed by the 32 councils in Scotland through decisions taken by elected members delegated by councils to the COSLA Convention.

Each of COSLA's policy teams work to a programme focussed on a range of outcomes that are linked in turn, and where appropriate, to the NPF Outcomes. These outcomes are threaded variously through all of our policy work and explicit links are highlighted as policy drivers in our political reports.

Furthermore, the *COSLA Blueprint for Local Government* published in September 2020<sup>3</sup> calls for the Scottish Government to provide the resources required by councils to achieve a more focussed set of six themes. These priorities are based on the empowerment of people and communities; all of which are designed to support post Covid-19 recovery and can be linked clearly to elements set out in the NPF. This enablement is further argued in the recent response to the consultation on the proposed *Resource Spending Framework*<sup>4</sup>.

The outcomes set out in the NPF have considerable influence over the way COSLA works.

## **2. How do you know which National Outcomes your organisation**

---

<sup>3</sup> [Blueprint for Local Government](#)

<sup>4</sup> [COSLA Response to Resource Spending Framework](#)

**contributes towards? How do you demonstrate this to your organisation and more widely to others?**

COSLA works on behalf of councils and in partnership with the Scottish Government, and the range of other public sector organisations (e.g. Public Health Scotland, Police Scotland, etc) and the third sector, which all have a part to play in delivering services to local communities and which all impact on the progress being made toward better outcomes locally and, by extension, the range of National Outcomes. Progress towards the National Outcomes are routinely demonstrated at COSLA Leaders' and policy Board meetings through reports, presentations, dialogue, and the range of other engagements with other public sector organisations and the media.

Progress on COSLA's priority outcomes is reported annually at COSLA Convention (comprising a politically balanced group representing all COSLA's member councils).

**3. How empowered is your organisation to do something different (should it wish) to achieve the National Outcomes relevant to you?**

COSLA has a wide-ranging remit covering the breadth of public policy area pertaining to the delivery of services to local communities; as such all the National Outcomes are relevant, though not all can be a priority for COSLA at all times. COSLA understands that the route toward achieving National Outcomes is not prescribed. This leaves the potential for, and advantage of, a wide range of different and often innovative paths to be developed through which better outcomes can be achieved. At the local level this can translate into tailoring specific services to address unique local issues or targeting local groups or communities.

However, the empowerment councils and their partners have in respect of local flexibility to meet local priorities, and in turn contribute to achieving a National Outcome, is often constrained by a national focus on particular 'solutions' coupled with funding which is provided only for those centrally favoured solutions and is often short term in nature. There has to be flexibility and an understanding that local solutions can cumulatively provide better national outcomes.

COSLA is able, as far as the limited resource it has available allows, to focus on doing things differently; albeit COSLA must also respond to options proposed by national governments whether or not they are the best for all communities in Scotland. Similarly, and more generally, councils are constrained by overall levels of funding provided through Grant Aided Expenditure by the Scottish Government together with significant funding allocations contingent on being tied to specific government sponsored implementations. This piecemeal approach to funding does not truly support and outcomes-based approach.

**4. How is your organisation held to account for how your actions and decisions impact on the National Outcomes?**

As a member-based organisation COSLA is resourced by, and comprises representation from, all 32 Scottish Councils. At the highest level COSLA Convention, supported by COSLA Leaders, accounts for all the actions and decisions taken in its name; for example by Policy Boards. Accountability on all matters, including those which impact on the National Outcomes, is provided to these structures through regular reporting.

At the local level Community Planning partners each have their own lines of accountability. Councils, for example, have several nationally agreed frameworks and regime with which they have statutory obligation to comply (e.g. Local Outcome Improvement Plans, Audit Scotland Best Value Framework, Local Government Benchmarking Framework).

It may be worth noting at this point that the Scottish Leaders Forum – which is co-chaired by the COSLA Chief Executive and the Scottish Government Director-General Communities – recently produced a report on accountability in respect of the NPF, entitled *Leadership, Collective Responsibility and Delivering the National Outcomes*<sup>5</sup>. The report makes several positive conclusions around the steps that can be taken to support progress toward achieving the National Outcomes.

## **5. How are the National Outcomes reflected in everyday decision taking?**

The commitment made in 2018 when COSLA co-signed, with the Scottish Government, the latest iteration of the National Performance Framework means that the outcomes set out therein are synergised with COSLA's policy development priorities. As such they are integral to the framework which guides and therefore reflects the National Outcomes through the decisions needed to draft a range of policy proposals. These are then decided upon by our member councils through our governance structures e.g. COSLA Leaders' meetings.

## **6. When it comes to spending priorities or providing funding to others, what role do the National Outcomes play?**

The National Outcomes are woven into strategic plans at national and local levels, which are supported by operational decisions designed to help progress toward national and local outcomes; their role is to underpin, alongside other factors, decision making.

The National Outcomes provide an over-arching set of focuses to be considered, as appropriate, beside the range of other priorities, factors, and priorities which inform policy development by COSLA and similarly at the local level by councils; who also need to ensure value for money; this being a requirement of the Best Value approach.

COSLA believe that further work is needed to ensure councils are provided with more resources to direct toward their local priorities, set out and agreed at the local level by Community Planning Partnerships through their Local Outcome Improvement Plans, rather than being tied to projects determined by the Government.

---

<sup>5</sup> [Leadership, Collective Responsibility and Delivering the National Outcomes](#)

There needs to be an acceptance that local outcomes, which are developed in the context of driving toward national outcomes, are a proper and valid way to achieve the National Outcomes. It is not clear that that connection is yet fully accepted or embedded, as it should be, across all Scottish Government directorates.

**7. To what extent is any public sector funding you receive contingent upon demonstrating your contribution to delivery of the National Outcomes.**

Funding support to work on specific areas across COSLA policy teams is provided, on fixed term bases, by several national organisations and the Scottish Government. Without exception, this work is intended to contribute to the delivery of National Outcomes. The contribution these various streams of work makes is demonstrated through reporting arrangements agreed at the start of the support term as well as through COSLA's reporting structures; albeit linkage to the progress made toward National Outcomes themselves can be demonstrated through analysis of the NPF performance measures.

**8. Where do the National Outcomes sit within the range of priorities and demands on your organisation?**

In terms of all the outcomes and priorities identified by COSLA and agreed with our partners as integral to the range of different pieces of work ongoing across the public policy landscape, the National Outcomes sit at the top level. They provide an overarching reminder of the need for COSLA's national policy development work as well as the services we host (e.g. Business Gateway, myjobscotland, and Trading Standards Scotland) to converge toward these outcomes as long-term destinations.

**9. To what extent do you work collaboratively with other organisations in delivering the National Outcomes relevant to you?**

Most, if not all, of the outcomes set out as part of the National Performance Framework require inputs from more than one organisation; it is clear that no single organisation will secure the National Outcomes. As such the coordination of work, in terms of objectives and outcomes, is essential. COSLA works collaboratively with the panoply of public sector organisations in Scotland, the UK and Internationally in pursuit of the development of public policy which will secure progress toward the National Outcomes. With this in mind COSLA considers it important to frequently challenge SG and UKG to ensure that policy and legislation that are developed, contribute to the National Outcomes.

As an illustration of this and taking the National Outcome on the economy as one example, the Business Gateway National Unit in COSLA, works extensively and in collaboration with the Scottish Government, the three enterprise agencies, Skills Development Scotland, Visit Scotland and Creative Scotland as well as all 32 Councils. The principal mechanism for this is the Business Support Partnership, which is proving effective in removing duplication, increasing collaboration, and improving the customer journey. The unit also works with the Scottish Government, VisitScotland, the enterprise agencies, Skills Development Scotland and the



Scottish Tourism Alliance on the Scottish Tourism Emergency Response Group which has proven effective in articulating and responding to the challenges faced by the tourism, hospitality, and leisure sector throughout the pandemic.

Likewise, councils collaborate extensively with many other local organisations, primarily through Community Planning Partnerships, and through other structures such as Integration Joint Boards, in terms of the work being done on prioritisation, design, development and delivery of services relevant to achieving local, and therefore, the National Outcomes.

**10. Please share any examples of good practice, areas for improvement or practices that have not worked so well.**

For brevity, the following provides a sample of experience drawn from the many areas of COSLA's activity which relate to progressing the National Outcomes.  
Adult Social Care

The Scottish Government and COSLA have issued a joint statement of intent which outlines how they will work together to deliver the key foundation pillars which were set out in the Independent Review of Adult Social Care in Scotland, these are key to achieving National Outcomes. This has involved working collaboratively with a range of organisations, where workstreams with a range of stakeholders have been set up to progress each of the agreed outcomes. Some progress has been made with achieving the statement of intent, but it has also taken place against a context of ongoing response to COVID-19 including the emergence of variants and the requirement to respond to the pressures that have been exacerbated within the social care sector, as well as the development of proposals for a National Care Service.

**Public Health**

Another area where COSLA is closely collaborating with other organisations to deliver the National Outcomes is through our work on Public Health as joint sponsors of Public Health Scotland where we have been supporting the delivery of the Public Health Priorities and working to strengthen strategic relationships with Scottish Government, COSLA, Public Health Scotland and Directors of Public Health in delivering a world class public health system.

**Mental Health**

COSLA has also been working collaboratively with other organisations to deliver the National Outcomes through our partnership working on mental health policy including suicide prevention strategy development and implementation of actions within Every Life Matters suicide prevention action plan.

**Economic Development**

Local Government, despite recognition as a key partner in the delivery of the National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET) and being a sphere of government, has had little engagement in the development of NSET. Given the many substantial areas that Local Government operates in, and which contribute to

the Economy, it would be helpful, going forward, for greater collaboration and co-production with the Government on economic recovery and development.  
National Taskforce on Human Rights

### **National Taskforce on Human Rights**

COSLA was a member of the National Taskforce on Human Rights Leadership, Leaders endorsed the recommendations to establish a statutory framework for the incorporation of the economic, social, and cultural rights, along with a right to healthy environment. Leaders also agreed to support the recommendations to incorporate specific rights for women, persons with disabilities, race, older people and LGBTI people. Once enacted, the Scottish Government and public authorities will have a duty to progressively realise these rights using the maximum available resources. A key pillar of support for this was due to the commitment to the National Performance framework, and how these recommendations will support improved outcomes.

### **Equality Budgetary Advisory Group**

COSLA officers are represented on the Equality Budgetary Advisory Group (EBAG) which aims to help shape the Scottish Government's equality and human rights approach to the budget. EBAG made a number of recommendations around improving processes; communications; organisation and culture; and knowledge and understanding for the Parliamentary term. EBAG frequently references the importance of linking budgets to the National Performance Framework to advance equality and human rights.

COSLA  
April 2022

## Written Submission from Fife Council

### **To what extent do the National Outcomes shape how your organisation works?**

The National Outcomes are reflected in the 13 ten-year ambitions set out in the Plan for Fife 2017-2027, Fife's Local Outcome Improvement Plan. As well as being Fife's community plan, the Plan for Fife is also Fife Council's corporate plan. The Plan for Fife therefore sets the overall strategic context for the work of Fife Council and the Fife Partnership. To the extent that the National Outcomes and related national plans and strategies have helped to frame the Plan for Fife, they have therefore played a key role on shaping the work of the Council and the Partnership.

The National Performance Framework and National Outcomes are framed around the UN SDGs. This rights-based approach is strongly reflected in the national framework for children's services, which are underpinned by GIRFEC and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This focus is also strongly reflected in national policy approaches for specific children's services (e.g. the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence, the National Improvement Framework – in terms of education; the Promise for children in need of care and protection).

### **How do you know which National Outcomes your organisation contributes towards? How do you demonstrate this to your organisation and more widely to others?**

Fife's 10-year ambitions have been mapped against the national outcomes and our progress against the Plan for Fife ambitions are assessed and reported on an annual basis. The focus of our performance and reporting outputs is placed on the contribution that is made to the Plan for Fife ambitions, service plan priorities and LGBF indicators.

There are clear expectations framed in terms of the outcomes expected for children's services. These underpin national policy approaches (e.g. the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence, the National Improvement Framework – in terms of education; the Promise for children in need of care and protection). Many are underpinned by statutory requirements to publish regular performance information (e.g. statutory requirements for reporting for the National Improvement Framework, Children's Rights). We use these reports to communicate how we contribute towards the National Outcomes.

### **How empowered is your organisation to do something different (should it wish) to achieve the National Outcomes relevant to you?**

The Plan for Fife addresses the key challenges facing Fife as set out in Fife's strategic assessment. The Plan for Fife was reviewed in 2021 following the Covid 19 pandemic and Fife's declaration of a climate emergency. The three-year plan for Fife update represents Fife's recovery and renewal plan and has a narrower focus on three priorities: tackling poverty and preventing crisis; addressing the climate emergency; and leading economic recovery. These priorities are being delivered as part of an overarching community wealth building approach and in the context for Fife's ten-year ambitions.

Key aspects of children's services are subject to inspection by national agencies (Education Scotland, the Care Inspectorate). These inspection arrangements are underpinned by a number of Quality Improvement Frameworks – based on EFQM – which support a process of continuous improvement at both operational and strategic levels. This approach is underpinned by an expectation of organisational self-evaluation, learning and innovation.

Organisational improvements at an operational level are supported by national agencies like CYPIC (the Children and Young People's Improvement Collaborative), which have a strong focus on innovation.

Organisational improvement at a strategic level is supported by a number of arrangements for collaborative improvement, including national policy approaches (e.g. Regional Improvement Collaboratives) and professional organisations (e.g. the Collaborative Improvement programme run by ADES).

However, innovation can be constrained at both operational and strategic levels by:

- A tendency for national policy and inspection arrangements to focus on certain, more easily measurable outcomes (e.g. SQA attainment as the predominant measure of educational outcomes, when it reflects only one of the four capacities of CfE). This tends to distract organisational focus away from the fundamental challenges that need to be addressed if national outcomes are to be achieved; in particular, it distracts attention away from the importance of wider wellbeing for improving outcomes for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children. There continues to be a need for a stronger, more holistic focus in the framing of national policy (particularly for specific services for children) on the role of wider wellbeing, underpinned by a stronger GIRFEC-based approach. This is the only way to address the wicked issues at the heart of the equity gap in outcomes for children.
- National policy approaches that constrain the use of resources (e.g. the range of hypothecated funds that have been introduced for schools). This can often limit the opportunity for a more innovative approach, particularly at a strategic level.

### **How is your organisation held to account for how your actions and decisions impact on the National Outcomes?**

Fife Council and the Fife Partnership report annually on progress against the Plan for Fife ambitions, which reflect the National Outcomes. We provide performance data to government and local government bodies and are audited by bodies including Audit Scotland and relevant regulators (e.g. Housing, Education) Children's services are held accountable through statutory requirements for public reporting, and through inspection. Council children's services are scrutinised by committee, at both local authority and area levels.

### **How are the National Outcomes reflected in everyday decision taking?**

The work of the Fife Partnership and Fife Council reflects the priorities set out in the Plan for Fife, which reflect the National Outcomes. Many aspects of decision taking are

influenced (or constrained) by national policy requirements, and these are strongly related to national outcomes.

In addition, decisions for Council children's services in Fife are influenced by the purpose of the Education & Children's Services Directorate (Improving Life Chances for All). This strongly reflects a values-based approach, which aligns with the rights-based approach of the National Performance Framework.

When it comes to spending priorities or providing funding to others, what role do the National Outcomes play?

The autonomy of local government's role in identifying spending priorities has diminished over recent years due to an increase in 'new burdens' – the expectation to deliver new Scottish Government policies. Although these new policies have been funded, this has eroded core funding to deliver both statutory obligated service provision and any locally identified spending priorities.

In terms of our funding to the voluntary sector we do not assess grant awards against their contribution to the National Outcomes directly, nor do we map the awards to the National Outcomes that they contribute to. The focus of our assessment processes is placed on the contribution that is made to the Plan for Fife ambitions and the service plan priorities of the relevant funding service. That said, many of the individual plans/outcomes that are taken into account are themselves derived from the National Outcomes. The funding decisions that are made are one step removed from that process and focus on the outcomes agreed at our local authority or service level.

**To what extent is any public sector funding you receive contingent upon demonstrating your contribution to delivery of the National Outcomes?**

It is becoming more common, that Scottish Government funding, although paid as General Revenue Grant, has various reporting and spending restrictions applied, e.g. Funding for Teachers, ELC Expansion. In terms of specific revenue grant, ring-fenced funding in its truest form, PEF is the most obvious that can be directly attributable to National Outcomes.

When developing applications for funding from the Scottish Government we are asked to demonstrate how the proposals being presented contribute to the National Outcomes, as well as to regional and local plans. This is true both in relation to individual projects and when working with Scottish Government to identify priorities and design funding programmes. For example, in workshops aimed at developing priorities for the Shared Prosperity Fund the priorities identified were then prioritised by consideration of their contribution to the National Outcomes. Similarly, when looking at regional plans for employability, due consideration is given to how the proposals meet the indicators that are attributable to the National Outcomes.

**Where do the National Outcomes sit within the range of priorities and demands on your organisation?**

National Outcomes inform and are incorporated into our overarching plan, the Plan for Fife, and, where appropriate, into specific service plans.

**To what extent do you work collaboratively with other organisations in delivering the National Outcomes relevant to you?**

Fife has a well-established community planning partnership which works collaboratively to deliver relevant National Outcomes as reflected in the Plan for Fife. Governance and delivery arrangements have recently been reviewed to strengthen delivery of Fife's recovery and renewal priorities and to give partnership groups a clear responsibility for delivering and reporting on delivery of the Plan for Fife ambitions.

Strategic planning of children's services is undertaken through a partnership of key public and voluntary sector agencies; this has a statutory basis in the 2016 Children and Young People (Scotland) Act. This process is underpinned by arrangements for joint inspection of partnership working for children's services.

The scope of formal collaborative working extends across a wide range of areas where joint working is key to improving outcomes, particularly where a greater focus on prevention is needed (e.g. support for emotional wellbeing and mental health, delivering the Promise). This includes collaborative planning, and collaborative self-evaluation and sharing of good practice.

