



APPG Wellbeing Economics

Tuesday 11 June 2019, 2:30pm – 4pm, Room C, 1 Parliament Street

“Implementing wellbeing: What we learn from Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and New Zealand”

Minutes

1. Welcome and introduction to our 3rd meeting which looks at the implementation of wellbeing approaches within the UK and beyond

This APPG was reconstituted in December last year, after a brief hiatus. The What Works Centre for Wellbeing have taken over as the Secretariat, to build on the science and discourse on wellbeing that has progressed in recent years and bring those discussions and developments to parliament. Our first meeting discussed the importance of measuring Children’s wellbeing systematically across the UK, and is being followed up with briefing being developed by the Children’s Society. Our second meeting discussed what a wellbeing approach could mean for the 2019 Spending Review. Two weeks ago we launched a report on this with evidence informed recommendations for spending to improve wellbeing.

This 3rd meeting, and the last before summer recess, we will hear from representatives of countries around the UK and beyond who have been implementing wellbeing as an overarching goal for policy and practice. We are interested in how it is being done, what the results of such an approach is for the wellbeing of people and places, and what the practical and political challenges are, as well as the evidence gaps that need to be addressed to support such an approach. This comes at a time when governments in New Zealand and Mexico have been elected on a platform promoting wellbeing as a goal.

We will follow 5 presentations with a discussion, kicked off by our discussant.

2. Speakers

Gary Gillespie (GG), Chief Economist, Government of Scotland: *Gary has been the Scottish Government Director and Chief Economist since September 2011. One of the aims of Scotland’s national performance framework, which began life back in 2007, is explicitly to ‘increase the wellbeing of people living in Scotland’. They are also leading the international charge, just last month’s hosting the first Wellbeing Economy Governments Policy lab.*

The Outcomes Framework in Scotland has been evolving, since devolution 20 years ago – and the associated control over devolved expenditure. The challenges for Scotland are deep rooted, including health inequalities and inequalities in other opportunities and outcomes. In 2007 government introduced ‘[Scotland performs](#)’, based on model from Virginia. Tackling 5 themes – healthier,



wealthier and fairer, smarter, safer and stronger, and greener using an outcomes based approach, to achieve sustainable economic growth. In 2018 that was [updated](#), to have wellbeing at the heart of it.

The Financial crisis 08/09 had a big impact on lives – changed focus of government to short term needs. Others outside of government in Scotland talking about different outcomes ([Oxfam Human Kind Index](#), [Carnegie Measuring What Matters](#)) established it to become more cross party. The [2015 new economic strategy](#) – put inequality alongside competitiveness, to focus Scotland's thinking about the economy towards inclusive growth. Complemented by the [Community Empowerment Act](#), established to empower communities to deliver inclusive growth outcomes.

The framework brings together social and environmental indicators. Now there is data on these indicators at the local area level, to compare with Scotland average. Tool used for city region deals and regional partnerships.

“The Scottish approach resonates elsewhere around the world – we can learn a lot from other's experience too.” [Wellbeing economy governments](#) – started last year. Brings together countries that want to share/collaborate. Talked about common interests of how to tackle child poverty, tourism and natural capital, budgets. A lot of similarities to share.

Jacob Ellis (JE), Communications and Public Affairs Lead (Acting) – *[standing in for Sophie Howe, Commissioner for the Future Generations Act in Wales]. As well as leading on the international work of the office of the Future Generation Act, Jacob is also the Deputy Chair of Literature Wales and a Trustee of Scouts Cymru. The Future Generations Act, established in 2015, has gone further than other legislatures by requiring public bodies to safeguard the interests of future generations, in terms of their decisions social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being.*

Wales is a small country – but making great advances in wellbeing. [The Future Generations Act](#), passed in 2015 – 3 months before the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) – placed a legal duty on 44 legal bodies in Wales, including museum libraries etc to consider future generations in their policies and activities and the [Commissioner](#) holds 44 bodies to account.

