

The 'go to' organisation for Local
Government improvement in Scotland

ELECTED MEMBER BRIEFING NOTE

Wellbeing Frameworks





Elected Members Briefing Series

The Improvement Service (IS) has developed an Elected Members Briefing Series to help elected members keep pace with key issues affecting local government.

Some briefing notes will be directly produced by IS staff but we will also make available material from as wide a range of public bodies, commentators and observers of public services as possible.

We will use the IS website and elected member e-bulletin to publicise and provide access to the briefing notes. All briefing notes in the series can be accessed at www.improvementservice.org.uk/products-and-services/skills-and-development/elected-members-development/elected-member-guidance-and-briefings

About this briefing note

Carnegie UK has been promoting wellbeing across the UK and Ireland for over a hundred years. We have actively engaged with the development of the National Performance Framework since 2010, when we led the first national roundtable on Measuring Economic Performance and Social Progress in Scotland.¹

The COVID-19 pandemic has shone an unforgiving light on structural economic and social inequalities in Scotland, and transformed our ways of working and living. It has highlighted, like never before, the links between our health and the economy; shown our frailties, our assets and resilience.

Many people have recognised now is the time to make changes. To develop systems and services that can respond to the climate emergency and realise the vision of a greener, fairer, more prosperous and sustainable Scotland.

Scotland's vision of a sustainable future is held within the National Performance Framework. The Framework is a wellbeing framework: a vision and approach to measuring performance that "gives equal importance to economic, environmental and social progress".² Local Authorities and their elected members have a vital role in putting this framework into practice across Scotland. We have produced this briefing to support that, by unpacking what we mean by wellbeing and a wellbeing framework.

1 Round Table on Measuring Economic Performance and Social Progress in Scotland (2011) *More Than GDP: Measuring What Matters* <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/more-than-gdp-measuring-what-matters/>

2 Purpose of the National Performance Framework. Available at <https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/what-it> Accessed on December 10, 2020.

What is the issue?

Addressing climate change at the same time as maintaining basic services (housing, food, education, information and infrastructure), tackling inequalities and supporting local economies requires Councils to make trade-offs.

To do this effectively a holistic framework is needed that looks at issues in the round. A framework that not only measures progress here and now but into the future, which a wellbeing framework can do.

Wellbeing and wellbeing frameworks

The term wellbeing can mean different things to different people, but in Carnegie UK we define it as everyone having what they need to live well now and in the future.

Looking after the wellbeing of all citizens – our collective wellbeing – is a powerful way of creating a society where everyone can live well together.³ We understand wellbeing to be three linked dimensions or areas of discussion (see figure 1).

1. Personal wellbeing – how a person thinks and feels about their own life; often thought of as happiness or life satisfaction or having a good quality of life. This is commonly the domain of health.
2. Community wellbeing – what we need to live well locally, within our communities.
3. Societal wellbeing – what we need to live well together as a society, now and into the future.

³ Carnegie UK. *Our strategy for change 2021: Learning how to live well together*. https://d1s-su070pg2v9i.cloudfront.net/pex/pex_carnegie2021/2021/08/09124822/Carnegie-UK-strategy-for-change-2021.pdf

Figure 1: The dimensions of wellbeing⁴

Societal wellbeing goes further than considering our health and our feelings. It includes understanding social connections and people's capability to contribute meaningfully to society (to volunteer, to vote, to make decisions). It looks across the board at the current situation of the different sectors of the population and the equality of future opportunities: a key focus of local and national governments.

While countries and cultures have some differences in what they think is necessary to live well, there is a remarkable similarity across developed countries. We all want our citizens to be healthy, wealthy and wise. That means societal wellbeing includes economic outcomes – having enough money and financial security to buy the things we need to live and enjoy life. But unlike other measures of success such as GVA or GDP, it also includes social outcomes that measure quality of life. Some of these are tangible, scrutinised and measured by public sector bodies such as education, health and housing, others are less concrete, like a sense of community and support networks of family and friends. Whether or not they are measured locally, these are all factors that Councils are concerned about and have to weigh up in decision making.

Wellbeing Frameworks are increasingly being used by governments to express what they want for their population and to measure what success looks like.⁵ For example, in New Zealand the Living Standards Framework is being used to set a wellbeing budget.⁶ The National Performance Framework exemplifies a wellbeing framework, with a mission statement, a diverse set of outcomes and a larger set of indicators that measure progress towards these outcomes. The frameworks do not generally set targets to be achieved, but rather seek continuous improvement on the indicators.