**Please share any examples of good practice, areas for improvement or practices that have not worked so well.**

Examples of good practice and challenges during the Covid 19 pandemic are detailed in the Fife Partnership Annual Report 2020-2021. A copy of this report can be provided on request.

# Written Submission from Children in Scotland

## About Children in Scotland

Giving all children in Scotland an equal chance to flourish is at the heart of everything we do.

By bringing together a network of people working with and for children, alongside children and young people themselves, we offer a broad, balanced and independent voice. We create solutions, provide support and develop positive change across all areas affecting children in Scotland.

We do this by listening, gathering evidence, and applying and sharing our learning, while always working to uphold children's rights. Our range of knowledge and expertise means we can provide trusted support on issues as diverse as the people we work with and the varied lives of children and families in Scotland.

## Responding to this consultation

Children in Scotland is pleased to be able to respond to this call for views on the Inquiry into the National Performance Framework by the Finance and Public Administration Committee. As a membership charity representing many third and public sector organisations working directly with children, young people and families, we welcome the Finance and Public Administration Committee's focus on how the National Outcomes shape the Scottish Government's policy aims and spending decisions, and in turn, how this drives delivery at national and local level.

Children in Scotland convenes the Children's Sector Strategic Forum, a group of 25 senior representatives from the children's sector who come together to influence national policymaking on issues of common concern relating to the lives of children, young people and families in Scotland. In recent years, the Strategic Forum has had outcomes budgeting as one of its priority focuses, believing a joined-up, outcomes-based approach to policymaking and finance is crucial if we are to achieve our collective ambitions for children and young people.

Our response draws from learning from our Strategic Forum activity on outcomes budgeting, as well as our own organisation's approach to engaging with the National Outcomes.

## To what extent do the National Outcomes shape how your organisation works?

Children in Scotland's vision is that all children in Scotland have an equal chance to flourish. This is closely aligned with the National Outcome relating to children and young people which states '[children and young people] grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential'.

In order to realise this vision, Children in Scotland has five strategic priorities:

- Championing the participation and inclusion of children and young people
- Working to ensure that support for children, young people and their families is appropriate, available and accessible
- Challenging inequalities
- Leading and developing the children's sector workforce
- Continuing as a sustainable organisation.

Together, these strategic priorities shape how our organisation works, and where we focus our attention to improve children's lives.

Scotland faces considerable challenges in achieving our collective vision for children, young people and families. Pre-pandemic, approximately one quarter of children in Scotland lived in poverty<sup>6</sup> and one in 10 had a diagnosable mental health problem<sup>7</sup>. Evidence suggests that the pandemic has had a negative impact in both of these areas<sup>8</sup>, Children in Scotland recognises that addressing these challenges requires strategic, long-term cross-portfolio policy and decision making.

Our Manifesto for 2021-2026<sup>9</sup> highlights the key steps we believe are necessary to improve the lives of children, young people and families across Scotland. This manifesto was developed following in-depth engagement with our members, children and young people, our staff and Board, incorporating findings and recommendations from our projects and services and the wider evidence base. It includes 33 calls across 10 thematic areas. The manifesto is a significant document for us, shaping our policy and influencing work, learning programme and projects and services. Our manifesto was not designed to align directly with the National Outcomes but features many of the same themes and priorities. In particular, this includes outcomes relating to human rights, poverty, health, education, communities, culture and the environment. It is important to emphasise that it is not only the national outcome related to children and young people where there is crossover and relevance to our own manifesto, but many of the others as well. There are truly few areas of policymaking that are not relevant to children and young people's lives.

We view this alignment between our manifesto and the national outcomes positively. This synergy can be seen as:

- Further endorsement of the National Outcomes – they focus on the areas we believe are important to the lives of children and young people
- Evidence of agreement across much of the children's sector and Scottish Government about the key goals and priorities for Scotland's youngest citizens.

<sup>6</sup> <https://data.gov.scot/poverty/2022/cpupdate.html>

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.samh.org.uk/documents/Going\\_to\\_Be\\_All\\_Right\\_Jacki\\_Gordon\\_Report\\_2017.pdf](https://www.samh.org.uk/documents/Going_to_Be_All_Right_Jacki_Gordon_Report_2017.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/scotlands-wellbeing-impact-covid-19>

<sup>9</sup> [Children in Scotland Manifesto for 2021-26](#)



## **How empowered is your organisation to do something different (should it wish) to achieve the National Outcomes relevant to you?**

In line with many other third sector organisations, Children in Scotland experiences a number of barriers and opportunities to 'doing something different'.

### **Barriers**

Our key barrier, and a common one across the third sector, is lack of sustainable funding. We currently receive a core grant from the Scottish Government through the Children and Young People's Early Intervention Fund, which comprises approximately 15% of our yearly budget (relatively small but absolutely vital because of the way it supports the core work of our organisation). This was originally a three year fund, but it has been rolled on year-on-year for a subsequent four years, in part due to uncertainties associated with the pandemic. Plans are now in motion to develop the fund that will replace it and our understanding is that this is currently being thought of as a two-year fund.

While two years is better than yearly funding, it still does not provide much stability to allow third sector organisations to plan ahead and make considered longer-term changes in order to improve our impact.

A similar year-by-year contract extension has been applied in recent years to a number of the services that we run on behalf of the Scottish Government, including Enquire, our advice service for additional support for learning. We did not receive notification of the extension of this contract for 2022-23 until March 2022 – weeks before the existing contract was due to finish. We appreciate the current challenges for Scottish Government, however, this is not an efficient or sustainable way for us to operate a vital service.

As can be imagined, this is incredibly unsettling for staff, and we sometimes lose great employees to organisations that can offer more stability. It also makes it incredibly difficult to plan longer-term and, while our services are consistently rated excellent, (in Q4 of 2021 –22, 100% of users rated the service as excellent and 96% as either easy or very easy to find), this without doubt affects our impact.

We know that short-term funding is an issue that many third sector organisations face, including many of our members. We strongly urge the committee to recommend that a longer-term, more sustainable approach is taken to third sector funding. Our manifesto calls for five-year funding timescales and we believe this stability would allow third sector organisations to be truly creative, ambitious and impactful. We would be happy to facilitate discussions between the Committee and some of our member organisations to help understand the negative impact of short-term funding, if this would be beneficial.

We understand that the Scottish Government is in a challenging financial situation, and that it therefore seems difficult to make the commitments to longer-term funding of third sector partners. However, we now have ambitious outcomes that we are trying to achieve as a nation, for instance tackling the entrenched and difficult issue of child poverty. If we want to succeed, we are all going to need to be

ambitious and brave. Longer-term funding of the third sector is not the only tool that will help, but it can play a significant role in releasing the potential of key partners to have the appropriate scope and flexibility that can ultimately lead to a stronger and more sustainable impact.

## Opportunities

Among the strengths of the third sector are its ability to be nimble, innovative and responsive to the needs and priorities of the communities it supports<sup>10</sup>. The independence of the third sector is absolutely vital<sup>11</sup>. Its independent voice and ability to build trusting and respectful relationships with people living in disadvantage should be nurtured.

Third sector organisations need sustainable funding in order to thrive, but they also need the freedom and trust of funders to develop their organisations and deliver their services in ways that work for them and their communities.

This can happen. Evidence from our members during the pandemic indicated that they appreciated the increased flexibility funders (including the Scottish Government) gave to them to use existing funds in creative ways to respond to urgent need. This was also reflected in a recent report by the Cross-Party Group on Children and Young People, for which Children in Scotland holds the joint secretariat<sup>12</sup>.

Framing funding awards around shared and agreed outcomes, such as the national outcomes, and moving away from rigid delivery criteria would, we believe, provide greater opportunity for the third sector to maximise its impact and contribute to the national outcomes.

## How is your organisation held to account for how your actions and decisions impact on the National Outcomes?

As a registered charity, Children in Scotland must meet the definition of charity as outlined by OSCR in that it must have charitable purposes and provide public benefit in Scotland<sup>13</sup>. We must produce and publish annual accounts as set out in the Charity Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006<sup>14</sup>. We have a Board of Trustees that oversees the running of the organisation and ensures we are meeting our legal responsibilities and charitable aims.

Beyond that, Children in Scotland is held to account in a number of ways:

- As a membership organisation we must be relevant and responsive to the needs of our members
- As a service delivery organisation, we must deliver on our commitments and responsibilities as outlined in service contracts
- As a policy and influencing organisation, we must comply with legal

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.thinknpc.org/resource-hub/untapped-potential-bringing-the-voluntary-sectors-strengths-to-health-and-care-transformation/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://cdn.baringfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/IndependenceUV.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/media/6981/final-cpg-pandemic-report.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.oscr.org.uk/guidance-and-forms/being-a-charity-in-scotland/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2006/218/contents/made>

requirements for regulated lobbying as outlined in the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016.

Most important to us is our accountability to children, young people and families across Scotland. It is absolutely vital that we listen to what they tell us and act with them and for them to push for the changes they need.

Our children and young people's advisory group Changing our World helps us to ensure we are focusing our work and organisational priorities on the important issues and needs of children and young people. We also have accountability to the other children and young people we work with to ensure that we are listening to what they tell us and taking action as a result. Our 'Principles and Guidelines for the Meaningful Participation and Engagement of Children and Young People' guide our approach to ensure we are meeting our responsibilities to those we work with.<sup>15</sup> We believe embedding quality participation across the sector and more widely will strengthen the work conducted by organisations and, in our opinion, positively impact on delivery of the national outcomes.

We know from our work with children and young people over the years that their priorities align with many of the national outcomes: living free from poverty and discrimination, support for mental health, having a voice in things that matter to them, and action to address the climate emergency.

We recognise that our role at Children in Scotland is to share children and young people's views with national decision-makers and to encourage change in response to their needs. And we have seen change – incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) for example will give Scotland a legal duty to ensure that the rights of children and young people are met.

We can and will play our part in supporting incorporation of the UNCRC, but it will be the responsibility of all duty bearers across Scotland to ensure that children's rights are fully realised. An explicit framing of the national outcomes in rights terms, linking them with relevant Articles in the UNCRC (alongside the UN sustainable development goals) would be very helpful and welcome.

We would also be happy to facilitate engagement between the committee and our members through a range of our policy forums to support your inquiry into the National Performance Framework.

### **When it comes to spending priorities or providing funding to others, what role do the National Outcomes play?**

In 2019 the Children's Sector Strategic Forum (through Children in Scotland), Carnegie UK Trust and Cattanach commissioned the 'Being Bold: Building Budgets for Children's Wellbeing' report<sup>16</sup>, written by Katherine Trebeck. The report, published in 2021, outlines a route map to change Scotland's economic approach

<sup>15</sup> <https://childreninscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/CiS-Participation-2019.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> ['Being Bold: Building Budgets for Children's Wellbeing' report](#)

and calls on the Scottish Government to prioritise children’s wellbeing by aligning budget processes more closely with both the National Performance Framework<sup>17</sup> and child poverty targets.

In the report we highlight the importance of taking a rights-based approach to budgetary processes. The report states “the goals of a [wellbeing] budget should be to uphold and realise human rights, including those of women and children, and to do so in an accountable, transparent and participatory manner”<sup>18</sup>.

The Strategic Forum and project partners have continued to use the Being Bold recommendations to advocate for outcomes budgeting for children and young people. Collectively we believe that aligning the Scottish Government’s budget to outcomes will be more impactful and rights respecting.

We welcome the Scottish Government’s commitment to a wellbeing economy and are strongly of the view that outcomes-based budgeting is a positive and necessary direction of travel for Scotland.

**To what extent is any public sector funding you receive contingent upon demonstrating your contribution to delivery of the National Outcomes?**

At present, very little. We believe there is scope for funding to be more closely aligned to the National Outcomes, and we would welcome the opportunity for discussion about how this could be taken forward appropriately.

**To what extent do you work collaboratively with other organisations in delivering the National Outcomes relevant to you?**

As highlighted above, Children in Scotland works with its members through the Children’s Sector Strategic Forum to deliver change for children and young people in Scotland. In recent years, the forum has supported the Scottish Government Directorate for Children and Families in their work to develop a series of children and young people’s wellbeing outcomes and indicators which will sit under the National Outcomes. We would encourage the Committee to engage directly with the Scottish Government team developing these outcomes and indicators as part of this inquiry.

We are supportive of this development and our manifesto calls for “a series of rights-based wellbeing outcomes and indicators for children, young people and families to give future direction to policy action to improve the health and wellbeing of children, young people and families living in Scotland.”<sup>19</sup> This call is supported by many of our members including Aberlour, Children 1<sup>st</sup>, CHAS, The ALLIANCE, Play Scotland, Together and YouthLink Scotland.

<sup>17</sup> [Scottish Government, National Performance Framework](#)

<sup>18</sup> ‘Being Bold: Building Budgets for Children’s Wellbeing’ report (Page 6)

<sup>19</sup> [https://childreninscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Manifesto\\_V2.1\\_March-21.pdf](https://childreninscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Manifesto_V2.1_March-21.pdf)

Inclusion of the children and young people's wellbeing outcomes framework within the NPF will, we believe help us to achieve our ambition to ensure public spending is outcomes-focused and evidence-informed and as efficient and effective as possible.

We recognise that the move towards outcomes-based planning and budgeting is a long journey and will require, amongst other things, good quality evidence on which to make decisions. We know that there are numerous data gaps at present, particularly with regards to younger children and those with protected characteristics. Committing funding to gather high quality data will be important to this mission's overall success.

**Please share any examples of good practice, areas for improvement or practices that have not worked so well**

Children in Scotland believes better collaboration between the public and voluntary sector is an important way of supporting improved outcomes for children, young people and families.

As mentioned above, the third sector plays a crucial role in supporting children, young people and families in Scotland. The unique and valuable services the sector provides has never been more evident than over the past two years during the Coronavirus pandemic.

Through Children in Scotland's work on the Supporting the Third Sector project<sup>20</sup>, we understand the value of the sector, both in delivery of services and as a strategic partner bringing expertise and data to inform services planning.

Work is currently underway through the STTS project to evaluate how well the third sector is involved in children's services planning in each locality. Bringing the sector into children's services planning and collaborative working based on shared outcomes constitutes good and necessary practice.

As highlighted in our 'Being Bold' report, we believe that children and their families need to be involved across the entire budget process to ensure public spending meets their needs. A participatory approach also aligns with the Scottish Government's goal of incorporating the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into Scots Law. Creative and inclusive opportunities need to be made available that support children, young people and families to share their ideas and experiences.

The 'Being Bold' report also underlines the importance of elevating voices who are often marginalised. There are a range of organisations across the children's sector, including Children in Scotland, who can support the Scottish Government to effectively engage with children, young people and families about this topic, and we hope these avenues will be explored.

Amy Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Projects and Participation Children in Scotland

---

<sup>20</sup> <https://childreninScotland.org.uk/supporting-the-third-sector-project/>

# Written Submission from the Open University in Scotland

## **To what extent do the National Outcomes shape how your organisation works?**

The National Outcomes indirectly shape the work of the Open University as much as they flow down from the Scottish Government's strategic priorities and funding via the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). The National Outcomes are not explicitly referenced within our Outcome Agreement with SFC.

## **How do you know which National Outcomes your organisation contributes towards? How do you demonstrate this to your organisation and more widely to others?**

In Spring 2021 we mapped our work against the National Performance Framework as we developed our prospectus Skills+ Scotland for the 2021-26 session of the Scottish Parliament. We used this to produce our four key themes:

- The Open University in Scotland can support the Scottish Government in delivering targeted skills support at scale, rolled out nationally
- We want to see a fair deal for part-time students removing financial barriers to accessing learning and achieving their potential
- Digital access and connectivity are vital to open up higher education to the most disadvantaged across Scotland
- A lifelong learning skills commitment would ensure higher education is open to everyone, at any stage of their life.

We are currently in our strategic and business planning cycle for the next academic year. Within our discussions as a senior staff group in Scotland we have started to think about how we could better relate the work that we do as an institution and our external partnerships to the National Outcomes and the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. We are keen to learn from best practice in other organisations to demonstrate our contribution not only internally to staff and students but more widely to others.

## **How empowered is your organisation to do something different (should it wish) to achieve the National Outcomes relevant to you?**

Within the Outcome Agreement with the SFC we have limited flexibility to do something different to achieve our targets. Where we believe that a different approach needs to be taken, we would have a proactive discussion with the SFC to ensure there is a common understanding of why this is required and how it will be achieved.

## **How is your organisation held to account for how your actions and decisions impact on the National Outcomes?**

The Outcome Agreement with the SFC is our guiding document and as such the Open University is indirectly held accountable for our actions and decisions

impacting on the National Outcomes via the Outcome Agreement with the SFC. The document sets out how the Open University will meet the priority areas of work within the core funding that we receive. The Outcome Agreement does not make explicit reference to the National Outcomes, instead citing Scottish Government and SFC priorities.

### **How are the National Outcomes reflected in everyday decision taking?**

The Outcome Agreement with the SFC is our guiding document and as such the National Outcomes are not an explicit part of our everyday decision taking. The work of the Open University does however cover all the National Outcomes as we deliver upon the Outcome Agreement.

### **When it comes to spending priorities or providing funding to others, what role do the National Outcomes play?**

The Outcome Agreement with the SFC is our guiding document and as such the National Outcomes are not an explicit part of our spending priorities. The work of the Open University does however cover all the National Outcomes as we deliver upon the Outcome Agreement.

### **To what extent is any public sector funding you receive contingent upon demonstrating your contribution to delivery of the National Outcomes?**

Our core funding is not currently directly contingent upon demonstrating our contribution to the delivery of the National Outcomes as we report using the Outcome Agreement with the SFC which is our guiding document. None of the additional funding we receive through the National Training Transition Fund, Upskilling Fund, Universities Innovation Fund and Workforce Development Fund is contingent upon demonstrating a contribution to the delivery of the National Outcomes.

Within their report 'Coherence and Sustainability: A Review of Tertiary Education and Research' the SFC has committed to working collaboratively with the sector and key stakeholders to develop a new overarching National Impact Framework (NIF) to ensure greater alignment with Scotland's National Performance Framework and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We welcome this and are keen to support this work as soon and as fully as possible.

