

Response to the Committee for the Executive Office

Introduction – Measuring Wellbeing

The Carnegie UK Trust seeks to improve the lives and wellbeing of people throughout the UK with particular regard to people who are disadvantaged. This focus on wellbeing has been at the heart of our work for over 100 years, during which time we have worked in a number of ways to improve wellbeing, through investing in libraries, further education, social work, children's rights, rural development and many more.

Today the Trust promotes a number of strategic approaches to policy and practice development to enhance wellbeing for people. One of our strategic objectives is to support wellbeing frameworks that allow governments to measure social progress for citizens in a meaningful way. We have worked with governments in the UK to support the design and implementation of wellbeing approaches to policy; have undertaken international research to identify models of best practice; and have worked with a range of organisations, including the OECD, to share learning and identify opportunities for embedding a wellbeing approach to public policy.

Our support for a wellbeing approach draws on the wealth of evidence which shows the limitations of GDP as the traditional preeminent snapshot measure of social progress. We support a much wider understanding about what makes for a stronger and fairer society. The concept of wellbeing, incorporating social, democratic and environmental factors, alongside economic measures such as GDP, can help to rebalance decision making. This approach both supports and requires a whole-of-government approach to policy making. Using wellbeing as a guiding narrative helps governments to focus on medium and long-term outcomes for citizens and communities, rather than simply inputs and processes. The most intractable challenges facing society have formed over decades and resolving them will require sustained efforts well beyond a single electoral cycle. Public services in the 21st century are complex, focusing increasingly on prevention and requiring joined-up services and an engagement with service users. A wellbeing narrative can be part of the mix in helping services focus on outcomes for citizens rather than on silos and reactive top-down management. It can shift the focus in policy design from the provider interest to the user interest.

Wellbeing is, of course, a widely used term that is open to various interpretations. In undertaking our work we align our definition of wellbeing with the OECD description of wellbeing as a way of understanding social progress. Wellbeing, linking social, economic, environmental and democratic outcomes, is about all aspects of society. It is about far more than the health of individuals or how satisfied individuals are with their lives. It is a multi-dimensional concept that describes progress in terms of improvements in quality of life, material conditions and sustainability. These three components of societal wellbeing form the basis of the basket of wellbeing indicators in the OECD's Better Life Initiative.

The Carnegie Roundtable for Measuring Wellbeing in Northern Ireland

The Carnegie Roundtable on Measuring Wellbeing in Northern Ireland, a partnership between the Carnegie UK Trust and Queens University Belfast, was convened in 2014 to explore how the Northern Ireland Executive could better understand social progress and its role in improving wellbeing. A timeline of relevant activities is provided in the Table below.

The membership of the Roundtable aimed to draw on a wide range of experience, including members from the main political parties, the senior civil service, local government, academia, the third sector and civil society. The Roundtable was supported by Carnegie Associates Dr Peter Doran

of School of Law at Queen's University and John Woods. A full list of Roundtable members is provided as an Annex to this briefing

The Roundtable set out to:

- raise awareness of the importance of an outcomes-based approach to improving wellbeing and the positive impact it can have on policy development;
- establish a shared understanding of the international and national policy debate on wellbeing and the measurement of economic performance and social progress;
- assess the relevance of the debate for Northern Ireland's governing institutions (regional and local) and identify priority issues;
- identify and explore the next steps necessary to develop an outcomes-based wellbeing framework in Northern Ireland.

Since the first meeting, Roundtable members have been prominent in an unfolding conversation across government and society on setting the wellbeing of citizens and communities as the collective purpose, and heart, of government in Northern Ireland. Particularly important to the success of the Roundtable was the support from political parties for the process, and the active engagement of senior civil servants in Northern Ireland at central and local level.

From the outset, the Roundtable also recognised the importance of engaging a wide range of people in its work. The Trust engaged with the public to explore their views on wellbeing through a number of focus groups with key constituencies. The feedback we received was critical to inform the Roundtable's work and recommendations. With the support of the School of Law at Queen's University Belfast, we met and took evidence from a large number of public servants, representatives from political parties, and other interest groups, such as trade unions, business, and the voluntary sector. The Trust also established a Twitter account (@NIwellbeing) to share progress and engage interested stakeholders and citizens.