4 Understanding Wellbeing Briefing Paper, Wellbeing Economy Alliance, 28 July 2020 Available at <https://wellbeingeconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/WEAll-Understanding-Wellbeing.pdf>

5 For the examples at city and regional level, see OECD, Carnegie UK Trust (2016) *Sharpening Our Focus*. Available at <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/sharpening-focus-guidance-well-being-frameworks-cities-regions/>

6 What Works Wellbeing article on the Living Standards Framework available at: <https://whatworkswell-being.org/practice-examples/new-zealand-treasury-the-living-standards-framework-dashboard-2/>

Wellbeing evidence gives us important pointers on how to deliver services to people in a way that improves their lives. For example, for a good sense of personal wellbeing, people need to feel control over their lives. When things are done to us, instead of with us, we can easily disengage. And yet, this method of 'doing to' people is a trap public services have frequently fallen into. Partnerships between communities and local authorities in the COVID-19 response have shown us a different approach is possible: with local authorities providing essential services, at the same time as enabling people to support one and another's wellbeing. This shift, required if we are to succeed in improving societal wellbeing, can be supported and encouraged by elected members.



What does this mean for elected members?

This role of Local Authorities to serve the wide variety of the needs of their populations, drawing on their strengths and understanding competing interests, is why a wellbeing framework is a natural approach to delivering public services.

A wellbeing framework will tell you what is going on and can frame a dialogue about why. For this to happen elected members need to encourage their Council to develop the vision, outcomes and indicators of a wellbeing framework. In many places much of this already may be available, for example reflected in Local Outcome Improvement Plans (LOIPs). Where it is not clear, elected members can play a role in the leading the development of a collaborative vision for their area. They can support the use of the National Performance Framework, its outcomes, and indicators, locally, to encourage decision making on the basis of promoting wellbeing in the round. Although not all the outcomes may be applicable to every department, we know that generally sectoral strategies and programmes (e.g. transport, housing, employability etc.) have an impact beyond just the one outcome they most closely associate with.

This more holistic approach can be encouraged by strategic planning and performance management frameworks making links to the national outcomes, and looking for locally available indicators of success. It will help us move on from a situation where experts use only the domains and indicators of wellbeing they are used to working with in decisions that often have wider ramifications. For example, education services should be considering their impact on improving health, not just direct attainment outcomes, and vice versa.



Key issues to consider

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted and heightened the structural inequalities that exist in Scotland. In the future, the public sector will work to better include and support the people worst affected. At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to lead to reduced funding (from 2021) for the public and third sectors.

These demands might tempt some to focus solely on growing the economy again. Using a wellbeing framework asks decision-makers including elected members, to consider the wider needs of their populations. Do Councils know what the local population thinks the wellbeing of their area looks like, and what achieving wellbeing for all will take? If there hasn't been an opportunity for a wider conversation about wellbeing, this should be the first step to developing a local wellbeing framework. The conversation can look at the role of programmes such as Community Wealth Building, community organising and the growth of community ownership of land and buildings in terms of supporting us to live well together in our local places.

Further resources and support

Round Table on Measuring Economic Performance and Social Progress in Scotland (2011), *More Than GDP: Measuring What Matters*. Available at: <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/more-than-gdp-measuring-what-matters/>

Scottish Government, *Purpose of the National Performance Framework*. Available at <https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/what-it>

Carnegie UK (2018) *Wellbeing: What's in a Word?* Available at <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/wellbeing-whats-in-a-word/>

OECD, Carnegie UK (2016) *Sharpening Our Focus*. Available at <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/sharpening-focus-guidance-wellbeing-frameworks-cities-regions/>

The Living Standards Framework available at <https://whatworkswellbeing.org/practice-examples/new-zealand-treasury-the-living-standards-framework-dashboard-2/>

National Performance Framework Resources <https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/resources>

OECD, (2018) *Policy use of well-being metrics: Describing countries' experiences SDD WORKING PAPER N94* (Including New Zealand and Scotland) Available at [http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=SDD/DOC\(2018\)7&docLanguage=En](http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=SDD/DOC(2018)7&docLanguage=En)

Carnegie UK, 2019, *What Next for the National Performance Framework* Available at <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/what-are-the-next-steps-for-the-national-performance-framework/>

Carnegie UK, 2020, *Gross Domestic Wellbeing (GDWe): An alternative measure of social progress*. Available at <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/gross-domestic-wellbeing-gdwe-an-alternative-measure-of-social-progress/>

The Wellbeing Economy Governments partnership <https://wellbeingeconomy.org/wego>



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The logo for Improvement Service, featuring the letters 'is' in a large, bold, blue font. The 'i' has a red dot above it, and the 's' has a red dot at the end. Below this, the words 'improvement' and 'service' are written in a smaller, blue, sans-serif font, with 'service' in red.

improvement **service**