Problems with in a place generally seen in isolation – problems with the economy are to be solved with economics. But the Act requires taking responsibility for 4 pillars of wellbeing – social, economic, environmental and culture, articulated through [7 national wellbeing goals](#). The Act requires public bodies maximise their contribution to all 7 – not just their own.

Involvement – active involvement of citizens. Agreed a [definition for prevention](#) last year. Starting to see a shift. Act established [public service boards](#), at the local authority level, which involve local interested parties. 340 national objectives.

What has the act changed? ***“The welsh government changed their decision to invest in [relief road round M4](#) – took a stance from the Future Generations Act perspective that it wasn't worth it”***. Wales have been leaders in the levy on plastic bags, first fair trade nation, setting legislation for wellbeing – and they mean it.



Aideen McGinley (AMG), Trustee, Carnegie UK Trust, Northern Ireland: *Aideen is Chair of Carnegie UK Trust's Embedding Wellbeing in Northern Ireland Advisory Group and Co-Chair of the Carnegie Roundtable on Measuring Wellbeing in Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland published its first working draft of a wellbeing framework in 2018, despite challenges due to the political vacuum in Northern Ireland. The wellbeing duty on local government, which was established in 2014, has also been vital in taking forward the approach through Community Plans.*

NI do better than the UK average on happiness indicators – but PTSD and anti-depressant use is the highest in the UK. Reflects the complexity of wellbeing and its measurement.

Carnegie Trust – responsibility across UK and Ireland – to ensure the wellbeing of people. Under the surface and doing the policy analysis – neutral convening power. [Conference in Belfast on measuring what matters](#) – standing room only.

During the turmoil in NI – what could be done? Evidence sessions – study trip to Scotland – 2014 report to government – determining role for government. Pulled through cross party support. Good progress on childhood poverty. [Draft programme for government](#) published with improving wellbeing. In 2016, when the NI assembly stepped down, there was a vacuum – and frustration from a system that had got behind an outcomes based approach. **“So momentum moved to a local govt level, with 11 councils in NI, asking what could wellbeing look like in community planning setting”**. 3 councils acting as Guinea Pigs, experimenting with approaches on behalf of all 11. The Civil Service are constrained, but as there was previous cross party support for the wellbeing approach they are now starting to help local govt and take those risks.

Ongoing issues - How do you make co-production work to achieve a common ownership of issues and shared leadership – community planning partnerships taking shared responsibility.

Data questions are a common denominator and what should be measured.

Definitions – individual wellbeing = living well, community wellbeing = living well locally, and living well together, now and in the future.

Nick Carroll (NC), Economic Counsellor, New Zealand Treasury: *Nick is the New Zealand Treasury's delegate to the OECD in Paris. The New Zealand Treasury were responsible for the development of the country's Living Standards Framework, launched in December last year, which went on to inform the priorities and approach to the country's first wellbeing budget launched at the end of last month.*

Picking up from Gary's presentation, there are lots of similar frameworks around the world, recognising the intersections of health, education, social connections etc. – a lot to learn from each other. From Jacob – agree on the importance of the integrated approach to addressing wellbeing – holistic and collaborative. It's not just one agency, important to enable agencies to work together for shared outcomes. From Aideen – need to take the jump – learn a lot by doing.



What does high quality policy advice look like? Need to think broadly about [the factors a policy will influence](#). This includes the primary purpose, but also any major positive/negative side effects on other issues. The risk is that we focus on economic outcomes at expense of others. Wellbeing means you start broadly looking at the impacts – if the primary purpose of a policy is economic, then you must also think of the side effects. **“It’s not either/or economics and wellbeing”**. Important to do high quality analysis on economic programmes – but also analyse with respect to other outcomes. That’s just good [Cost Benefit analysis](#), but now – being more transparent about the measures, being consistent over time to allow a longer term view and more systematic about decisions.

[Wellbeing budget](#), focus on different domains of wellbeing. Used wellbeing data to assess where NZ is strong/weak and to identify 5 priorities; mental health, child poverty, Maori and Pasifika aspirations, digital, sustainable and low emissions productivity. Move away from departments thinking about budgets as their own. Improved cost benefit tools. More concerted effort to have broader benefits framework.