The teaching grant received by the Open University in Scotland is based on our funded student numbers at completion rather than, as other higher education institutions are, at registration. As a result, the teaching grant received from SFC is directly linked to the number of students successfully completing OU modules up to the number of funded places allocated. For those students who do not complete in the year, the university receives only the module fee.

Since the introduction of the Part-time Fee Grant, we have seen increasing student registrations year on year, and improved completion rates. This has resulted in sustained growth in full-time equivalent (FTE) numbers and this demand has increased significantly over the pandemic. In 2020-21, as well as our full funding for

4,400 FTEs student places, we are supporting over 3,000 FTEs in Scotland where we will receive only module fees and no teaching grant. This results in an equivalent funding gap of £16 million.

Due to our scale and financial prudence, we have been able to support these module-only funded places to-date. However, meeting this level of student demand without the associated teaching grant is unsustainable in the longer term.

We have welcomed additional COVID-related funding made available to the University which have been deployed to provide vital targeted skills support to employees, organisations and businesses impacted by the pandemic. But these separate funding streams have not directly offset the lack of teaching grant for our core numbers.

### **Where do the National Outcomes sit within the range of priorities and demands on your organisation?**

The National Outcomes are currently not an explicit part of our priorities and/or demands on the Open University. We believe however that through our refreshed five-year strategy, the Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Funding Council and our internal business planning that we contribute to each of the 11 National Outcomes in a range of different ways:

#### **Children and Young People**

Our Young Applicants in School Scheme delivers across all 32 Scottish local authority areas. Supporting students making the transition from school to university. Pupils are offered a range of open modules to choose from in subjects such as accounting, economics, engineering and law. They were able to study at home during the periods of remote learning which provided an important contribution to the school curriculum during this challenging time.

The Scottish Government commissioned us to produce a funded badged open course on early years and additional needs. The content of the module reflects Scottish Government policy and is aimed to enhance the quality of practice for supporting children who have additional needs. This has been hugely successful with over 4000 early years practitioners enrolled to-date and the contract extended to deliver more modules.

#### **Communities**

A new OU in Scotland pilot is developing a new workforce offer for the community learning and development sector in partnership with Education Scotland and the CLD Standards Council for Scotland. The project is funded by Scottish Government to address skills gaps identified during the pandemic.

The three deliverables are an online skills development portal, the provision of up to 200 funded microcredentials supporting CLD practitioners, and the development of a network of regional champions to deliver workshops and learning clubs.



In partnership with Voluntary Health Scotland (VHS) we held a series of seven online talks on the theme of Ageing Well, with 366 registered participants across the series, providing guidance and input in this area. In addition, during 2021 we worked with VHS and some of their partners on two round tables related to mental health and the over 65's (it was felt that this group had not been well supported during the pandemic). The seminars explored some of the key issues that emerged during the last two years, with the intention of trying to inform future policy in this area.

We are also key partners with the Glasgow based social enterprise, Lingo Flamingo, who primarily support older people in residential care with language learning as part of a cognitive stimulation strategy. We provide training and support to help Lingo Flamingo develop their programmes, and to add value to the overall experience for learners.

## **Culture**

'Gaelic in Modern Scotland' has been developed as a free online learning resource in both English and Gaelic to raise awareness of Gaelic and to encourage interest in learning the language. A free online course in Scots language and culture was launched in partnership with Education Scotland. The only course of its kind, it teaches Scots through the context in which it's spoken, highlighting the role of Scots in Scottish culture and society, past and present.

Our knowledge exchange programme supports a number of lectures and events at book festivals, arts festivals and science festivals across Scotland and we contribute to research into Scottish culture and society.

For example, academics, archivists, museum curators, research students, and public historians came together to explore aspects of Glasgow's cultural history through three themes: engagement; wellbeing; international. The Cultural History of Glasgow Research Network project was delivered in partnership with Glasgow Life and funded by the Royal Society of Edinburgh. With almost 40 active members, the project delivered a variety of events and outputs for range of audiences.

Intergenerational family audiences enjoyed a series of events on maths as part of the Glasgow and Edinburgh science festivals. Audiences participated in popular code-breaking tasks to discover the names of trees in the Glasgow Botanic Gardens as part of a week-long event in the Glasgow Science Festival.

An online activity for Edinburgh Science Festival called Out for the Count: The Mathematics of Voting Systems engaged audiences in an interactive and fun introduction to a number of real-life voting systems.

We brought together indigenous artists and speakers from The Open University and Glasgow Museums to discuss the connections between citizens, culture and climate at an event in the prestigious Green Zone at COP26. A dynamic cultural collaboration, Ancient Knowledge and Modern Thinking: Climate Perspectives in Folk Art was positively received by the live audience and had over 1,600 views online.

## Economy

The coronavirus pandemic has seen a strengthening and deepening of our relationships with employers and industry at what has been a challenging time for everyone. We have worked in an agile way to ensure that we provided targeted skills support where it is needed most. Drawing on our unique distance learning model, we have collaborated with partners to roll out support at scale across Scotland.

Through several Scottish Government skills-focused funding streams we have been able to rapidly respond in supporting businesses, workers, families and communities during the pandemic through our online platforms and flexible learning opportunities. To help support employees who were furloughed and facing redundancy because of COVID-19, we offered free places through the Scottish Funding Council Upskilling Fund on a new Coding Skills course to upskill and reskill people for digital roles and careers. We also saw significant demand for the suite of microcredential courses that we were able to offer, thanks to being able to access the Scottish Government's Flexible Workforce Development Fund which previously had been restricted to colleges only.

As Scotland recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Open University's ethos of being open to people, places, methods and ideas is as relevant today as it was when the University was founded over 50 years ago. We support our students and learners to achieve their goals with outcomes that open-up new opportunities in life and work.

## Education

With 22,000 students and almost half a million informal learners via our OpenLearn platform, we connect with people in every parliamentary constituency, and in every corner of the country from Dumfries and Galloway to the Shetland Islands. We are the fourth largest university in Scotland and, with around three quarters of our students combining work and study, the largest provider of part-time higher education. In addition, 24% of OU students in Scotland declare a disability and 23% live in remote or rural areas.

Many learners choose to go to college first or pursue higher education at a later stage, perhaps due to work or family commitments, or financial reasons.

This will be even more applicable in the post-pandemic environment as people return to study to gain new skills and improve their prospects of new employment opportunities, and in supporting the future economy.

We are continually seeking new ways to match our core curriculum, microcredentials and free OpenLearn content to the learning needs of people across Scotland. We continue to partner with all 15 regional colleges in Scotland, outside of UHI network, to provide college students with progression routes to flexible degree level study. With Ayrshire, City of Glasgow, and Fife Colleges we have collaborated on campus-based delivery providing students with the opportunity to transition to an OU degree within the familiar environment of their local college. Dundee and Angus College have successfully integrated OU Access modules into their wider access programme, OU Options, at the college.

## **Fair Work and Business**

New partnerships and collaboration are building rich impacts that benefit society and business. Our work with Scottish Professional Football League clubs in Scotland, including Celtic, Dundee, Hibernian and Rangers, has piloted a range of innovative employability programmes for delivery in the community.

Already young people, those re-entering the jobs market and refugees have benefited by achieving new skills and confidence. These bespoke delivery partnerships are tailored to the needs of the community associated with the individual football clubs. Programmes are developed from conversations with partners where we understand their needs and develop solutions which work for them.

Charlie Bennett, then Chief Executive Officer, Hibernian Community Foundation described the work as the perfect coming together of the football club and its community foundation with the commitment of the Open University “to support upskilling across local communities through exciting employability programmes that will support people in their journey back into employment.”

We are working with businesses to solve industry challenges, identify opportunities for further collaboration and develop lasting partnerships. Our work with the Scotch Whisky Research Institute collaboration is a strong example of this approach. A research collaboration, supported by a Knowledge Transfer Voucher scheme, is exploring Innovative biosensor technology, which could significantly improve the whisky industry production process and offer a competitive advantage.

We celebrated small business rural enterprise in partnership with the Scottish Council for Development and Industry through sponsorship of a new Highlands & Islands Business of the Year Award. The award was made to Mesamorphic, a Shetland based IT company who are also one of our leading Graduate Apprenticeship providers.

In April 2021 we re-affirmed our Memorandum of Understanding with the STUC setting out a range of collaborative activity which will open up training opportunities for the 540,000 Scottish workers who are trade unionists, the members of 39 affiliated trade unions and 20 Trades Union Councils. Shared goals include applying learning in the workplace through upskilling or reskilling; enhancing career development; and providing opportunities to those who have previously benefited least from education and training.

## **Health**

We offer routes into nursing and support those looking to transition into, or advance in, the health and social care sectors. Our funded programme, delivered in partnership with health boards across Scotland, includes routes for those already working in healthcare support worker roles to become registered nurses. This develops the NHS workforce and supports people to achieve degree level education while continuing to work.

The pandemic has had a significant impact on health and social care education pathways particularly in relation to practice learning which in turn can lead to graduates entering the workforce later than expected. The Open University has worked closely with education partners to ensure that students have been able to progress as normally as possible in their chosen fields through practice learning solutions and study options. Nursing students have experienced a challenging two years experiencing distressing situations in practice that they have never previously encountered. The unique online learning and tuition model has responded very well to increased student need for human contact from associate lecturers, practice tutors and central OU staff including adapting library practices to include telephone support.

We strive to provide the best support to our students encouraging them to achieve their goals across the whole student journey. Initiatives to support students included enhanced mental health counselling with Scottish Government support, free access to period products with Scottish Government support and providing digital grants via the Scottish Funding Council Digital Inclusion strand. We focused the latter at student carers and our care-experienced students and helped them to buy hardware or software; valued support to many of these students who only have their phones or shared equipment to study with.

## **Human Rights**

Research, from The Open University (OU) and published in the Journal of Medicine, Science and Law brought fresh input into the ongoing debate over reforms to the historic jury system in Scotland. It revealed that the majority of legal professionals in Scotland would consider getting rid of the current three-verdict system in criminal trials, guilty, not guilty and not proven, and moving to a new binary verdict system, proven and not proven. The research was the first published study focused exclusively on the opinions of the legal practitioners in Scotland on whether to overhaul the current jury system.

## **International**

African teachers can access a new school-based continuing professional development programme on OpenLearnCreate which was produced by The Open University. Our Zambian Education School-based Training (ZEST) project developed the programme in Zambia in collaboration with the Ministry of General Education, with the input of 600 teachers and District Officials from Central Province. It is supported by World Vision Zambia and funded by The Scottish Government. The programme is designed to support a learner-centred approach to active teaching and learning with six courses for teachers or those who support teachers.

Four secondary schools from across the Scottish Highlands took part in a Mock COP26 to raise awareness and increase understanding of the landmark global political conference. Organised in partnership with the Highland One World Development Education Centre and Developing the Young Workforce, the event involved Culloden Academy, Millburn Academy, Speyside High School and Dingwall Academy. Held virtually, the event brought together fifth-year and sixth-year students

across the four schools. They negotiated in groups for the best results for their chosen country, while trying to make a difference in the battle against climate change. We are now developing this concept as another way of engaging with schools across Scotland.

The COVID-19 pandemic has helped to spotlight the position of migrant workers, refugees and asylum seekers, with growing calls for new approaches to policy in this area at national and local level to promote the benefits these citizens can bring to the Scottish economy. We have collaborated with partners in the Universities of Parma, Edinburgh and Glasgow to collect the narratives of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers and explored the barriers and enablers to their life in UK. Based on findings, the collaborative project teams have produced a list of recommendations for the Scottish Government and local authorities.

## Poverty

A key focus of our work is ensuring that people from Scotland's most disadvantaged groups and communities can all access higher education at any stage of their lives to help improve their work and life opportunities.

We have a Scotland-wide network of Open Learning Champions, drawn from community and third sector organisations, who have undertaken a workshop with us to develop the skills and confidence to support people to access online learning, with a particular focus on non-accredited learning on OpenLearn and other free OU platforms.

"I am privileged to be doing a course called Succeeding in a Digital World. I am now building my confidence back, no longer the weakest link in my family." Learner, 2021

Our Open Pathways resource is designed for learners to plan their pathways into accredited learning from informal and online learning, including a specific pathway for those undertaking the Adult Achievement Award (SCQF6). We also have a module called Making Your Learning Count (SCQF7) which allows learners to convert 150 hours of informal, online and community-based learning into credit through reflection and group activities while developing skills for formal study. We have three Access modules (SCQF6) to prepare people for undergraduate study.

In the 2020-21 academic year we recruited as many students from the most deprived areas as the least deprived areas. Yet we know from our students that there is more to be done to break the barriers to education. We would like to see a review of support for part-time study to ensure that it is treated on an equitable basis with full-time and that barriers to study such as maintenance support are given urgent consideration. Evidence indicates the most deprived and rural areas will be hardest hit economically by the pandemic and in turn that will have a disproportionate impact on those with protected characteristics such as age, race, gender and disability.

**To what extent do you work collaboratively with other organisations in delivering the National Outcomes relevant to you?**

We work in partnership with Scottish Council Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) and many third sector organisations to reach people from the most deprived areas, people with disabilities and chronic health conditions, carers, ethnic minority groups, and people with care experience. We embed support into our curriculum design and delivery at every stage of the student's learning journey, including mental health support.

We have worked in partnership with community, third sector organisations and local authorities to co-create bespoke, open educational resources with learners on our OpenLearn Create platform and curated collections and portals on OpenLearn.

We make many of our open educational resources available with a creative commons licence so practitioners can use, share and adapt them to their learners' needs and contexts. We also make them available, as standard, in a range of formats (Word, PDF, Kindle) for accessibility and offline use.

Examples include:

- Everyday computer skills – a beginner level digital skills course co-created with disabled people, in partnership with Lead Scotland
- Caring Counts – a reflection and planning course for carers, co-created with carers and young adult carers, in partnership with Carers Trust Scotland
- Reflecting on Transitions – a reflection and planning course for refugees, migrants and other New Scots, in partnership with Bridges Programmes, Glasgow
- Volunteer Scotland have used the platform to develop a range of resources for volunteers and volunteer managers in collaboration with the OU's Centre for Voluntary Sector Leadership
- Skills Portal for Community Councils - a curated portal of free courses to upskill Scotland's community councillors

**Please share any examples of good practice, areas for improvement or practices that have not worked so well.**

A clear linking between the SFC's objectives and the National Outcomes would help better demonstrate how the Open University successfully contributes to them. While it is not beyond us as an organisation to do so it would also help show more clearly how the sector contributes. What we would want to avoid however are significant additional reporting burdens at a time that our core funding is failing to match rising costs; and the Scottish Government seeking to embed previously additionally funded work into our core funding without the additional monies.

## Written Submission from Oxfam Scotland

### 1. To what extent do the National Outcomes shape how your organisation works?

Oxfam Scotland views the National Outcomes, and the National Performance Framework as a whole, as a valuable – though still maturing – attempt to embed richer measures of national progress in Scotland. In the coming period, Scotland can build on this relatively strong framework, whilst seeking – with cross-party support – to strengthen it, including by deepening public engagement and boosting the level of Parliamentary scrutiny.

Internationally, the measurement of a nation state's progress is often dominated by the pursuit of growth, as measured by Gross Domestic Product (GDP), irrespective of how carbon-intensive and highly unequal that growth is. This is described by the World Health Organisation as a “pathological obsession” with an “inappropriate measure of progress that perversely rewards profit-generating activities which harm people and destroy ecosystems, undermining what we really value”.<sup>1</sup> GDP growth has come to be viewed by many as a goal in and of itself, rather than a means of delivering societal outcomes. Economic growth, when used to support health and education, and when those living in poverty are participants, has helped to reduce extreme poverty globally. At the same time, GDP has serious limitations – including that it doesn't consider wellbeing, environmental damage, or the informal economy, including unpaid work.<sup>2</sup> Crucially, the gains from growth are often captured by those with the most. We therefore need to better measure human progress using metric/s that capture genuine wellbeing and sustainability. While Scotland's NPF offers a positive alternative approach – one we actively highlight within our global influencing – it must continue to evolve.

While recognising the need to strengthen the NPF as a tool for policymaking, Oxfam uses the National Outcomes as an important frame for our work in Scotland. We seek to use them as a lever to encourage the Scottish Government, and all political parties, to implement aligned policy and spending decisions. Oxfam has engaged with the NPF since its inception and, at various stages, has worked with others to push for improvements to it, including the need for a comprehensive shift from a focus on economic growth to wellbeing.<sup>3</sup> Oxfam was a member of the Round Table on the NPF, chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, but unfortunately this platform – which encouraged cross-party participation, as well as broad engagement from civil society organisations – no longer exists in its previous form. However, we hope to engage in the upcoming review of the Outcomes by the Scottish Government and COSLA.

Oxfam has also sought to contribute to, and encourage, an evolution in the way success is measured in Scotland, including via the Oxfam Humankind Index. Created in 2012, the Index was one of the first attempts in the UK to develop a multi-dimensional measure of prosperity. The aim was to assess Scotland's prosperity through a holistic and more representative measure. Participation was core to the creation of the Index: we asked people across Scotland what really mattered to them. This involved a multi-stage process that engaged almost 3,000 people. A

particular effort was made to reach out to seldom heard communities: groups whose interests are so often marginalised in formal policy making process. In 2014, we also published *The Scottish Doughnut: A Safe and Just Operating Space for Scotland*<sup>4</sup> as a tool to drive progress on the twin challenges: delivering a decent standard of living for everyone, whilst living within environmental limits. The Doughnut allows people to visualise a space, between planetary boundaries and a social floor, which is environmentally and socially safe.

Reflecting our ambition for the National Outcomes to drive policy and spending action, Oxfam is delivering a joint campaign for a new National Outcome to fully value and invest in all forms of care and all those who provide it. This campaign is being run in partnership with Carers Scotland, Scottish Care, One Parent Families Scotland and the Scottish Women’s Budget Group. Currently, care is invisible in the 11 existing National Outcomes. While recognising the remit of this Inquiry does not include how “appropriate and effective” the existing National Outcomes are, we include more information on this campaign in Question 10, “areas for improvement”. We also welcome the Committee’s stated intention to undertake work on the Scottish Government’s review of the National Outcomes later in 2022/23.