The Roundtable [reported in March 2015](#), identifying seven steps to take forward the agenda of developing a wellbeing framework to guide and support the work of all public services in Northern Ireland. The seven steps, illustrated in Chart 1 below, included: setting wellbeing as a collective goal; engaging the public; establishing new ways of working; aligning tiers of government; communicating social progress; improving accountability; and supporting the wellbeing framework.

The Roundtable identified that these steps would be challenging for all: the Executive, public bodies, the private and voluntary sector, and communities. However, the Trust has been pleased to see a real commitment from all involved to engage in the process in a meaningful and constructive way, and our response to the Draft Programme for Government reflected on the positive progress made to date against many of the steps.

Chart 1: The 7 Steps



Table 1: Carnegie Roundtable Activity Timeline

Date	Activity
2009	Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission reports on measuring social progress and recommends governments set up Roundtables to explore wellbeing frameworks to guide policy making.
2010	Carnegie UK Trust sets up the first national Roundtable on Measuring Social Progress in Scotland , in collaboration with the Sustainable Development Commission for Scotland. The Scottish Roundtable worked to identify and prioritise indicators on social progress, as recommended by the 2009 Stiglitz, Sen, Fitoussi report. This work was influential in securing a legislative footing for the Scottish framework, through the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.
2011	Queens University Belfast hold a seminar on the sustainable economy, exploring what it means for Northern Ireland.
2012	Carnegie UK Trust launch findings of international research into wellbeing frameworks ' Shifting the Dial ' with IPPR North.
Sept 2013	Carnegie UK Trust and Queens University Belfast host a joint seminar on Wellbeing Frameworks, 'Measuring What Matters in Northern Ireland' securing the support of then Finance Minister, Simon Hamilton MLA and Chair of the Finance Committee Daithi Mackay MLA. The event is 'standing room only'.
Feb 2014	Carnegie UK Trust and Queens University Belfast publish ' Measuring Wellbeing in Northern Ireland: A new conversation for new times ' and announce the establishment of the Carnegie Roundtable for Measuring Wellbeing in Northern Ireland.
Mar 2014	Carnegie Roundtable on Measuring Wellbeing opens call for evidence on wellbeing and conducts focus groups with the public.

Jun 2014	Carnegie Roundtable on Measuring Wellbeing holds study trip to Scotland and meets with Deputy First Minister John Swinney MSP.
March 2015	Carnegie Roundtable on Measuring Wellbeing reports its findings Towards a Wellbeing Framework .
March 2016	Carnegie UK Trust and Queens University Belfast publish ' Towards a Wellbeing Framework: One year on '.
May 2016	Northern Ireland Executive publishes draft Programme for Government and consultation opened.
July 2016	Carnegie Roundtable on Measuring Wellbeing reconvened to discuss draft Programme for Government.
July 2016	Carnegie UK Trust and Queens University Belfast publish response to consultation: ' Towards a Wellbeing Framework and the Draft Programme for Government '.
Sept 2016	Carnegie UK Trust publish an international review of wellbeing frameworks, in partnership with the OECD. The report again highlights the importance of political leadership for the development and implementation of wellbeing frameworks.
Sept 2016	Carnegie UK Trust hold 'Towards a Wellbeing Framework: From Outcomes to Actions' event at Girdwood Community Hub in Belfast. The event is attended by 100 stakeholders and features presentations from Rolf Alter, OECD; Finance Minister Máirtín Ó Muilleoir MLA and Chair of Finance Committee Emma Little Pengelly MLA.

Draft Programme for Government

The Carnegie UK Trust welcomes the most recent Draft Programme for Government, and public consultation period. The Trust congratulates the Executive on its meaningful commitment to the process of developing a Programme for Government with a focus on citizen wellbeing at its core. We particularly support the up-front acknowledgement in the latest Draft Programme for Government of wellbeing and the importance of Government for making people's lives better. We welcome the introduction of a reference to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We also welcome the commitment the Executive has made to engaging the public with the Programme for Government through its consultation process and series of public events.