Wellbeing approach doesn’t change fiscal choices government makes regarding tax/spending and spending areas. But we will see greater focus on outcomes and effectiveness.

Wellbeing is not just about the budget – it’s about effectiveness of public services. E.g. – through the priority to address high level of domestic violence. It’s changed our advice e.g., through the regional transformation initiative. Wellbeing means being more rigorous with a higher evidence bar to be believable.

Journey – 2 years through intensive process. Addressing incentives and capabilities in agencies – over and above changing budget guidance and way we communicate

Katherine Trebeck (KT), Policy and Knowledge Lead, Wellbeing Economy Alliance: *Katherine has been the Policy and Knowledge lead of the Wellbeing Economy Alliance (WE-ALL) since its inception just over a year ago. WE-ALL is a new global collaboration of organisations, alliances, movements and individuals working together to change the economic system to create a wellbeing economy: one that delivers human and ecological wellbeing.*

The forgers: We see a breadth of actors having a go at this. Starting to deliver. Attention to circular economy, inclusive businesses – we see a [new mission for Scottish enterprise](#), not about prioritising businesses with high growth potential, but instead addressing inequality and decent work. The Wales approach is popular with younger people. Iceland have put [gender equality](#) at the heart of their rethinking of the economy. Forgers are not just sprinkling wellbeing to existing ways of working – but understanding that it demands a transformation of the how the economy operates.

Frontiers: Currently sending out mixed messages on wellbeing – but mixed messages is better than messages in the past. Need to join up for coherence and consistency, particularly to inform spending decisions and policy. There’s now a good sense of inadequacy of GDP, so that it’s not if – but how we



complement and go beyond GDP. Need to take patches of good and weave together into a quilt.
Example – if education department is doing well, police department will see the benefit.

What's still fraught: Timeliness of data. GDP is frequent and accepted. There's so much other data that's collected, we're not short of indicators. But how frequently it's collected and how it's scrutinised – and how is it reported in the media – getting them to ask 'what will this budget do for collective wellbeing?' Need to change the definition of economic crisis away from GDP – towards food banks insecurity etc. Ongoing questions on definitions and measures, for example, are subjective wellbeing measures too anthropocentric, how to include a societal wellbeing and a capital approach – and who defines these? How do we define the collective/society.

3. Open for discussion – Chaired by MP Chris Ruane

Discussant - Professor Paul Dolan (PD), LSE: Paul Dolan is a Professor of Behavioural Science and Head of the Psychological and Behavioural Science Department at the London School of Economics. His main research interests are in the measurement of happiness and in changing behaviour through changing the contexts within which people make choices, and he is the author or the recently published 'Happy Ever After' in which he talks about how the stories we tell about how we ought to live our lives harm us.

Responsible for generating the [QALY](#), which challenges the assumption that doctors know best – to instead ask patients. Subjective wellbeing does this by asking people what matters, and asks for people's view on the actions of policy makers.

How to capture interrelationships and spill over effects in different areas – subjective wellbeing helps. Now have 4 headline indicators – the [ONS4](#). Also importance of misery - no policy maker will reject the need to minimise misery and reducing suffering, which also addresses wellbeing inequalities by explicitly looking at those with the lowest level of wellbeing.

Stories - Whether the things we do for/to people are good for them? Consider rethinking the narratives – coming from parents, practitioners – be more circumspect about the life we think we ought to be leading, and test the associations between what we think is good for us, versus what is actually good for us?

Questions and comments:

Jennifer Nadel, Compassion in Politics: How sticky is 'wellbeing' as a concept in our culture to create the change we need to happen quickly?

JE – Important for this to be collaborative – where people come together, including around accountability – with consequences for what happens when someone doesn't focus on wellbeing or the FGA etc. SDGs are voluntarily, whereas there is a Judicial review in Wales if not performing.