**2. How do you know which National Outcomes your organisation contributes towards? How do you demonstrate this to your organisation and more widely to others?**

As an anti-poverty organisation, much of Oxfam’s work aligns most closely to the National Outcome on Poverty. However, our work also links to several other Outcomes, including, but not limited to: Economy; Fair Work and Business; Environment; Human Rights; and International. We seek to utilise the National Outcomes – and their broad relationship to the Sustainable Development Goals – within our advocacy activities. We also amplify the overarching Purpose of the NPF, including the overarching aims to give opportunities to “all people living in Scotland” while increasing “wellbeing”. We reference the NPF regularly within our influencing activities and our outputs are routinely shared with MSPs and promoted via our public channels.

**3. How empowered is your organisation to do something different (should it wish) to achieve the National Outcomes relevant to you?**

Oxfam Scotland can choose to work on any area of work covered by the National Outcomes, or beyond. In practice, our work is shaped by several factors – most importantly, our anti-poverty focus, but also by our assessment of poverty in Scotland, and where we believe opportunities for progress are greatest.

**4. How is your organisation held to account for how your actions and decisions impact on the National Outcomes?**

As a non-public body, we are not held to account for how our actions and decisions impact on the National Outcomes.

**5. How are the National Outcomes reflected in everyday decision taking?**



Oxfam Scotland promotes the National Outcomes as a positive attempt to embed richer measures of national progress, and we integrate them within our ongoing policy and advocacy activities in Scotland.

## **6. When it comes to spending priorities or providing funding to others, what role do the National Outcomes play?**

Oxfam Scotland's spending and funding decisions link directly to our charitable purpose and priorities.

The Scottish Government says: "The Scottish Budget is underpinned by Scotland's National Performance Framework". Positively, the Scottish Budget now details the "primary" and "secondary" National Outcomes which spending by different government portfolios is designed to support.<sup>5</sup> While useful, clearer links could be established between each National Outcome and the spending decisions put in place to help achieve them; recognising that progress will also be driven by a range of non-spending decisions. The Carnegie UK Trust has said that while the "intention is strong" in relation to the National Outcomes, they are concerned by "the slow, stilted nature of the change" and say the budget process is seen as "the stumbling block to shifting to a larger-scale vision on national wellbeing".<sup>6</sup>

The SPICe's Financial Scrutiny Unit says that attributing outcomes to a single budget line is "notoriously difficult", but that "it should still be possible for parliamentarians to gain an understanding of the extent to which a budget line has made a positive contribution to an outcome".<sup>7</sup> Improving these links at national level would enhance the ability of Parliament, and civil society, to assess whether spending aligns with the Outcomes during their scrutiny of the Scottish Budget, while setting a positive example for local authorities and all public bodies. For example, the NPF website could link each Outcome (the objective), to the key spending and other policies designed to support their delivery, and the data reflecting the progress achieved (measured by disaggregated quantitative data, bolstered by lived experience).

Positively, the SNP has committed to establishing a "Wellbeing Budget" to ensure "all budget decisions benefit the wellbeing of people across the country".<sup>8</sup> It would seem essential for this to enhance links between the Scottish budget and the NPF. However, Scotland is not the only country seeking to make progress in this area, and the Committee could usefully examine evolving international practice. For example, in Italy, where there are 12 domains of wellbeing, ministries are legally required to outline how each budget line item will impact wellbeing indicators.<sup>9</sup> In addition, in 2019, New Zealand launched a Wellbeing Budget.<sup>10</sup> A recent report commissioned by Children in Scotland, Cattanach and the Carnegie UK Trust also points to a countries and sub-state actors which could provide further insights including, but not limited to, Austria, Bhutan, Canada, France, New South Wales, Sweden and Ireland – with the latter creating a wellbeing dashboard to inform the budget process as part of a commitment to move towards SDG budgeting.<sup>11</sup> The research highlights that some "record 'negative tags' on budget items that harm climate targets or 'positive tags' for budget lines which support, say, gender equality goals or spending on children (as Mexico is doing)".

**7. To what extent is any public sector funding you receive contingent upon demonstrating your contribution to delivery of the National Outcomes?**

N/A

**8. Where do the National Outcomes sit within the range of priorities and demands on your organisation?**

Oxfam Scotland uses the National Outcomes as a key tool to drive policy and spending action in Scotland.

**9. To what extent do you work collaboratively with other organisations in delivering the National Outcomes relevant to you?**

Oxfam Scotland works with a range of partners to deliver activities which connect to the National Outcomes. For example, we work with the End Child Poverty Campaign, the Scottish Campaign on Rights to Social Security, the Poverty Alliance, Stop Climate Chaos Scotland and Scotland's International Development Alliance.

We have also worked collaboratively to enhance scrutiny of progress while reflecting the Scottish Government's description of the NPF as Scotland's way to "localise" the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).<sup>12</sup> While this ambition is positive, academic research suggests "at the level of indicators, the NPF and SDGs are aligned, but not especially closely".<sup>13</sup> The SDG Scotland Network also says the relationship is much looser than it should be and, in practice, this means that it is unclear how progress towards the SDGs can be achieved using the National Outcomes.<sup>14</sup> The Network argues that significant work is needed to deepen the connection. Nevertheless, in 2019, Oxfam Scotland worked with the Network, and the University of the West of Scotland, to perform a snap-shot review of Scotland's progress against the SDGs.<sup>15</sup> The report features inputs from multiple civil society organisations and found that – despite signs of policy and political commitment in Scotland – more needed to be done to deliver the SDGs in Scotland. Various submissions sought to link the SDGs with relevant National Outcomes and the NPF as a whole.

**10. Please share any examples of good practice, areas for improvement or practices that have not worked so well**

Oxfam Scotland views the NPF as a 'work in progress' with the Committee's inquiry, and the upcoming review of the National Outcomes, a significant opportunity to enhance it. Below we outline potential areas for improvement:

**Fully Integrate Learning from International Best Practice**

We welcome the Scottish Government's role in founding, and supporting, the Wellbeing Economy Governments initiative, a joint platform with New Zealand, Iceland and others. Oxfam Scotland was involved in the early stages of this initiative, which has evolved into a government-to-government platform with a

stated aim of enabling “cross- government engagement, learning and collaboration” focused on “delivering a wellbeing economy for citizens and environment”.<sup>16</sup> The Committee could usefully endorse this approach, while independently examining international best practice at a time when, as the World Health Organisation notes, “some countries are making a conscious effort to shift accounting away from GDP fundamentalism”.<sup>17</sup> For example, it points to Finland, which has committed to using the Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI), which measures sustainability, while documenting the growing difference between GDP and the GPI driven primarily by high carbon emissions and increasing income inequality.

A recent UWS-Oxfam Partnership’ report<sup>18</sup> also noted that many countries have started thinking about multi- dimensional approaches to measuring wellbeing or are already implementing them. For example, it points to Germany’s framework which is underpinned by 12 dimensions of wellbeing and 46 indicators<sup>19</sup>. New Zealand’s Living Standards Framework<sup>20</sup> features 12 domains of current wellbeing and four oriented toward future wellbeing; these are underpinned by 65 indicators and the first Wellbeing Report is due in 2022.<sup>21</sup> The Canadian Government has also begun developing a ‘Quality of Life’ framework.<sup>22</sup> While they have signalled a desire to learn from the “innovative work” in Scotland<sup>23</sup>, learning generated in Canada and elsewhere should also inform the next phase of Scotland’s NPF. As well as examining international best practice directly, the Committee could invite the Scottish Government to clearly demonstrate how it is integrating this learning into the next phase of the NPF in Scotland.

While noting that “no single country is already deploying all of them”, research<sup>24</sup> commissioned by Children in Scotland, Cattanach and the Carnegie UK Trust identifies a range of positive international approaches, including:

- The importance of a high-level mission or vision, underpinned by wellbeing measures and metrics;
- Using disaggregated data to understand how outcomes are distributed between individuals or groups (the research recommends the creation of a “Wellbeing Distribution Map”);
- Recognition that the economy is in service of wellbeing goals, not a goal in and of itself;
- The need for frameworks to encompass environmental considerations, so as not to compromise the wellbeing of people around the world and that of future generations;
- The importance of public involvement – especially of marginalised groups and those whose wellbeing needs particular attention – to enhance the “legitimacy and mandate” of the framework;
- The need to map and regularly report on current progress;
- The need to understand how spending relates to targets, while recognising the role of wider actions;
- The need to align spending and actions through systems-wide, evidence-based theories of change that translate the metrics and targets to policies and actions;
- The importance of ministerial responsibility and accountability for both

- reporting and outcomes, to ensure the agenda is built in rather than bolted on;
- The importance of Parliamentary oversight, including feedback from stakeholders and the wider public, supported by Government auditors who can offer quality assurance and independent auditing;
- The need to enshrine the vision, reporting schedule, delivery mechanisms and plans for reviews and updates in legislation to ensure they are ‘hard-wired’ into government processes, with relevant roles clearly understood, and making them more likely to endure through a change of government;
- The necessity for sustained championship, while ensuring there is an institutional ‘home’, and the a sufficiently resourced independent (and politically neutral) watchdog function to ensure regular reporting, undertake additional research and hold governments to account;
- The need to ensure officials across government have the support, guidelines, tools and training they need;
- The necessity of cross-departmental work given that wellbeing issues do not align neatly with government silos nor pertain to a single sector.

### **Clarify Accountability and Ownership**

The Scottish Government says the NPF is “for all of Scotland”<sup>25</sup> with the Deputy First Minister saying that it “sets the vision for the type of nation we want to be”.<sup>26</sup> This is a positive aspiration. However, there appears to be a gap between this vision, and the legal requirements which underpin the Outcomes. As per the Community Empowerment Act, the actors who must “have regard” to the Outcomes are defined as: (a) a cross-border public authority, (b) any other Scottish public authority, and (c) any other person carrying out functions of a public nature.” The Scottish Government’s factsheet on the Act confirms that the Outcomes are designed to “guide the work of public authorities”.<sup>27</sup> While the Government is required to consult on the Outcomes, SPICe describes them as representing “the broad policy aims that the Scottish Government intends to work towards achieving”.<sup>28</sup> There is perhaps a need to clarify the function of the NPF as setting a national vision for progress, while also serving as an accountability tool to monitor the progress achieved by public bodies that are legally required to “have regard” to the National Outcomes.

In 2018, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution committed “to ensure that the NPF is fully embedded throughout the public sector”. The Committee may wish to consider if this has been achieved. Oxfam Scotland is supporting the work of Scotland’s International Development Alliance on the upcoming Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill.<sup>29</sup> One hope for this Bill is that it narrows the distance between the ambitions of the National Outcomes and their delivery. In this regard, the SNP has committed that the Bill will “make it a statutory requirement for all public bodies and local authorities in Scotland to consider the long term consequences of their policy decisions on the wellbeing of the people they serve and take full account of the short and long term sustainable development impact of their decisions”.<sup>30</sup> Given that the pursuit of “wellbeing” features in both this Bill, and the NPF’s Purpose statement, it is hoped the Bill will be used to accelerate delivery of the National Outcomes.

## **Bolster Public and Parliamentary Consultation**

If the National Outcomes are to become the key focus for policy and spending action by the Scottish Government and public agencies, as well as for Scotland as a whole, their status must be enhanced. This inquiry, and the upcoming review of the Outcomes, are critical opportunities to build political and public awareness of, and engagement with, the National Outcomes – it must be a springboard for sustained engagement over the next five years. Crucially to deliver on the Government’s ambitions for the NPF to be “for all of Scotland”<sup>31</sup>, the Outcomes must transparently reflect the priorities of the people of Scotland. This can only be achieved through meaningful consultation at depth and scale. Ministers are legally required<sup>32</sup> to “consult— (a) such persons who appear to them to represent the interests of communities in Scotland, and (b) such other persons as they consider appropriate.” However, the breadth and depth of consultation is not stipulated. There is also no requirement for consultation on how progress is measured. At a time when Scotland is pursuing other forms of participative democracy<sup>33</sup>, there is a need to deepen opportunities for engagement with the NPF, both in the shaping of the National Outcomes and in subsequent monitoring of progress.

Ahead of the 2018 review of the National Outcomes, the Scottish Government’s statutory consultation exercise<sup>34</sup> aimed to determine a set of Outcomes which “reflects the values and aspirations of the people of Scotland”.<sup>35</sup> Oxfam Scotland supported the consultation with the Carnegie UK Trust.<sup>36</sup> This involved 20 discussions groups led by the Trust, and 10 street stalls delivered by Oxfam. These asked ‘What sort of Scotland do you want to live in?’. The groups secured input from 215 people, with the street stalls engaging 300 people across deprived and affluent areas and each of the eight electoral regions. However, the scale of this dedicated engagement exercise was limited by time and resource.

In its report to the Scottish Parliament<sup>37</sup>, the Scottish Government said the findings were bolstered by the Fairer and Healthier Scotland<sup>38</sup> conversations in 2015 and 2016. It said these comprised “substantial public engagement, involving more than 16,000 participants at public events” across Scotland, with input from diverse audiences. It said that more than 400,000 people were reached through social media, websites, blogs and other platforms. The Government also commissioned the Children’s Parliament to “engage the views of children”, reaching 102 children. Finally, the Government said the findings from “relevant Scottish Government consultations and strategic documents” were “accounted for” in the development of the draft National Outcome presented to Parliament.

While these activities were useful in informing the National Outcomes to boost the legitimacy of the National Outcomes, we believe the depth of future consultations, including the upcoming exercise, should be increased to ensure the Outcomes fully and transparently, reflect the public’s priorities. Critically, this must appropriately reflect Scotland’s demographics, including ensuring deeper engagement with children and young people, reflecting the inter- generational

importance of the National Outcomes, with fully disaggregated consultation data published.

By way of comparison, Germany’s performance framework was established after a dedicated “national dialogue” launched by Chancellor Angela Merkel in 2015 to establish how people define “wellbeing”.<sup>39</sup> The German government says this “gave everybody in Germany the chance to make their voices heard and to contribute their ideas – either in person at about 200 events held up and down the country, online or by using a simple postcard”.<sup>40</sup> A total of 15,750 people took part and, based on the findings, the government identified 12 dimensions and 46 indicators which “describe and measure the current status and trends in wellbeing in Germany” via an Interactive Report.<sup>41</sup>

Following the legally required consultation process, Scottish Ministers must prepare draft National Outcomes, and consult the Scottish Parliament during a 40-day period. In 2018, the Convenor of the lead committee highlighted the limited time available to scrutinise the draft Outcomes, with the committee “unable to give any consideration to other committees’ responses”. The Convenor issued a “plea for more scrutiny time in the future”.<sup>42</sup> The Committee’s report recommended that the Scottish Government “takes steps to extend the timescale for the Parliamentary scrutiny of the next draft National Performance Framework so that Committees are able to conduct a more in-depth scrutiny of the revised National Outcomes and the consultation undertaken to produce them”.<sup>43</sup> The Convenor also said the committee would “like to have some engagement with civic Scotland while the outcomes are in draft form”. Therefore, alongside considering the depth and quality of the Scottish Government’s consultation which informs the proposed National Outcomes, the Committee could also usefully re-state the need to increase the time and depth of Parliamentary consultation on them – thereby increasing the overall quality of the consultation process.

### **Clarify the Overarching “Purpose”**

Oxfam Scotland hopes the upcoming review of the National Outcomes will be used to enhance the overarching Purpose as set out within the NPF. As highlighted in the 2018 review, there is a need to separate the Purpose, with the means of achieving it. In 2018, an explicit aim was inserted to “increase the wellbeing of people living in Scotland”. While this is a very positive addition, it still sits alongside the aim to “create sustainable and inclusive growth”. We consider this to be a means, not an end. As per the invitation issued by the lead Committee during the previous Parliamentary consultation, the Government should “separate out the means from the desired ends to more clearly focus on the Scottish Government’s vision for the future of Scotland”.<sup>44</sup> This Committee should re-state this call.

### **Address Gaps in the Existing National Outcomes**

It is vital for the upcoming review of the National Outcomes to meaningfully test if they remain fit for purpose, and the Committee should make this expectation clear to the Scottish Government prior to the review getting underway. For example, a

unique collaboration of organisations – Oxfam Scotland, Carers Scotland, Scottish Care, One Parent Families Scotland and the Scottish Women’s Budget Group – is calling for a new National Outcome on value and investing in all forms of care – both paid and unpaid. While Scotland is one of only a few countries in the world with a specific objective to increase people’s wellbeing, we believe a key ingredient is missing: fully valuing care and carers – most of whom are women. We argue that to build a fairer, resilient and caring Scotland as we seek to recover from Covid-19, we must tackle this glaring omission. While care must be fully reflected in the delivery of every Outcome, we argue that its foundational importance requires a dedicated Outcome to help drive the transformative policy and spending actions we need, whilst also ensuring a robust set of National Indicators allows progress to be monitored.

The partner organisations have worked with the University of the West of Scotland to develop a blue-print for a new Outcome, in consultation with unpaid carers, care workers, people experiencing care, representatives of care organisations, and academic experts.<sup>45</sup> The Outcome proposed is: “*We fully value and invest in those experiencing care and all those providing it*”. The report also identifies indicators to track progress. We are calling for the Scottish Government to test this proposal within the upcoming review, improve it if necessary, and then embed it. Positively, the First Minister has committed that the proposal will be considered in the upcoming review.<sup>46</sup> International analysis by the University of the West of Scotland found that embedding a dedicated National Outcome of this sort would make Scotland one of the first countries in the world to make this comprehensive and explicit commitment.<sup>47</sup>

### **Embed Systems to Deliver Policy Coherence Across the National Outcomes**

The delivery of each National Outcome must be achieved through a policy coherent approach – specifically, this must ensure that work undertaken in relation to each National Outcome does not undermine delivery of another. The planned Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill offers an opportunity to embed this approach in statute.<sup>48</sup> For example, it could require public bodies to proactively and transparently use existing tools within their decision-making to ensure the interconnectedness of the National Outcomes is recognised.<sup>49</sup>

Positively, the Deputy First Minister says the review will “provide an opportunity to inform the development of the proposed Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill”, which he says will place duties on public bodies and local government to take account of the impact of their decisions on sustainable development, in Scotland and internationally.<sup>50</sup> It is critical that this commitment is delivered to ensure the Outcomes are pursued in ways which support sustainable development globally, recognising the need to ensure the pursuit of wellbeing in Scotland does not undermine the achievement of that goal internationally, or for future generations.