In June 2016, the Roundtable reconvened to consider the first Draft Programme for Government. Informed by this discussion, the Roundtable Co-Chairs Martyn Evans and Aideen McGinley [responded as part of the consultation process](#). We identified specific recommendations, including:

- ensuring the final set of outcomes, measures and indicators are genuinely reflective of the views of the people of Northern Ireland;
- the Executive invest in communicating the wellbeing framework and trend data to the public by a range of techniques including data visualisation, live dashboards, social and traditional media;
- the Executive should lay an annual report before the Northern Ireland Executive for debate on the progress made by the Programme for Government, timed to coincide with the Budget Bill;
- the Executive should provide guidance on how it expects outcomes to be used by local government and the third sector.

The Trust hopes that the Executive considers how it delivers on these recommendations to ensure that the Programme for Government achieves its aspiration to be 'a totally different way to do Government' in Northern Ireland.

Based on the discussions of the reconvened Roundtable in June 2016, the Trust also made specific recommendations around strengthening the language of a number of the 14 outcomes, and suggested changes to some indicators and measures. In the next iteration of the Programme for

Government, we would welcome further changes to the language of the outcomes, and further refinements to some of the indicators and measures, [based on our previous recommendations](#). We would also suggest that the reference to ‘growth’ should be qualified by taking up the OECD language of ‘inclusive growth’, where gaps between the rich and the poor – not only in terms of income, but also in other dimensions that matter for people – are less pronounced.

The Carnegie UK Trust’s ongoing engagement with Northern Ireland and the PFG

We are delighted that the work of the Roundtable is highlighted in the Introduction of the Programme for Government and to have been involved in the process towards developing a new approach to policy making in Northern Ireland. This process is still in its early stages and has a number of challenges but we are optimistic about its success. There appears to us to be a broad consensus that a new, whole-of-government approach to policy making in Northern Ireland is both desirable and possible and the Programme for Government is a significant step in this direction. The Trust looks forward to hearing about the results of the current consultation process, and the final publication of the Programme for Government.

We have welcomed the ongoing engagement with the Executive over the course of the development of the Programme for Government. In September 2016 the Trust convened a conference at Girdwood Community Hub in Belfast to consider the Programme for Government and what it means for delivering outcomes-based government to support citizen wellbeing in Northern Ireland, including the design of future joined-up policies, services and accountability mechanisms, and to hear from the Executive about their priorities for change. Participants were enthused about the Programme for Government and the real opportunity and platform for change it provides for Northern Ireland, while recognising the challenges that come with such an approach.

To continue to embed the approach, which we believe is one from which others can learn, the Trust is planning a visit to the OECD headquarters in Paris in 2017, to which we intend to invite a small delegation of representatives from Northern Ireland. We believe that Northern Ireland has a remarkable story to tell, and we would like to support the Executive to share this at a global level with others involved in developing and strengthening outcomes-based government to support citizen wellbeing.

Annex – Roundtable membership

Martyn Evans, Chief Executive, Carnegie UK Trust (Co-Chair)

Aideen McGinley OBE, BBC National Trustee for Northern Ireland (Co-Chair)

Dr Theresa Donaldson, Chief Executive, Lisburn City and Castlereagh District Council

Dr Peter Doran, School of Law, Queen’s University Belfast and Carnegie Associate (Executive secretary)

Megan Fearon MLA, Nominee of Chair of Finance & Personnel Committee

David Gavaghan, Chief Executive, Titanic Quarter

Professor Neil Gibson, Director, NI Centre for Economic Policy, University of Ulster

Will Haire, Head of the Policy Profession, NI Civil Service

Kat Healy Policy, Research and Evaluation Officer, Community Foundation for Northern Ireland

Dr Helen Johnston, Senior Social Policy Analyst, National Economic and Social Council

David McIlveen MLA, Nominee of Minister of Finance & Personnel

Dr Denis McMahon, Deputy Secretary, Office of First and deputy First Minister

Joe Reynolds, Alternate

Dr Tracy Power, Director of Analysis, NI Statistics Research Agency

Quintin Oliver, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

James Orr, Director, Friends of the Earth

Dr Colin Sullivan, Director of Policy and Reform, Department of Finance and Personnel

Dr Bernie Stuart, Alternate

Jennifer Wallace, Head of Policy, Carnegie UK Trust

Dr Jane Wilde CBE, Former Chief Executive, Institute of Public Health in Ireland

Lisa Wilson, School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work, Queen’s University Belfast

John Woods, School of Law, Queen’s University Belfast and Carnegie Associate (Executive Secretary)