AMG – Great traction and pickup on recent work on [kindness](#). Wellbeing agenda need to be multi lingual. By default NI focussing at local level, whereas in NZ, it's working in culture of civil service.



Paul Frijters, LSE: Models presented in Wales and NZ have many indicators – are there too many to make sense of from a practical perspective?

NC – Wellbeing is complex – with lots of indicators to assess. Moving beyond complexity – advice to ministers is based on identifying major priorities within the indicator set and where the biggest bang for the buck can be achieved (e.g. tackling domestic violence). The cost benefit analysis tool shouldn't be taken too literally, with policies assessed against each indicator – but rather identify a primary outcome, and then the additional factors the policy may have positive or negative impacts on.

GG – [OECD countries have a range of indicators](#), over 100 to 12. It's up to different areas to decide what their priorities are. Solutions are different in different areas – need to give people the agency to do this. Bit more bottom up, agency based approach than NZ.

GOD – problem with a dashboard of indicators, is that it suggests equal weighting – subjective framework helps to address this. In public policy, we are thinking about nudges to change behaviour – but we need to think instead about the outcome of that behaviour in terms of wellbeing – in order to get the design right.

JE – Indicators can be updated – whilst the objectives are common, question is how to make the indicators most meaningful.

Pillipa Whitford, SNP MP Central Ayrshire – If we want to look at outcomes at all levels of government – does this inform the design of a car? Or how people use them? If we could get wellbeing to be addressed in all policies, this would send you in a communitarian and ecological direction at every level – but how to get it happen?

JE – Three things are needed: 1 - Policies and regulation, 2 - Innovation and ideas, 3 - People's hearts and minds – on 3 is where Wales are still struggling.

KT – Discussion on wellbeing can quickly go to technocratic metrics and domains – removed concepts from the communities we set out to benefit. Need to close the gap with ultimate beneficiaries – circling back to communities and communicate with stories. Would love for the ultimate measure of progress to shift from GDP to the number of girls riding their bikes to school.

PD - Looking at policies through a wellbeing lens even before measurement is a good start.

Paul Najsarek, Chief Executive, Ealing Council – Is devolution essential for wellbeing – or is it happenstance?

NC – NZ wasn't a crisis economy, but it wasn't delivering for people. The stable environment helped though.

GG – It can work well in a crisis too – allowing for a paradigm shift in what people value – as a platform for change. Size matters, the permission to be different and leadership that's open to trying different approaches. The early years collaborative in Scotland applied systemic theory thinking and saw mortality rates fall. Can't attribute this to any specific policy – but rather it's the common approach that worked.



GOD – the UK wide measures allow us to be able to make the comparisons across devolved regions. Common data plus experimentation in regions.

Roger Higman, Network of Wellbeing – In CB analysis – is subjective wellbeing enough to change decisions? E.g. for road construction decisions.

GOD – a good CB analysis should do this. Use of subjective data is one way of going further

Baroness Claire Tyler of Enfield – How we change the political dialogue – for those not thinking about this first? How would you get the current contesters for the tory party leadership to have to focus on wellbeing?

KT – Use of deliberative democracy to engage people - not a rapid fire survey. [NB - There is an APPG on [deliberative democracy](#)].

AMG – Demonstration of results – in justice, and successes with child poverty and rural transport. Scale, size, permission, data and communication all important.

JE – Act looks at current needs – plus future generations – those who don't yet have a voice. Framing becomes a different conversation, in a generational context. Helps that we've had the same party in govt for 20 years, but also cross govt support.

KT – Increasing focus on HR, decent work and inequality – watch that space...

4. Summary and next steps

- The Minutes from this meeting will be available on the Wellbeing Economics APPG website by next week.
- The next meeting of the APPG will be held after summer (September). We are reviewing the agenda for future meetings, but please do contact the secretariat if you have a proposal for a discussion topic for this Group as we continue to move the conversation forward with respect to implementing an evidence informed, collaborative approach, which can improve wellbeing in the UK.