## Increase the Frequency and Quality of Reporting and Scrutiny

Scottish Ministers “must prepare and publish reports about the extent to which the National Outcomes have been achieved”.<sup>51</sup> However, reports must only be prepared and published “at such times as the Scottish Ministers consider appropriate”.<sup>52</sup> Improving the frequency and quality of reporting on the National Outcomes – individually, and collectively – would enhance accountability and boost the status of the Outcomes within decision-making.

The Scottish Government uses 81 indicators which it says help us understand if progress is being made.<sup>53</sup> Performance is assessed as “improving”, “maintaining” or “worsening”. As of 5 April 2022, the Scottish Government assessed that performance against 13 indicators was improving (16%); 37 were maintaining (46%), and 10 were worsening (12%). However, performance against 15 Indicators (19%) was still to be confirmed and six indicators (7%) were still in development. In October 2021, the Deputy First Minister highlighted that work to complete the data set was “significantly disrupted” due to Covid-19 and provided a timeline to resolve this.<sup>54</sup> It is vital that a robust approach to reporting is established, both before and after the review of the National Outcomes. A consultative approach is also essential to ensure the National Indicators are fit for purpose, and that a rounded assessment is available.

A fully intersectional approach to data collection is also vital, recognising that individuals’ outcomes will be impacted by a range of overlapping characteristics. Positively, the Scottish Government has produced an Equality Evidence Finder<sup>55</sup> containing data split by age, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status and transgender. However, the platform is “still in development” and users “may encounter errors”. Progress to increase the functionality of the Finder will be important. However, in relation to gender quality, Engender has highlighted that “the NPF is not well gendered”; they say “only two of its 81 indicators relate specifically to women, and where sex-disaggregated data on individual indicators does exist, this is not well integrated.”<sup>56</sup> The Committee should challenge the Scottish Government to ensure this is addressed in the next phase of the Framework.

While quantitative data collection and publication is important, the lived experience of people across Scotland must also be reflected when measuring performance. The Equality Evidence Finder includes links to “Lived Experience Research”<sup>57</sup>, including via Get Heard Scotland. However, further consideration could be given to co-locating quantitative and qualitative data side-by-side for each Outcome to provide a richer picture of the progress achieved.

In 2019, the Scottish Government published the report “Scotland’s Wellbeing – Delivering the National Outcomes”<sup>58</sup> with an aim of bringing together – for the first time – the “existing evidence and analysis on a number of key issues, trends and features of Scotland’s performance”. While acknowledging that “it does not tell



decision makers everything they need to know”, the report was intended to “provide a holistic picture of Scotland’s current and longer-term performance, across social, economic and environmental indicators, presenting an overall picture of wellbeing”. While a welcome addition, the report should evolve into a more regular and comprehensive means of communicating progress, while ensuring it supports Parliamentary scrutiny.<sup>59</sup> The committee could examine whether a report of this nature should become an annual requirement and whether individual Parliamentary Committees should be appointed to lead scrutiny of progress on each National Outcome. Any recommendations to enhance both reporting and scrutiny requirements could be placed in statute via the Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill, alongside measures to deepen consultation on the formulation of the National Outcomes and to boost engagement with reporting.

Finally, when the NPF was introduced in 2007, delivery timescales were included. This approach was changed in 2018, with the Chief Economist explaining that “the new NPF does not have time-specific commitments, because it is about continuous improvement”.<sup>60</sup> Continuous improvement is, of course, essential, but the lack of time-bound commitments within the existing NPF arguably weakens the level of regular accountability for the progress achieved.

<sup>1</sup> The WHO Council on the Economics of Health for All, Valuing Health for All: Rethinking and building a whole-of-society approach (March 2022): [https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/council-on-the-economics-of-health-for-all/who\\_councilbrief3.pdf?sfvrsn=b121f943\\_11&download=true](https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/council-on-the-economics-of-health-for-all/who_councilbrief3.pdf?sfvrsn=b121f943_11&download=true)

<sup>2</sup> Oxfam, An Economy for the 99% (January 2017): [https://www-cdn.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file\\_attachments/bp-economy-for-99-percent-160117-en.pdf](https://www-cdn.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file_attachments/bp-economy-for-99-percent-160117-en.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Revising Scotland’s National Performance Framework, A briefing (2021): [https://ww2.rspb.org.uk/Images/NPF\\_joint\\_briefing\\_EET\\_tcm9-346658.pdf](https://ww2.rspb.org.uk/Images/NPF_joint_briefing_EET_tcm9-346658.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Oxfam, The Scottish Doughnut (2014): <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/the-scottish-doughnut-a-safe-and-just-operating-space-for-scotland-323371/>

<sup>5</sup> Scottish government, Scottish Budget 2022 to 2023 (December 2021): <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-budget-2022-23/documents/>

<sup>6</sup> Official Report, Finance & Constitution Committee (11 Nov 20): <https://archive2021.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=12932&mode=pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe), Linking budgets to outcomes – the impossible dream? (June 7, 2019): <https://spice-spotlight.scot/2019/06/07/linking-budgets-to-outcomes-the-impossible-dream/>

<sup>8</sup> SNP Manifesto (April 2021): <https://www.snp.org/manifesto/>

<sup>9</sup> Wellbeing Economy Alliance, Italy – Equitable, Sustainable Wellbeing Indicators: <https://weall.org/resource/italy-equitable-sustainable-wellbeing-indicators>

<sup>10</sup> The Treasury New Zealand, The Wellbeing Budget, (2019): <https://www.treasury.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2019-05/b19-wellbeing-budget.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Being Bold: Building Budgets for Children’s Wellbeing, Katherine Trebeck with Amy Baker (2021): <https://childreninscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/BeingBold-Report.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Scottish Government, Sustainable Development Goals:

<https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/sustainable-development-goals>

<sup>13</sup> <https://globalgoals.scot/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/SDG-Discussion-paper-February-2019.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> SDG Scotland Network: <https://globalgoals.scot/>

<sup>15</sup> UWS-Oxfam Partnership, On Target for 2030? An independent snapshot review of Scotland’s progress against the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (July 2019):

<http://uwsoxfampartnership.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/On-Target-July-2019-Web-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Scottish Government, Wellbeing Economy Governments (accessed 12 April 2022):

<https://www.gov.scot/groups/wellbeing-economy-governments-wego/> <sup>17</sup> The WHO

Council on the Economics of Health for All, Valuing Health for All: Rethinking and building a whole-of-society approach (March 2022):

[https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/council-on-the-economics-of-health-for-all/who\\_councilbrief3.pdf?sfvrsn=b121f943\\_11&download=true](https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/council-on-the-economics-of-health-for-all/who_councilbrief3.pdf?sfvrsn=b121f943_11&download=true)

<sup>18</sup> UWS-Oxfam Partnership, Towards a Scotland That Cares: a New National Outcome on Care for the National Performance Framework (November 2021): <https://research-portal.uws.ac.uk/en/publications/towards-a-scotland-that-cares-a-new-national-outcome-on-care-for->

<sup>19</sup> The Federal Government of Germany, Wellbeing in Germany: <https://www.gut-leben-in-deutschland.de/en/>

<sup>20</sup> The Treasury, Our Living Standards Framework: <https://www.treasury.govt.nz/information-and-services/nz-economy/higher-living-standards/our-living-standards-framework>

<sup>21</sup> The Treasury, Wellbeing Report: <https://www.treasury.govt.nz/publications/strategies-and-plans/wellbeing-report>

<sup>22</sup> Government of Canada, Measuring What Matters: Toward a Quality of Life

Strategy for Canada (2021): <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/services/publications/measuring-what-matters-toward-quality-life-strategy-canada.html>

<sup>23</sup> Government of Canada, Measuring What Matters – Towards a Quality of Life Strategy

for Canada (April 19, 2021): <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/services/publications/measuring-what-matters-toward-quality-life-strategy-canada.html>

<sup>24</sup> Being Bold: Building Budgets for Children’s Wellbeing, Katherine

Trebeck with Amy Baker (2021): <https://childreninscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/BeingBold-Report.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> Scottish Government, National Performance Framework, What it is (accessed 5.4.22):

<https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/what-it>

<sup>26</sup> Swinney, J. (2021) Letter from the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for COVID Recovery to the Convener of the Finance and Public Administration Committee, 6 October. Online

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/committees/current-and-previous-committees/session-6-finance-and-public-administration-committee/correspondence/2021/national-performance-framework>

<sup>27</sup> Scot Gov, Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act: summary (2017):

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/community-empowerment-scotland-act-summary/>

<sup>28</sup> SPICe Briefing: National Outcomes Consultation 2018:

<https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/what-sort-of-scotland-do-you-want-to-live-in/> <sup>29</sup> Update on proposed Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill,

Scotland’s International Development Alliance (December 2021):

<https://www.intdevalliance.scot/news/update-proposed-wellbeing-and-sustainable-development-bill>

<sup>30</sup> SNP Manifesto (April 2021): <https://www.snp.org/manifesto/>

<sup>31</sup> Scottish Government, National Performance Framework, What it is (accessed 5.4.22):

<https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/what-it>

<sup>32</sup> Scot Gov, Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act: Summary (2017):

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/community-empowerment-scotland-act-summary/>

<sup>33</sup> Scotland’s Climate Assembly: <https://www.climateassembly.scot/>

<sup>34</sup> National Outcomes Consultation 2018, SPICe (12 April 2018): <https://sp-bpr-en-prod-cdnep.azureedge.net/published/2018/4/12/National-Outcomes-Consultation-2018/SB%2018-26.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> National Outcomes for Scotland, Consultation process undertaken to produce draft National Outcomes for Scotland (29 March 2018):

[https://archive2021.parliament.scot/S5\\_HealthandSportCommittee/Inquiries/Updated\\_National\\_Outcomes.pdf](https://archive2021.parliament.scot/S5_HealthandSportCommittee/Inquiries/Updated_National_Outcomes.pdf)

- 36 SPICe Briefing: National Outcomes Consultation 2018: <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/what-sort-of-scotland-do-you-want-to-live-in/>
- 37 National Outcomes for Scotland, Consultation process undertaken to produce draft National Outcomes for Scotland (March 2018): [https://archive2021.parliament.scot/S5\\_HealthandSportCommittee/Inquiries/Updated\\_National\\_Outcomes.pdf](https://archive2021.parliament.scot/S5_HealthandSportCommittee/Inquiries/Updated_National_Outcomes.pdf)
- 38 Scottish Government, Fairer Scotland (accessed 28 September 2020): <https://blogs.gov.scot/fairer-scotland/get-in-touch/>
- 39 The Federal Government of Germany, The national dialogue and its scientific analysis: <https://www.gut-leben-in-deutschland.de/report/national-dialogue>
- 40 The Federal Government of Germany, About the Dialogue: [https://buergerdialog.gut-leben-in-deutschland.de/EN/Home/home\\_node.html](https://buergerdialog.gut-leben-in-deutschland.de/EN/Home/home_node.html)
- 41 The Federal Government of Germany, Wellbeing in Germany: <https://www.gut-leben-in-deutschland.de/en/>
- 42 Scottish Parliament, Official Report (24 May 2018): <https://archive2021.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=11553&i=104800>
- 43 Local Government and Communities Committee, Report on the Consultation on the Scottish Government's Draft National Outcomes (15 May 2018): <https://sp-bpr-en-prod-cdnep.azureedge.net/published/LGC/2018/5/15/Report-on-the-Consultation-on-the-Scottish-Government-s-Draft-National-Outcomes/LGCS052018R7.pdf>
- 44 Local Government and Communities Committee, Report on the Consultation on the Scottish Government's Draft National Outcomes (15 May 2018): <https://sp-bpr-en-prod-cdnep.azureedge.net/published/LGC/2018/5/15/Report-on-the-Consultation-on-the-Scottish-Government-s-Draft-National-Outcomes/LGCS052018R7.pdf>
- 45 UWS-Oxfam Partnership, Towards a Scotland That Cares: a New National Outcome on Care for the National Performance Framework (November 2021): <https://research-portal.uws.ac.uk/en/publications/towards-a-scotland-that-cares-a-new-national-outcome-on-care-for->
- 46 [https://www.scottishparliament.tv/meeting/meeting-of-the-parliament-december-2-2021?clip\\_start=12:48:05&clip\\_end=12:49:22](https://www.scottishparliament.tv/meeting/meeting-of-the-parliament-december-2-2021?clip_start=12:48:05&clip_end=12:49:22)
- 47 UWS-Oxfam Partnership, Towards a Scotland That Cares: a New National Outcome on Care for the National Performance Framework (November 2021): <https://research-portal.uws.ac.uk/en/publications/towards-a-scotland-that-cares-a-new-national-outcome-on-care-for->
- 48 <https://www.intdevalliance.scot/news/update-proposed-wellbeing-and-sustainable-development-bill>
- 49 [https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/sites/default/files/documents/Outcomes-focused\\_Policymaking\\_SDG\\_NPF\\_FINAL.pdf](https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/sites/default/files/documents/Outcomes-focused_Policymaking_SDG_NPF_FINAL.pdf)
- 50 Letter from Deputy First Minister to Finance and Public Administration Committee, (6 Oct 2021). <https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/committees/current-and-previous-committees/session-6-finance-and-public-administration-committee/correspondence/2021/national-performance-framework>
- 51 Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2015/6/section/3/enacted>
- 52 Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2015/6/section/3/enacted>
- 53 Scottish Government, Performance Overview (accessed 23 August 2021): <https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/measuring-progress/performance-overview>
- 54 Letter from Deputy First Minister to Finance and Public Administration Committee, (6 Oct 2021). <https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/committees/current-and-previous-committees/session-6-finance-and-public-administration-committee/correspondence/2021/national-performance-framework>
- 55 Scottish Government, Equality Evidence Finder: <https://scotland.shinyapps.io/sg-equality-evidence-finder/#equality-npf-top>
- 56 <https://www.parlaimaid-alba.scot/~media/committ/1078>
- 57 Scot Gov, Equality Evidence Finder, Publications and Outputs on Lived Experience: <https://scotland.shinyapps.io/sg-equality-evidence-finder/#equality-npf-top>
- 58 Scot Gov, Scotland's Wellbeing Report (2019): [https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/sites/default/files/documents/NPF\\_Scotland%27s\\_Wellbeing\\_May2019.pdf](https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/sites/default/files/documents/NPF_Scotland%27s_Wellbeing_May2019.pdf)
- 59 SPICe Spotlight, Linking budgets to outcomes – the impossible dream? (7 June, 2019): <https://spice-spotlight.scot/2019/06/07/linking-budgets-to-outcomes-the-impossible-dream/>

# Written Submission from Public Health Scotland

## Response summary

Public Health Scotland welcomes this call for evidence from the Finance and Public Administration Committee. We regard the national performance framework as a vital part of delivering the Christie Commission's vision for Scotland's organisations working together to change outcomes for the public, rather than for administrative convenience. This is an important opportunity to strengthen its implementation.

In summary, we believe the national performance framework:

- Is **fundamentally important** as a statement of the shared national priorities and a clear expression of what wellbeing means for the people of Scotland today.
- Can be strengthened by tightening the **accountability** for contributing towards the outcomes and indicators. For example, the framework could specify the public bodies expected to contribute towards delivering each outcome indicator. This would counter the current 'bottom-up' accountability of the framework of bodies self-selecting which outcomes they contribute to.
- Could foster greater **collaboration** by specifying lead national bodies responsible for bringing together organisations to work towards specific outcomes.
- Could be more **relevant** to the public, improve **accountability** and support local **prioritisation** if the indicators were all available at the same local level. This would let people see how their local area compared to others across Scotland, improving **accountability** and informing local **prioritisation** decisions.
- Could be **more accessible** if the measures were aggregated into a single measure (like to GDP) but that gave an overall measure of wellbeing. This would be further strengthened if it could be used to track progress across time, showing whether wellbeing was improving or declining.
- Could be strengthened by filling in some of the **gaps** in the suite of indicators (e.g. vaccination uptake) and making sure that they match the shared priorities for Scotland.

We look forward to hearing the committee's consideration of the national performance framework and would be pleased to provide evidence in person or recommend other experts.

## Response to questions

### **To what extent do the National Outcomes shape how your organisation works?**

For us, the national outcomes – as qualitative statements of what we want Scotland to look like – are important but not as influential as the outcome indicators – the quantitative measures of Scotland’s performance in these areas – which underpin them.

The national outcome indicators play an important role in our strategic planning. We are an outcomes-focused organisation and need to be able to demonstrate the difference we make to Scotland. The outcome indicators are shared measures, which are regularly available, describing where Scotland is at right now. This makes them a valuable point of orientation for our strategic planning.

The presence of these measures in our strategic plan helps us prioritise our work so that we are focusing on work that positively impacts them, not other measures.

We recognise that no one organisation can deliver the improvements in these measures alone. Collaboration across sectors with a broad range of partners will be needed. Currently we have partnership with a wide range of different organisations. In the future we want to make our collective contribution to the national outcome indicators more prominent across our partnerships.

However, as we work in partnership with other organisations, we come across bodies who do not plan against the national performance framework’s outcomes or outcome indicators.

- Sometimes this is because they feel their area of work is not especially well represented in the national performance framework.
- Other times it is because of the misconception that aligning to the national performance framework outcome indicators means the bodies will be solely accountable for delivering change in these outcomes.

### **How do you know which National Outcomes your organisation contributes towards? How do you demonstrate this to your organisation and more widely to others?**

We identify the outcome indicators we contribute to through our strategic planning. As Scotland’s national public health body, our starting point is life expectancy and health inequalities in Scotland. We identify the measures relating to those focusing on the areas we need to shape to change health in Scotland. Based on these chosen areas, we identify measures elsewhere in the national performance framework.

We demonstrate the link to these to our organisation and to our stakeholders through our strategy map.

This points to one way we feel the national performance framework could be strengthened. Currently, public bodies effectively self-select which outcomes they are contributing towards. This allows them to opt out, identify their own outcomes, or measure different things.

In the next version of the national performance framework, we would welcome the Scottish Government and COSLA:

- (a) setting out which public bodies they expect to contribute to delivering each national performance framework outcome indicator and
- (b) determining which national bodies have a role in leading collaboration among the rest of the system to work together on an indicator. For example, as Scotland's national public health body, we would expect to be asked to lead whole-system action on areas that involve risky health behaviours like alcohol use.

How empowered is your organisation to do something different (should it wish) to achieve the National Outcomes relevant to you?

Public Health Scotland was established to address two outcomes which Scotland continually performs worse than other countries: life expectancy and health inequalities. We were commissioned to do things differently and do different things to achieve progress on these outcomes.

Our ability to do this is somewhat constrained by our funding model. 38% of our funding is non-recurring and originates from different Scottish Government policy teams. The nature of the funding makes it harder for us to do different things or do things differently in these areas towards national outcomes.

Reducing the proportion of our funding from non-recurring sources would enable us to take more effective action to improve health and reduce health inequalities.

This situation is not unique to Public Health Scotland. It is felt particularly acutely in local government where various sources of ring-fenced and fixed-term funding come in parallel to local areas. Larger blocks of funding which can be used more flexibly would work better not just for public bodies but the communities they serve.

We appreciate the concern to make sure the public is seeing results for public funding. Elsewhere in this response we highlight the importance of making sure the measures under the national performance framework can be segmented to local levels like consistently. Doing this and strengthening the measures underpinning the national performance framework would allow funding to be delegated with fewer conditions while keeping accountability for its use.

Public bodies would be better enabled to do things differently towards national outcomes by:

1. Strengthening the national indicators underpinning the national

- performance framework and making sure they can be segmented to consistent local levels (like local authority),
2. Reducing the amount of ring-fenced funding public bodies receive, and
  3. Strengthening cross-government budget setting focused on outcomes.

### **How is your organisation held to account for how your actions and decisions impact on the National Outcomes?**

We are held to account in two main ways: through our board and through our sponsors.

Accountability through our **board** tends to focus mostly on our strategic plan and therefore has the strongest explicit link to the national performance framework. Accountability through our **sponsors** tends to reflect our performance against their strategic priorities. Public Health Scotland is a health board with a difference: we are jointly sponsored by COSLA and Scottish Government.

Often there is a strong link between sponsorship accountability and the national performance framework, but the link tends to be implicit rather than explicit.

In general, accountability tends to be relatively short-term in its cycles compared to the longer timeframes needed to change the measures in the national performance framework.

Sometimes the link between our accountability and the national performance framework is weaker. This is not always a bad thing. For example, vaccination has been a major focus in addressing COVID-19. However, vaccination is not well represented in the national performance framework. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, we would welcome future measures of national wellbeing including levels of vaccine take up.

Accountability for performance against the national performance framework could be strengthened by addressing some of the gaps between it and the building blocks of health and wellbeing in Scotland, like vaccination. Another example of an area that could be strengthened involves access to public services. Much of Public Health Scotland's data analysis focuses on the NHS, the ease of access to it and the quality of services offered. This is a real priority and plays a role in reducing health inequalities by making sure people can get fair access to quality services. However, the indicators of service access in the national performance framework are often based on surveys which cannot be segmented by public body or geography. We would welcome the opportunity to strengthen these measures.

### **How are the National Outcomes reflected in everyday decision taking?**

As a national body, this is relatively straight forward for us although this is an area we wish to strengthen. We are working to put in place a 'new demand' process

that makes sure there is a demonstrable link between any new work we take on and national performance framework measures.

As mentioned above, one issue we encounter as an organisation is perceived gaps in the national performance framework. Strengthening how the national performance framework speaks to healthcare access as well as quality and health protection measures such as vaccinations would address this.

Another challenge we encounter are different policy agendas. For example, Scotland's public health priorities – jointly agreed by COSLA and Scottish Government – do not neatly join up to the national performance framework. In addition, national performance framework measures are not available for all the public health priorities. Often, we can demonstrate a link between a new piece of work and the public health priorities however, there are challenges finding links through the national performance framework. Making sure all new policies and strategies link through to the national performance framework would improve collaboration.

We are seeking to work more with local areas. One issue we observe in doing this is the applicability of the national performance framework to local areas. Making sure all national performance framework metrics can be segmented to the same geographic level would greatly improve public engagement and local prioritisation. Some measures are only available Scotland-wide, giving us a picture of wellbeing across Scotland. However, many public services are delivered either at a regional, health board or local authority level.

Understanding wellbeing at this level would help strengthen accountability: people would be able to see how their locality compared to Scotland as a whole. It would also shape priorities: people could meaningfully discuss the areas where they want to focus public resources on improving. It would also foster improved collaboration between local and national bodies by having a shared and consistent outcomes framework to work towards. Below we have linked to England's public health outcomes framework which we can be segmented to local areas allowing comparison between health in those areas with the rest of the country.

**When it comes to spending priorities or providing funding to others, what role do the National Outcomes play?**

We have focused on building a strong link between our strategic, financial and workforce planning. The strength of the links between spending/funding priorities and the national performance framework are only as strong as the links between these types of planning.

As a national NHS board, our experience is that keeping workforce and financial and strategic/operational planning working together takes focus and effort. Sometimes the timelines for submitting our workforce, financial or strategic/operational plans set by our sponsors can be a barrier to running these important planning processes. For example, in the past our legacy bodies were asked to submit financial plans before we completed our strategic/operational or



workforce plans. This makes it challenging to ensure that our financial plans serve the strategic/operational plans that define how we will meet national outcomes.

**To what extent is any public sector funding you receive contingent upon demonstrating your contribution to delivery of the National Outcomes?**

The strength of the link between funding and the national performance framework varies by (1) the type of funding and (2) what we spend it on.

Around 62% of our funding is recurring. This is relatively easy to align to the national performance framework through our strategic planning process. It allows us to discuss with our Boards and sponsors our contribution nationally towards these and how our work lines up against the national performance framework.

We can identify and demonstrate the contribution of this funding to the national performance framework where we spend it on externally facing projects and staffing.

The remaining 38% of our funding is non-recurring. This funding tends to come from specific policy teams within the Scottish Government. While we do have discretion over whether we accept the funding (although since it supports permanent staff, we do have to secure non-recurring funding to remain financially sustainable), the link is only as strong as the link between the funders' priorities and the national performance framework.

In general, we observe a relatively variable link. In part, this is because in our experience the indicators in national performance framework have a weaker link to healthcare access and quality than they do other areas of public health, like health improvement, and most of our non-recurring funding is for healthcare access and quality data.

Public Health Scotland is currently working with our sponsors to reduce the amount of non-recurring funding we receive.

This situation, however, underlines a wider point. We believe there is an opportunity for a more strategic approach to public sector funding in Scotland. This would increase the resources we are spending on reducing demand on public services, instead of just servicing increasing demand.

This is needed now more than ever. After decades of improvement, life expectancy in Scotland has not improved meaningfully since 2012. People in our poorest communities die a decade or more before those in the wealthiest. Covid has made the situation worse by creating a backlog of demand for elective procedures. It has generated physical and mental health demand pressures directly related to the condition itself or related to the measures introduced to control its spread. These pressures have been felt unequally across the population, worsening inequalities.

The stalling of life expectancy has been linked to reductions in public sector budgets. Local government has felt this particularly keenly compared to the

NHS. Further constraints or reductions on public sector budgets seems likely to continue.

In the face of limited funds, we must not only invest in servicing demand on public services, but on preventing it. Prevention needs to go further than simply reducing the use of public services or providing wrap around services for those who need multiple public services. Spending on prevention means invest in all the building blocks of a healthy society that stop people needing health and social care services: quality housing and education, good work for fair pay, safe neighbourhoods that are a good place to live, to name a few.

The national performance framework already plays an important role in driving this change – but its next version could do even more. Strengthening the indicators, addressing gaps, making the data segment-able to a local level and more strategic funding can help realise this ambition.

### **Where do the National Outcomes sit within the range of priorities and demands on your organisation?**

As we have outlined above, the national performance framework's outcome indicators are how we define our strategic priorities: therefore, they are among our top priorities.

As we also mentioned above, the link between the jointly owned Scottish Government/COSLA public health priorities and the national performance framework indicators could be strengthened. In practice, Public Health Scotland tends to place more explicit emphasis on the national performance framework in our planning.

Finally, as noted above, sometimes our sponsors' priorities diverge from the national performance framework. In these circumstances and to that extent, our priorities diverge also. Previously we gave the example of vaccination. Another example is our whole response to COVID-19 which, although linked through to life expectancy in general, did not feature in the national performance framework. We feel this emphasises a challenge around the national performance framework: it cannot foresee all Scotland's future priorities. Therefore, public bodies should be able to diverge from it when evidence and the public interest demands.

### **To what extent do you work collaboratively with other organisations in delivering the National Outcomes relevant to you?**

Scotland faces several key public health challenges:

- People in Scotland die younger than any other Western European country.
- People in our poorest neighbourhoods die ten years before people in the wealthiest neighbourhoods.
- After decades of improvement, life expectancy has not increased

meaningfully since 2012.

There are gaps in the building blocks which make up a healthy society in too many of Scotland's communities; this is driving our public health challenges. These gaps include affordable, secure and quality housing; stable, well-paid work; and accessible, quality public services. These challenges can be reversed.

Public Health Scotland recognises that the actions needed to address these challenges cannot be delivered by one organisation. It will take the collaborative efforts of many sectors and organisations to create a Scotland where everybody thrives. That is why collaboration is one of our guiding values and underpins all our work.

Since our creation, we have been using our unique position to convene and catalyse collaborative action across the whole system to address the unfair differences in life expectancy. This has included developing new strategic partnerships with organisations such as Police Scotland and Glasgow Regional Economic Partnership, and strengthening existing partnerships, with organisations such as the Improvement Service, COSLA, Sport Scotland and Food Standards Scotland. Throughout all these partnerships we have aligned our ambitions to delivery of our Strategic Plan, and through this to the National Performance Framework and Public Health Priorities.

**Please share any examples of good practice, areas for improvement or practices that have not worked so well**

We would like to highlight three examples to the committee:

- Carnegie UK's work on Gross Domestic Wellbeing
- The Centre for Thriving Places' Thriving Places Index
- England's Public Health Outcomes Framework

Gross Domestic Wellbeing

Carnegie UK's work on [Gross Domestic Wellbeing \(GDWe\)](#) is an example of good practice for the committee to consider.

The strength of the national performance framework, as we have said, is that it represents in tangible definition of what wellbeing means for people in Scotland today. One of the issues with public engagement with the national performance framework is the complexity of the data that underpins it. A linked issue is tracking change over time.

The GDWe approach developed by Carnegie UK helps address these two issues. The idea was to create an alternative metric to GDP which better reflected wellbeing.

By aggregating the measures and any changes found in them over time, the GDWe approach gives a single score to represent overall wellbeing. By tracking this over time, we can determine whether the overall change is for improvement or not.

While there are challenges and drawback to this approach, it is the same with any measure. Like GDP – which for all its drawbacks is a useful metric – we feel that the accessibility and ability to track progress over time of an approach like GDWe outweigh them.

From a public health perspective, the building blocks of public health go far beyond life expectancy and hospitals. They include quality housing and education, employability, the availability of good work for fair pay and access to public services. An aggregate measure of wellbeing like GDWe could help focus and galvanise action in Scotland towards prevention.

### **Thriving Places Index**

We would also like to highlight the [Thriving Places Index](#) developed for England and Wales. Created by the [Centre for Thriving Places](#) it is designed to give a balanced and easily read ‘dashboard’ of information on the different elements that support places to thrive. It cuts across different policy areas and is structured to provide a holistic way of approaching different priorities.

Approaches like this help to localise data available on wellbeing to support public engagement and local prioritisation of actions and investment.

### **Public Health Outcomes Framework**

The Office of Health Improvement and Disparities’ [Public Health Outcomes Framework](#) highlights some ways we can strengthen the way Scotland’s national performance framework turns ambition into action.

The framework, like the national performance framework, works from high level qualitative statements of the desired outcome/objective for the country. It then breaks this down into measurable indicators.

- Like the national performance framework but unlike Scotland’s public health priorities, it has [a data tool](#) that lets the public see performance or progress against those measures.
- Unlike the national performance framework, this data can be segmented down to consistent local levels, letting local leaders, planners and the public compare their area against the rest of the country and identify local priorities.

## Written Submission from Revenue Scotland

### **To what extent do the National Outcomes shape how your organisation works?**

As part of the National Performance Framework the Scottish Government uses the National Outcomes to describe ‘the kind of Scotland it aims to create’ as a result of its activities and those of the wider public sector which it supports and funds.

Revenue Scotland’s role is to collect and manage the devolved taxes to support the delivery of Scotland’s public services and as such, contributes to all of the Scottish Government’s National Outcomes set out in the National Performance Framework. It also contributes to them through investment in staff, commitment to equality, diversity and human rights, working closely with stakeholders and taxpayers. effectively collecting and managing devolved taxes to support the delivery of Scotland’s public services.

The National Outcomes are prominently positioned in our Corporate Plan 2021-24; it is this plan, and in it the National Outcomes, that strategically direct and prioritise all our work as an organisation. Six of the National Outcomes are particularly relevant to the work we do: Economy, Environment, Fair work and business, Communities, Human Rights and Health.

To ensure the successful delivery of the Corporate Plan, our objectives and deliverables are further defined through a strategic framework of corporate strategies. In particular, our Service delivery, Tax compliance, People, Green, Equalities and Engagement strategies are contributing to the National Outcomes (and are defined by them).

How do you know which National Outcomes your organisation contributes towards?  
How do you demonstrate this to your organisation  
and more widely to others?

The National Outcomes form a core element of our strategic framework.

- Revenue Scotland has performance reporting processes in place to monitor our progress against objectives on a monthly and quarterly basis.
- We also fulfil all reporting requirements, such as environmental and equalities mainstreaming and measure these in our KPIs and, as such, regularly report on the relevant National Outcomes.
- In our Annual Reports we report on the delivery of our Corporate Plan (and within it National Outcomes) and our performance for the year.

### **How empowered is your organisation to do something different (should it wish) to achieve the National Outcomes relevant to you?**

One of our strategic outcomes under Looking ahead it to deliver change (and new responsibilities) flexibly, on time and within budget. We strive to have a digital mind-

set, maximise the use of our data and harness new technology to improve our working practices and services.

We believe what makes Revenue Scotland stand out as an organisation, is our ability to work closely and collaboratively to deliver effective solutions at pace, and we have demonstrated we can do this even in challenging and changing circumstances. We pride ourselves in empowering our staff and, through our People Plan, actively support staff to work across team and hierarchical structures, creating valuable opportunities for generating ideas, and to do things differently.

**How is your organisation held to account for how your actions and decisions impact on the National Outcomes?**

As noted above, in our Annual Reports we report on the delivery of our Corporate Plan (and within it National Outcomes) and our performance over the year. Both our Corporate Plan and Annual Reports are laid in Parliament. The Annual Report process works alongside an annual audit undertaken by Audit Scotland.

How are the National Outcomes reflected in everyday decision taking?

Our business plan and team plans are checked against the objectives set out in the Corporate Plan which in turn is intended to align with the National Outcomes. In this way the work we do is steered by the National Outcomes.

At Revenue Scotland we are committed to evidence-based decision-making and we prioritise our everyday work according to strategic importance and impact. Our solid governance process reflect and supports this approach, e.g. in the approval of projects and investment.

**When it comes to spending priorities or providing funding to others, what role do the National Outcomes play?**

Revenue Scotland's budget is used to raise tax revenues from Land and Buildings transaction Tax and Scottish Landfill Tax and as such, our budget is not directly linked to the National Outcomes. For example, we have invested in the procurement, maintenance and the continuous improvement of our Scottish Electronic Tax System (SETS2) to improve our effectiveness at collecting taxes. Despite our spending priorities not directly contributing towards the National Outcomes, the tax revenue we help generate is used by other public bodies to deliver the National Outcomes.

**To what extent is any public sector funding you receive contingent upon demonstrating your contribution to delivery of the National Outcomes?**

Our budget and any public sector funding is not directly linked to us demonstrating our contribution to the National Outcomes. Our primary function is to collect and administer tax revenues to support other organisations to contribute towards the National Outcomes.

**Where do the National Outcomes sit within the range of priorities and demands on your organisation?**

The National Outcomes are embedded in our corporate priorities, defined in the Corporate Plan.

**To what extent do you work collaboratively with other organisations in delivering the National Outcomes relevant to you?**

We work collaboratively with other organisations to ensure the correct amount of tax is paid, so other organisations can use this tax revenue to support the National Outcomes.

We work closely with the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) to conduct site inspections at landfill sites. This collaborative work is a critical component of our tax compliance work, ensuring landfill operators are paying the correct amount of Scottish Landfill Tax.

We are strengthening relationships with Registers of Scotland to improve our use of data. This relationship is generating new knowledge on land and property ownership, allowing us to improve our effectiveness at collecting the correct amount of tax and providing revenue towards achieving National Outcomes.

In addition, we work with in collaboration with colleagues at the Scottish Government to inform tax policy. For example, we are working together to currently reviewing the policy on the Additional Dwellings Supplement, and subsequent guidance for taxpayers to ensure they understand their obligations and can pay the correct amount of tax.

**Please share any examples of good practice, areas for improvement or practices that have not worked so well.**

Revenue Scotland actively seek opportunities to learn from other organisations so we can improve our effectiveness in tax collection, to support revenue generation for the National Outcomes. We have arranged workshops with other organisations, such as Inland Revenue New Zealand, to identify areas to improve our tax collection processes.

In addition to this, the annual staff survey results have been used to identify strengths and opportunities to improve the equality, diversity and inclusiveness of our organisation. For example, we have an action plan of staff activities to enhance our organisational culture, including wellbeing workshops, team-cohesion workshops, and guest speakers sharing their stories.

## Written Submission from Scotland CAN B

### **To what extent do the National Outcomes shape how your organisation works?**

The NPF provides the basis or roadmap for how we measure the Scotland CAN B programme's success.

We highlight the NPF alongside the SDGs as the north star for the Scottish businesses and business advisors we engage in our training offerings. A fundamental pillar of our work is helping individual businesses to identify their unique contributions towards delivering these national and global wellbeing and sustainable development outcomes.

### **How do you know which National Outcomes your organisation contributes towards? How do you demonstrate this to your organisation and more widely to others?**

The systemic nature of Scotland CAN B's work means that we have varying degrees of touchpoints with all of the National Outcomes. However, the primary outcomes we would identify CAN B as contributing towards are Economy, International, and Fair Work & Business. We can track this through KPIs with the relevant indicators and/or using tools such as the SDG Action Manager to track our impact towards the SDGs and then use the SDG/NPF mapping to draw conclusions on our NPF contributions. We look forward to the forthcoming solution presented by the current CivTech 6 Sprint Challenge whereby an impact measurement tool for tracking impact directly on the National Outcomes will be developed to make this easier.

### **How empowered is your organisation to do something different (should it wish) to achieve the National Outcomes relevant to you?**

We are a small, agile team so have a good level of flexibility and empowerment to pivot and focus our efforts where we will have the deepest positive impact. However, as an initiative CAN B is underfunded and we could do more, faster, with more proportionate investment and deepened mandate.

### **How is your organisation held to account for how your actions and decisions impact on the National Outcomes?**

There isn't currently any external accountability mechanism, but we hold ourselves to account internally.

### **How are the National Outcomes reflected in everyday decision taking?**

Honestly, they aren't really present in everyday decision making, but more referenced in strategic programme development decisions on closer to a quarterly or bi-annual basis.



**When it comes to spending priorities or providing funding to others, what role do the National Outcomes play?**

Not enough, at the moment! It would be fantastic to see more grant making or procurement decisions informed by the National Outcomes. CAN B would be keen to help develop this.

**To what extent is any public sector funding you receive contingent upon demonstrating your contribution to delivery of the National Outcomes?**

It isn't explicitly, though we would be able to provide detail on our contributions voluntarily.

**Where do the National Outcomes sit within the range of priorities and demands on your organisation?**

High.

**To what extent do you work collaboratively with other organisations in delivering the National Outcomes relevant to you?**

All of Scotland CAN B's work has a direct link to the National Outcomes. One example from this year is the impact training we delivered for the Can Do Collective to establish a shared understanding and use of the national outcomes as an impact measurement framework (See: <https://candocollective.com/impact-training/>) .

SCVO response to the Finance and Public  
Administration Committee

# National Performance Framework: ambitions into action

April 2022

## Summary

## About us

The [Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations \(SCVO\)](#) is the national membership organisation for the voluntary sector (sometimes referred to as the third sector). We champion the sector, provide services, and debate big issues. Along with our community of 2,900+ members, we believe that charities, social enterprises, and community groups make Scotland a better place.

## About our submission

SCVO welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Committee's [inquiry](#) into the [National Performance Framework \(NPF\)](#). Here, we provide supplementary evidence alongside that provided by individual voluntary organisations on their experience with the NPF.

We hope this will be of use to the committee when considering the processes, systems, cultures, and behaviours that support NPF delivery. Our submission is split into two parts: a **summary of our response** and our **full response**.

We have not carried out fresh engagement with voluntary organisations concerning this inquiry to avoid replicating the committee's direct call to organisations. We base our submission on our own experience and understanding of the implementation issues we have built over many years.

## Summary

Our submission covers three strands relating to the delivery of the NPF that we consider to be significant. Those strands include the need for visible policy coherence, effective accountability mechanisms, and inclusive participation. This summary shares our key asks.

### Visible policy coherence

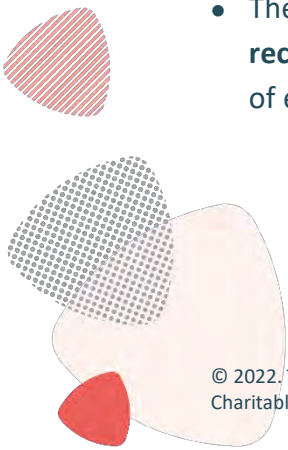
- There needs to be **a consistent commitment to and leadership of the NPF throughout the Scottish Government and other public bodies** that delivers policy coherence across strategies, plans, frameworks, and activities.
- We expect to see a **more profound analysis of how policies and activities in economic and other strategies and plans contribute** to and interact with and across the different National Indicators and Outcomes.
- The committee could **seek evidence from the Scottish Government on its use of specific methodologies and tools to assess the potential impact or influence** of policies and activities on National Indicators and Outcomes.

### Effective accountability mechanisms

- The **Scottish Government, Parliament, COSLA and scrutiny organisations should indicate the next steps they will take to disseminate and act upon the report of the Scottish Leaders' Forum** on improving accountability to deliver the NPF outcomes.
- The committee could **ask the Scottish Government how it will use the Wellbeing & Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill to strengthen duties** on public bodies to demonstrate their impact against the NPF outcomes.

### Inclusive participation

- The Scottish Government should **consider how data generated by the voluntary sector can be linked to National Indicators, with tools and guidance** for voluntary organisations to demonstrate their unique contributions.
- The Scottish Government should **consider the Social Renewal Advisory Board's recommendation that the NPF becomes a live dashboard**, informed by a broad range of experiences in addition to current outcome measures.



## Our response

SCVO welcomes the Finance and Public Administration Committee's [inquiry](#) into the [National Performance Framework \(NPF\): ambitions into action](#). We have [promoted](#) the inquiry to our members and look forward to participating in the committee's informal evidence gathering sessions this May.

Here, we provide supplementary evidence alongside that provided by individual voluntary organisations on their experience with the NPF. We hope this will be of use to the committee when considering the processes, systems, cultures, and behaviours that support NPF delivery.

SCVO has been a long-time supporter of the National Performance Framework since its inception in 2007, calling for the NPF to guide the decisions and actions of public bodies. We have often asked a similar question to that of the committee – *“how well does it do that?”*

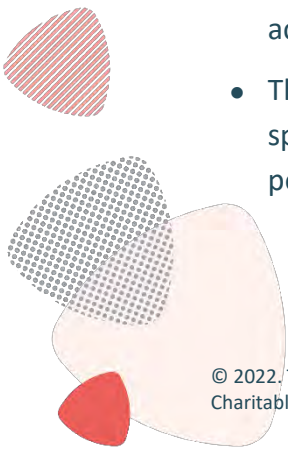
We agree with the committee that the 2023 review is an opportunity to *‘reposition the National Performance Framework at the heart of government planning, from which all priorities and plans should flow.’* However, the committee's inquiry provides a welcome space to consider what is required to deliver the NPF.

Our submission covers three strands relating to the delivery of the NPF that we consider to be significant. Those strands include the need for:

1. Visible policy coherence
2. Effective accountability mechanisms
3. Inclusive participation

### 1. Visible policy coherence

- There needs to be a consistent commitment to and leadership of the NPF throughout the Scottish Government and other public bodies that delivers policy coherence across strategies, plans, frameworks, and activities.
- We expect to see a more profound analysis of how policies and activities in economic and other strategies and plans contribute to and interact with and across the different National Indicators and Outcomes.
- The committee could seek evidence from the Scottish Government on its use of specific methodologies and tools to assess the potential impact or influence of policies and activities on National Indicators and Outcomes.



The committee has [recently highlighted](#) confusion across sectors around how the National Outcomes in the National Performance Framework influence policymaking. We agree that it is often unclear which of the Scottish Government's frameworks, strategies, or plans are the priority. Policy coherence is about joined-up thinking, but we are not seeing consistent links between strategy, plans, and activities with the NPF. This muddles the strategic vision set by the NPF and contributes to a confusing landscape.

The NPF risks falling into the background of other frameworks and approaches that do not coherently reinforce policy actions across government plans and strategies and those of other public bodies. Policy coherence is crucial for addressing social, economic, and environmental outcomes in a balanced manner. However, the development of economic policy in Scotland over the past 18-months provides excellent examples of fairly light-touch and scattergun approaches to utilising the NPF.

The Scottish Government's [Advisory Group on Economic Recovery \(AGER\)](#) chose to sidestep the NPF. While it noted that the NPF was a "*sound framework*," it wanted to "*adopt a broad and robust framework for looking at the Scottish economy that would capture all of its assets and provide the basis for a holistic view of paths to a more robust and resilient economy in the future.*" The AGER adopted the [four capitals framework](#) rather than using the NPF to situate its work.

Looking at the [National Strategy for Economic Transformation \(NSET\)](#), it is hard not to notice the lack of a single mention of 'national outcome.' Across many government plans and strategies, we often see the line used in the NSET: "*The strategy is aligned with our National Performance Framework.*" However, there is usually little evidence of a robust alignment process that can demonstrate the potential impact or influence of policies and activities on National Indicators and Outcomes; the Scottish Government should publish this if it has undertaken one.

Likewise, many of those who gave evidence to the committee on the [Resource Spending Review \(RSR\) Framework](#) highlighted the lack of links between the NPF and other frameworks, policy directions, and spending decisions. The RSR Framework offers little to no clarity on the connections between the priorities set out and Scotland's National Outcomes. In our [oral evidence](#) to the committee, SCVO explained that we were unsure which of the Scottish Government's frameworks, strategies or plans were the priority.

As part of establishing the [Scottish National Investment Bank \(SNIB\)](#), the Scottish Government developed an impact assessment tool as a potential approach for the Bank to measure its performance against the NPF. However, it is unclear how the Scottish Government assesses the impact of policies and activities across the Scottish Government on the NPF and whether similar tools are deployed. Such tools should not be viewed as an exercise in form-filling but rather to help policymakers think and learn.

The prototype tool designed for the Bank highlighted how it is possible for the Scottish Government and other public bodies to score the potential direct and indirect impact of policy choices and activities across plans and strategies on the relevant National Indicators and, subsequently, the National outcomes. It is unclear whether the Bank now uses the tool. Still, it would have been able to assess whether activities were likely to influence the indicators positively or negatively.

Attributing a particular policy or activity directly or indirectly to changes in the National Indicators can be challenging. In these cases, civil servants developed proxy indicators relevant to the Bank as the best alternative. It helpfully demonstrated the possibilities and limitations surrounding the implementation of the NPF, and the approach taken here could be considered further to inform how other Scottish Government departments, public bodies, and other sectors demonstrate their impact robustly and coherently.

## 2. Effective accountability mechanisms

- The Scottish Government, Parliament, COSLA and scrutiny organisations should indicate the next steps they will take to disseminate and act upon the report of the Scottish Leaders' Forum on improving accountability to deliver the NPF outcomes.
- The committee could ask the Scottish Government how it will use the Wellbeing & Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill to strengthen duties on public bodies to demonstrate their impact against the NPF outcomes.

In announcing the inquiry to the Scottish Parliament on 1 March, the Convenor mentioned that in his blog of 7 September 2021, "[Christie 10-years on](#)", the Auditor General for Scotland noted that Scotland is suffering from "*a major implementation gap between policy ambitions and delivery on the ground.*" The report, '[Valuing the Third Sector](#),' published by the former [Equalities and Human Rights Committee](#) in 2019, highlighted the voluntary sector's evidence of the gap between national policy priorities and local delivery.

We agree with [Audit Scotland's analysis](#) at the time that there is a crucial issue around how to marry the Local Outcomes Improvement Plans and the national plans together and how the different plans align. According to the recently published report of the [Social Renewal Advisory Board \(SRAB\)](#), local government has responsibility for 65% of the NPF. Yet, local authorities have no legal duty to report on their contribution to the National Outcomes, only a recommendation that they look at how local outcomes link to national outcomes.

We recognise that other frameworks will be needed, particularly at local and thematic levels. Ensuring more visibility of the links and reporting across these frameworks is vital so that voluntary organisations can navigate a complex landscape of policies and



frameworks. We agree with [Evaluation Support Scotland \(ESS\)](#) that “it would be helpful if all of us involved in public services start with the NPF and, if other frameworks are also needed, link them to the NPF to join things up.”

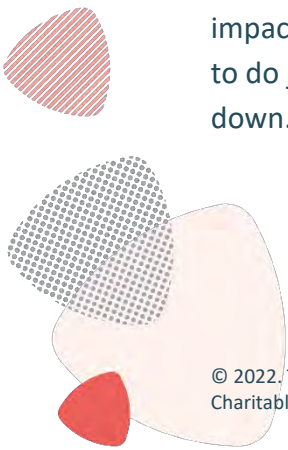
The former [Equalities and Human Rights Committee](#) called on the Scottish Government to outline its “views on the options available to it to strengthen the links between Scotland’s NPF and public bodies.” The [government’s response](#) pointed to its work to bring senior leaders from the public sector and other sectors together through the [Scottish Leaders Forum \(SLF\)](#). Since then, the SLF has taken a re-energised focus on the NPF, recently publishing its report on “[Improving accountability and incentives to deliver the NPF outcomes and live the values.](#)”

The SLF report concludes that the status of accountability against the NPF is at best “*patchy*” and that the NPF is not always actively used to shape scrutiny, funding decisions, and commissioning. The report goes on to outline how organisations across all parts of society – including design authorities, delivery agencies, enabling organisations, and scrutiny bodies – can be supported and encouraged to make changes to deliver on Scotland’s National Outcomes, covering aspects of awareness, desire, knowledge, ability, and reinforcement.

The SLF’s focus on these aspects supports our view that there needs to be a consistent commitment to and leadership of the NPF throughout the Scottish Government and other public bodies that stretches across strategies, plans, frameworks, and activities at a national and local level and other sectors. A report is only as good as the dissemination and implementation plans that run alongside it. Now that the SLF has delivered its report on strengthening the links between the NPF and other bodies, how will the Scottish Government, Scottish Parliament, COSLA and scrutiny organisations take the next steps required to deliver on the NPF?

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, which puts Scotland’s NPF on a statutory footing, only requires Scottish ministers to consult on, develop and publish a new NPF every five years. It does not require public bodies, the Scottish Parliament, or local authorities to consult on the way we measure progress towards those national outcomes, nor does it require institutions to assess the impact of their decisions and actions against the 11 National Outcomes.

The committee may wish to consider the [Programme for Government 2021-2022](#) commitment to introduce a new [Wellbeing and Sustainable Development \(Scotland\) Bill](#). How will this bill be used to strengthen the requirements for all public bodies and local authorities in Scotland to take complete account of their decisions’ short and long-term impact by assessing the impact on Scotland’s National Outcomes? There is a commitment to do just that, and it is essential that any new legislation is meaningful and not watered down.



### 3. Inclusive participation

- **The Scottish Government should consider how data generated by the voluntary sector can be linked to National Indicators, with tools and guidance for voluntary organisations to demonstrate their unique contributions.**
- **The Scottish Government should consider the Social Renewal Advisory Board's recommendation that the NPF becomes a live dashboard, informed by a broad range of experiences as well as current outcome measures.**

Referring to the NPF as a '[beacon of hope](#)' back in 2019, SCVO's CEO, Anna Fowlie, explained that the framework must be more than an aspirational rallying call. We must measure our services, whatever sector they are in, against the National Outcomes. Some organisations use the NPF to shape services and dialogue with public sector colleagues. At an [event](#) hosted by SCVO, ESS, and the Scottish Government in 2019, attendees heard from several organisations who had embraced the NPF in their work and of which ESS had produced [case studies](#) of.

[Befriending Networks](#) discussed how they used the NPF when considering applying for new funding. The [Scottish SPCA](#) used the NPF as a vital tool in setting out its 2020 business plan. The [Scottish Youth Theatre Arts Scotland](#) and its members considered how they can collectively improve evidencing the impact of their work on non-arts priorities for Scotland. In addition to these case studies, we would recommend the Committee considers the [report](#) from ESS Scotland in June 2019 on what the national performance framework means for the third sector?

We know that voluntary organisations use the NPF and National Outcomes in many ways, from utilizing them in advocacy reports and funding applications to adopting them as a lens to undertake their annual planning. We would regard awareness of the NPF as relatively strong within Scotland's voluntary sector, demonstrated in the significant presence of voluntary organisations in the structured conversations and online survey as part of the [consultation process](#) undertaken to produce revised National Outcomes in 2018.

Better use of the NPF may be encouraged through greater commitment to and leadership of the NPF within the Scottish Government and across other public bodies, with more visibility of how National Outcomes feed through Scottish budget allocations. Considering how data and monitoring generated by voluntary organisations can be linked to National Indicators, and hence the National Outcomes, would be useful. It would also be beneficial to provide tools and guidance to civil servants and voluntary organisations on how to work together to develop appropriate proxy outcome indicators relevant to their projects that can link to National Indicators.

The Social Renewal Advisory Board's report – "[If not now, when?](#)" – offers 20 calls to action that, if acted upon, would make a substantial contribution to seeing progress



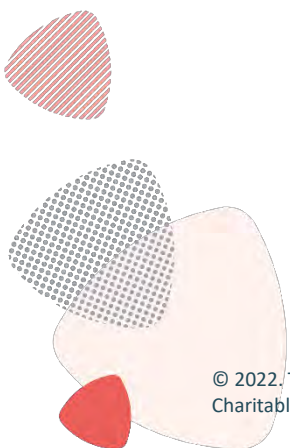


across Scotland's National Outcomes. More than this, it provides a key call to action that directly relates to the usability and success of Scotland's National Performance Framework. Under chapter five of the report, titled "*Closing the Gap between promise and practice*," call to action 20 states that "*decision-makers must commit to co-designing the means of gauging progress towards renewal.*"

The call to action states specifically, "*The NPF is a valuable asset but should become a live dashboard, informed by people's experiences as well as current outcome measures, improving our ability to strengthen effective approaches, change course and address gaps. Committing to this will generate insights which otherwise may be missed in a flurry of performance data.*" This reflects the views of those with lived experience who were [interviewed](#) as part of the Board's engagement; they supported enhancing the NPF with indicators reflecting their lived experience of what benefits their lives: belonging, confidence and connections, making contributions and participating.

The committee should consider this key call to action from the Social Renewal Advisory Board. It highlights the broader role that non-public bodies and citizens can play, if allowed to, in monitoring and reporting progress and demonstrating the impact or influence non-public bodies and communities are having on improving wider outcomes such as those in the NPF. If Scotland's NPF is a framework for the whole of Scotland, not simply the Scottish Government, then it needs to be informed by us all.

Paul Bradley  
Policy and Public Affairs Manager  
Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations



# Finance and Public Administration Committee

## National Performance Framework: Ambitions into Action

### Note of key issues discussed at the Dundee engagement event on 10 May 2022

#### Background

Three<sup>21</sup> Members of the Scottish Parliament's Finance and Public Administration Committee met informally with representatives of the local authority, other public bodies, business organisations and the voluntary sector, in Dundee on 10 May. Members heard about the experiences of participants on how the NPF influences their day-to-day roles and the approaches of their organisations. A parallel event was held involving the other four<sup>22</sup> Members of the Committee in Glasgow on the same day, and a similar engagement session with Scottish Government officials took place on 3 May.

At all three events, participants were asked the same questions, which are listed below, along with the key points of discussion at the Dundee event. Separate notes of the issues raised at the other two engagement sessions are also available on the [Committee's inquiry page](#).

#### Discussion

##### 1. What role does the NPF and national outcomes play in your decision-making?

For some participants, the National Performance Framework (NPF) is the 'umbrella' for strategic plans and performance management, it shapes the policy landscape, and influences delivery and behaviours. For others, it doesn't tend to affect their day-to-day roles, nor is it a "driver for action".

For the local authority there is a clear "golden thread" from "city plan" (the Community Planning Partnership plan) through to the Council plan, then to individual service plans and to those delivering services on the ground. Those 'on the ground' services were less likely to use the language of the NPF, but nevertheless, the connections are clear. It was felt to be much easier to map to the broad NPF outcomes given the broad nature of the local authority's activities.

---

<sup>21</sup> Kenneth Gibson MSP (Convener), Liz Smith MSP, and Michelle Thomson MSP.

<sup>22</sup> Daniel Johnson MSP (Deputy Convener), Ross Greer MSP, , Douglas Lumsden MSP, and John Mason MSP.

For other bodies with a narrower remit, the connections with the NPF were sometimes less apparent – their obvious indicator might not actually be a good descriptor of their work, for example. In some bodies, an attempt has however been made to map their organisational Key Performance Indicators to the NPF, providing ‘a line of sight’.

Some suggested that the NPF provides a common goal across organisations and encourages collaboration. In fact, one attendee suggested that the NPF “gives us a reason to be in the same room” and can foster a greater understanding of what organisations are collectively trying to achieve. Another participant however noted that collaboration between sectors is happening locally but not because of the NPF.

The contrast between the national outcomes being longer-term goals and the short-term motivation of politicians and the media was discussed, along with the challenges of “squaring that circle”.

The NPF was described as ‘ethereal’ and ‘anodyne’ and it was suggested that the document be rebranded as ‘The Wellbeing Plan’, as “everyone wants to achieve better wellbeing outcomes”. However, it was argued that the allocation of funding needs to also join up with these wellbeing outcomes.

Contradictions were highlighted within the outcomes, for example economy vs the environment. Some also suggested that the outcomes needed local content and colour to be meaningful.

It was unclear what the ‘hook’ is for the private sector to be involved.

## **Q2. To what extent are you supported to deliver the national outcomes?**

In terms of support, again this varied between different public bodies. For the local authority this seemed to work well, with COSLA and the Improvement Service having a key role. For other bodies, the picture was more mixed, however Scottish Government sponsor teams and official letters of guidance, which include emphasis on delivery of national outcomes, do play an important part.

The question was asked whether the NPF needed to be a more ‘dynamic’ document, which is responsive to the multiplicity of plans, strategies and policies. One attendee, for example, suggested that individual strategies, such as Scotland’s National Strategy for Economic Transformation, often have more relevant outcomes than those in the NPF. It was argued that the complexity of the Scottish public landscape for such a small country is not helpful and this “cluttered landscape” may be hampering delivery of the NPF.

It was also suggested that there is a need for resources to be pooled to better effect and for collective prioritisation; “perhaps don’t try to deliver everything”. The question was asked whether all indicators are equal, if they are too detailed, and whether some of the ‘big issues’ are missing. It was noted that “we need to understand indicators and what’s working and how organisations are working together on delivery”.

### **Q3 To what extent are you held to account for delivering national outcomes?**

The wide range of ways in which bodies are held to account was discussed. Attendees said that the extent to which this accountability is directly focused on NPF outcomes or if it is more general isn't clear but, where the NPF is built into strategic planning, accountability is implicit.

For the local authority, it was felt that accountability was strong through its normal democratic structures of committees, and progress reporting. The Local Outcome Improvement Plan maps directly to the NPF and national reporting, even though it might not mention the NPF specifically. Within the local authority (and other bodies) the role of strong leadership at official and political level is seen to be crucial.

Participants discussed being held to account for contributions to outcomes over which their organisation might have little control, and there was a recognition that while this is challenging, it could be done proportionately.

General difficulties in achieving accountability were noted and it was suggested that a broad conversation about how the public sector is being held to account for delivery is needed. Participants argued that each leader needs to feel accountable for delivery and there is a role for the Scottish Government in mapping out how best to achieve this.

Some felt that a clearer link between the national outcomes and local priorities would secure better outcomes and enable greater accountability. Particular difficulties in holding voluntary bodies to account were highlighted, with one participant indicating that "the NPF should be the beating heart of voluntary bodies, but it's not".

One attendee highlighted that "we do what we do as an employer as it's the right thing to do, not because of the NPF", while another from the private sector said "my Board don't expect to see the NPF in my strategic plan".

### **Q4. What does good practice look like?**

There is a lack of awareness as to what other bodies, which carry out similar functions, are achieving. One participant from the private sector suggested that "success is like trade secrets – it isn't shared, so we don't know if we are doing well or otherwise". Local government officials would in contrast "readily share willingly and easily", while in the voluntary sector sharing good practice "is down to good relationships".

Some felt that it can be difficult to identify good practice through measuring outcomes, asking "are we measuring the right things, too many things?" and suggested that duplication is happening "but we don't know the extent".

Funding and competition are barriers to sharing good practice. There is a feeling that "my competitors will benefit". The focus needs to be on successful human stories rather than 'big data'.

Participants suggested that there is a role for the Scottish Government to marshal this information and share good practice and that this could create a better understanding of what works well and less well.

**Q5 Can you give an example where there has been effective collaborative working across different public / private / third sector organisations? What was it that made it work well?**

The experience of transforming the old Michelin site in Dundee was most frequently mentioned as an example of good practice, being a quick response, building on strong relations across public and private sectors, with everyone coming together with a “common purpose”.

Another example was work across many organisations on addressing poor behaviour in the countryside – success here was driven by a shared understanding of the immediate problem.

There was a lot of discussion on the impact of Covid-19. The pandemic forced change, quickly. In many areas this has led to new, innovative ways of working. The fear of some participants is that things might revert to “bad old ways”.

A positive example of Covid-19 prompting positive change is work on food insecurity in Dundee, which led to a Food Network in place now that has become a centre for a wide range of other advice and support. It involves local people delivering, with the council supporting activity.

Finally, a discussion was held on community wealth building, with an example of the trade-offs between community-produced hand sanitiser versus imported, but much cheaper, hand sanitiser.

**Q6 What culture, training, systems, or processes would you like to see changed for the next revised NPF?**

Participants recognised that the NPF is a ‘wellbeing strategy’, while noting this was “intangible”, “opaque” and is not relatable to the public. They were unsure as to how the Scottish Government defines wellbeing and noted it can be difficult to measure.

Others argued that a wellbeing framework is about using a values-based approach, leadership, relationships and how we treat each other. This, they suggested leads to productivity. The same methods used in organisations’ consideration of staff wellbeing can be applied to achieving the wellness of society. One participant highlighted the example of getting people into jobs and young people into positive destinations as a way of contributing to wellbeing outcomes.

A discussion was held on how we can know what good looks like in a wellbeing strategy. Identifying examples of good practice and producing case studies can, it was argued, help with this. Leadership and cultures are also seen to be important factors and it was suggested that the Scottish Government needs to take a lead on encouraging this.

The Parliament's role in holding bodies to account was recognised. It was noted that this was perhaps easier with the earlier iteration of the NPF where bodies were named against specific outcomes for delivery. Now every organisation is expected to deliver against every outcome. In the current structure, it is "hard to hold everyone to account for everything". Some participants felt that more clarity is needed in relation to roles, with their preference being for this to be more prescriptive.

One attendee highlighted that the NPF plays a role in incentivising organisations to consider how they can achieve better outcomes.

The question was asked whether there is awareness of the NPF within the civil service, with one person noting that "looking in from the outside, the Scottish Government is paying 'lip service' to the NPF". There are, they argued, "different agendas in government", whereas "Government strategies and plans should fit together and link to the NPF; they don't currently".

Finally, it was noted that the Scottish Leaders' Forum has a role in encouraging greater shared leadership and providing training and support.

May 2022

# Finance and Public Administration Committee

## National Performance Framework: Ambitions into Action

### Note of key issues discussed at the Glasgow engagement event on 10 May 2022

#### Background

Four<sup>23</sup> Members of the Scottish Parliament's Finance and Public Administration Committee met informally with representatives of the local authority, other public bodies, business organisations and the voluntary sector, in Glasgow on 10 May. Members heard about the experiences of participants on how the NPF influences their day-to-day roles and the approaches of their organisations. A parallel event was held involving the other three<sup>24</sup> Members of the Committee in Dundee on the same day, and a similar engagement session with Scottish Government officials took place on 3 May.

At all three events, participants were asked the same questions, which are listed below, along with the key points of discussion at the Glasgow event. Separate notes of the issues raised at the other two engagement sessions are also available on the [Committee's inquiry page](#).

#### Discussion

##### **Q1. What role does the NPF and national outcomes play in your decision-making?**

This varied by type of organisation. Broadly speaking there is an awareness of the NPF and its outcomes among voluntary sector bodies, however, for some it felt quite 'remote'. For local authorities and public bodies, the NPF tends to be used implicitly to inform their work, but it is not explicit in decision-making, with one participant noting that "it's not the obvious, immediate thing we think about when we make decisions". It was noted that the NPF takes up time and capacity, which can be problematic. There is less awareness and use of the NPF in the private sector. To the question, if the NPF didn't exist, would organisations be doing anything differently?", participants from audit/scrutiny bodies responded: "probably not".

Local government representatives referred to the Council's new strategic plan being tied in with the NPF at a high-level to enable flexibility in delivery. However, it is the UN Sustainable Development Goals that they feel are most helpful, with one commenting that they "provide coherence and underpin the NPF ... and a clearer

---

<sup>23</sup> Daniel Johnson MSP (Deputy Convener), Ross Greer MSP, Douglas Lumsden MSP, and John Mason MSP

<sup>24</sup> Kenneth Gibson MSP (Convener), Liz Smith MSP, and Michelle Thomson MSP.

benchmark, nationally and internationally”. Some felt that the NPF is “not digestible enough at the moment to be for all of Scotland”. The level of detail in the NPF is seen as restrictive and could be simpler in only setting out a direction of travel. It was noted that the NPF national outcomes were more of an expression of corporate values than a set of measures.

Some voluntary sector representatives spoke of the NPF representing a ‘macro-economic measurement’, which is not always aligned to the aims of those working ‘on the ground’. They felt that the NPF is “a good start”, but that it needs to move away from the metrics and reflect a more grounded ‘lived experience’ e.g. “has a person’s life improved rather than the reporting of lots of numbers?”

Participants from audit/scrutiny bodies highlighted their view that the NPF is not visible or easily understandable to the outside world.

## **Q2. To what extent are you supported to deliver on the national outcomes?**

Local authorities feel that they are responsible for roughly 70% of the national outcomes, yet they do not receive proportional funding to support this work. It was also noted that the funding structure does not support early intervention due to time lags in seeing the outcomes, and that “insecure funding” leads to poorer outcomes. It was noted that, sometimes an organisation can only leverage funding if it demonstrates that it meets NPF outcomes. Some organisations have developed their own Key Performance Indicators to measure performance and success, while others are working to different indicators, e.g. GIRFEC<sup>25</sup> and SHANARRI<sup>26</sup>, which feel “more relevant”. There was a discussion amongst local authority and public sector representatives highlighting lots of really good work being undertaken, and positive outcomes in society, but these do not require to be recorded or reported on anywhere.

Questions were also asked in relation to how the NPF links with other government strategies and frameworks, and whether more discussion around the NPF might make it feel more relevant.

The need to move away from silo-working towards greater collaboration across departments and agencies, as advocated by the Christie Commission, was highlighted. There was a feeling that the NPF does nothing to help different elements of Government, public bodies and the third sector to work together, which might not be helped by some of the national indicators in the NPF working against others.

A discussion was held on ‘outcomes vs outputs’ and whether there was a conflict or misunderstanding around what should be delivered and recorded, and how to evidence the outcomes with more qualitative data. There was an acknowledgement that those who provide the funding drive measuring and reporting.

---

<sup>25</sup> Scottish Government initiative ‘Getting It Right for Every Child’.

<sup>26</sup> These are wellbeing indicators for children: Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, Included.



### **Q3. To what extent are you held to account for delivering national outcomes?**

There was a variety of experiences amongst participants in relation to accountability. While many felt that they are held to account and scrutinised, that was not specifically due, or in relation, to the NPF. The local authority is not explicitly reporting on the NPF directly to the Scottish Government however, each department has their own reporting process aligned to the UN Sustainable Goals. The NHS does however report on the NPF as part of the NHS annual performance review and other reports submitted to the Scottish Government.

Participants suggested that there is no obvious link between the NPF and funding allocations to the third sector and public bodies. It was not clear to participants how the NPF is used in policy development and decision making around budgets: “it sits there but doesn’t drive the structures required to deliver it or the decision-making process” commented an attendee from audit/scrutiny bodies.

A discussion was held amongst representatives from the local authority and public bodies about the need to balance accountability with allowing organisations to “get on with it” once funding is provided.

It was argued that the Scottish Government should provide more data and relevant research, case-studies, or examples of best practice. This was particularly so for local authorities who do not have the resources to commission research or explore different approaches. An example was given of a body that had tendered for work with the Scottish Government and had been unsuccessful. In feedback, they were told that the bid had not made adequate reference to the NPF.

### **Q4. What does good practice look like?**

Participants suggested that good practice requires collaboration between sectors and agencies (breaking down silo-working) and having a clear goal or common understanding that everyone signs up to and parity of esteem.

Those from the voluntary sector noted that good practice affords the ability to plan and act for the long-term and uses lived experience, while also balancing metrics with qualitative measures

Learning can be taken from the Commissioner for Future Generations in Wales, as well as from practices during the pandemic, where the focus was on speedy and effective delivery.

Flexibility in structures and procedures is needed, and the NPF should be a practical document rather than aspirational. Expectations of the Scottish Government should be clearly communicated. It should take account of local issues and needs, as well as reflect UN Sustainable Development Goals.

**Q5. Can you give an example where there has been effective collaborative working across different public/private/third sector organisations? What was it that made it work well?**

Examples included:

- The response to the pandemic: there was better use of data across services and fewer restrictions in terms of GDPR, which enabled effective collaboration. Bureaucracy was temporarily reduced, working practices changed, and there was more flexibility and good communication and engagement by government.
- Net zero: there is a shared sense of importance of net zero and climate change, across sectors
- Safety in the health and social care sector: an example of working in partnership.
- Ending homelessness together strategy: an example of collaborative working between public and voluntary sector.
- NHS working with universities to support innovation.
- Children's houses: an example of local authorities working with local housing associations and private housing developers
- Child poverty: involving the private sector.

General points raised during this discussion included that collaboration works better when all bodies concentrate on what they have in common and when there is a short-term deadline. Having a specific goal, such as achieving net zero, is also helpful. Some businesses have signed up to the NPF when they are made aware of the benefits, for example, on net zero, and should be given more opportunity to contribute. Participants suggested that organisations receiving public funds should be accountable for delivering the NPF.

**Q6. What culture, training, systems, or processes would you like to see changed for the next revised NPF?**

One suggestion was that NPF website should include a mechanism for sharing best practice (such as a 'hub'), including details of policies that have been effective.

Some felt that the revised NPF should encourage collaboration across organisations, and include more specific outcomes, how they relate to policy, and how they can be delivered across activities. GDPR compliance was cited as a barrier to sharing data and collaboration between organisations. A culture shift between different levels of Government: UK-Scottish-Local in relation to sharing of data may be needed.

One attendee noted that shared accountability for the NPF should come with better collaboration across government, along the lines envisaged by the Christie Commission. However, another participant disagreed with this statement, arguing that, "if everyone is accountable, no-one is accountable" and that clear roles and accountability for leaders was needed.

It was noted that outcomes are only meaningful if people understand them, so efforts should be made to make the NPF more accessible and raise its profile amongst the

public. Attendees suggested that the NPF should also set out what people should expect in their day-to-day lives if the NPF outcomes are delivered: “people should be able to see themselves in the NPF”. There should be clearer delineation of who is accountable for which outcomes and indicators in the NPF.

One participant would like to see more emphasis placed on preventative measures in the NPF, taking a longer-term view outwith political or electoral cycles. Linked to this, one participant argued that the NPF could usefully set out outcome targets for the short-term as well as the medium to longer term. Other participants said that the NPF should provide for more autonomy for local delivery.

Finally, it was argued that the NPF would benefit from being simplified, starting with an overall, understandable goal for government (“for example, a more equal society”) and working back from that.

May 2022