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Improving lives in Scotland – a wellbeing approach

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Abstract

This paper has been developed from a programme of work supported by the Scottish Universities Insight Institute, Scotland's Futures Forum and partners in 2014, which focused on wellbeing in Scotland. Such an approach takes a balanced look across social, economic and environmental dimensions to understand what influences the wellbeing of citizens and society at large and to assess its progress. The wellbeing of individuals and society is influenced by a wide range of factors that are interrelated and often self-reinforcing. A broad conclusion that can be drawn from a wellbeing perspective is that fairer, more inclusive societies tend to be happier, more prosperous and have better developed social capital and fewer social problems. Scotland is considered to be one of the leading countries in the world in measuring wellbeing, although there are a number of areas where this could be improved. While measurement plays an important role in assessing progress and focussing resources, it must be used carefully and a number of issues need to be taken into account. A wellbeing framework provides an opportunity to actively engage citizens, join up policy and practice and prevent the need for often costly remedial action. Actively engaging, enabling and empowering citizens will not only improve policy and practice and strengthen democracy it will also directly improve wellbeing.

I Introduction and background

In 2014 the Scottish Universities Insight Institute (SUII)¹, Scotland's Futures Forum and partners² supported a programme³ aimed at better understanding, measuring and promoting wellbeing in Scotland, it sought to address three broad questions:

What influences individual and societal wellbeing?

How best to measure wellbeing and what influences it to help shape and guide policy and practice? (and contribute to the development of the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework)

¹ The Scottish Universities Insight Institute (SUII) is a joint venture between eight of Scotland's research intensive universities (Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow School of Art, Heriot Watt, St Andrews, Stirling and Strathclyde). It supports multi-disciplinary, multi-institutional teams of researchers, to come together with policy makers, practitioners, end users and overseas experts, to share knowledge and ideas to address the challenges and opportunities faced by Scotland and the wider world.

² Carnegie UK Trust*, Scottish Environmental Protection Agency*, Scottish Enterprise*, Scottish National Heritage*, Scottish Parliament, Scottish Government, Audit Scotland, SCVO, Oxfam Scotland, Volunteer Scotland and the David Hume Institute. (* co-funders)

³ The programme comprised of six individual projects:

- Good lives and decent societies (GLADS) – Edinburgh & Strathclyde
- Home not housing – Dundee, Stirling & Edinburgh
- The path to wellbeing – Aberdeen & St Andrews
- Walking for wellbeing – Edinburgh & Strathclyde
- Flourish (wellbeing in 'invisible' communities) – GSA & Aberdeen
- The economics of wellbeing – Scottish Institute for Research in Economics (Stirling)

It involved 15 knowledge sharing events and workshops with over 500 participants, including a conference in the Scottish Parliament in November 2014.

More information on the programme and all the projects can be found here:

<http://www.scottishinsight.ac.uk/Programmes/Wellbeing2014.aspx>

How best to promote and embed improved wellbeing?

The work built on the growing international interest in this area including: the Scottish Government's work on child well-being⁴, the Carnegie UK Trust's 'Shifting the Dial in Scotland' report⁵, the Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi work on behalf of the French Government⁶, the Oxfam Humankind Index⁷ (developed by the Fraser of Allander Institute), the OECD's Better Life initiative⁸, the Office for National Statistics⁹, the New Economics Foundation¹⁰ and the Social Progress Imperative¹¹.

This paper presents a synthesis of some of the main outputs from the SUII programme. These reflections are a summary of a significant body of work to which it is impossible to do justice. All responsibility for the content and interpretation rests with the authors.

II What is meant by 'wellbeing' and a 'wellbeing approach'?

A focus on wellbeing has a long and evolving history. Over two hundred years ago David Hume wrote "The great end of all human industry is the attainment of happiness. For this were arts invented, sciences cultivated, laws ordained." Around one hundred years ago Andrew Carnegie gave his UK Trust the remit of the "improvement of the wellbeing of the masses of the people of Great Britain and Ireland". More recently Ian Marchant (outgoing chairman of Scotland's 2020 Climate Group¹²) described sustainable development as increasing wellbeing while reducing the resources used.

In essence a wellbeing approach takes a balanced and systemic look across social, economic and environmental dimensions to understand and assess what influences the quality of life of citizens and society at large in order that it might be improved.

The measurement of wellbeing can help to define the concept but done badly it can also distract, mislead or provide too narrow a focus on what constitutes wellbeing. One of the motivations driving the development of a wellbeing approach is to move beyond GDP as an all-encompassing measure of economic welfare. In some countries, for example, subjective surveys of happiness or life satisfaction have been developed, although they usually only form part of the picture alongside more objective dashboard of measures of social, environmental and economic progress. Interestingly in this context Sir John Sinclair (who coined the term 'statistics') felt one of the key roles for government was to assess the "quantum of happiness".

As can be seen from the brief historical references above, happiness is a term which best captures much of what is involved in describing wellbeing. This has been revived in a more modern context by the work of Richard Layard¹³ and others. Yet this renewed focus on happiness is often misunderstood and

⁴ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/gettingitright/well-being>

⁵ <http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/2013/shifting-the-dial-in-scotland>

⁶ <http://www.stiglitz-sen-fitoussi.fr/en/index.htm>

⁷ <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/scotland/blog/2012/04/~media/6A6B095DB10E432A88DEBCA5C9F0F365.ashx>

⁸ <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/>

⁹ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/user-guidance/well-being/index.html>

¹⁰ <http://www.neweconomics.org/issues/entry/well-being>

¹¹ <http://www.socialprogressimperative.org/data>

¹² <http://www.2020climategroup.org.uk/>

¹³ Richard Layard, "Happiness: Lessons from a new science" Penguin (2nd edition 2011)

its aims underestimated. It is not just about the pursuit of our 'favourite things', as Paul Dolan puts it in a recent book¹⁴ "The pursuit of happiness is a ... noble and very serious objective".

(i) Individual wellbeing

For individuals, Dolan sees happiness as a combination of pleasure and purpose, which together shape the quality of experience. Attempts to capture how happy individuals are tend to use surveys of both hedonic wellbeing (with questions such as how happy were you yesterday) and overall life satisfaction (on a scale of one to ten how would you evaluate your life)¹⁵.

Happiness may appear a simple concept yet the influences on it are many and complex. We are discovering ever more about thinking processes and the relationship between conscious and unconscious thoughts - psychologists and behavioural economists are continuing to explore the many unconscious biases that influence our understanding and decision making¹⁶, which will also have an impact on how happy we feel. Linked to this is the degree of objectivity we used to assess a situation and the relationship between perception and reality. For example recent polling data suggests that across a number of different countries citizens consistently overestimate the level of social and economic problems that exist - sometimes by a wide margin¹⁷. For example, unemployment is felt to be around three times higher than it actually is in many places - given the impact that unemployment has on wellbeing (see below) this is bound to feed through into assessments of happiness.

Age also appears to be a factor - happiness appears to be U-shaped with age¹⁸; we start off reasonably happy (full of expectations perhaps) then as we move towards our fifties we become less happy (as ambitions are dashed and the cares of the world grow?) and as we grow older our happiness increases.

(ii) Societal wellbeing

Human evolution has been strongly influenced by our ability to co-operate in societies¹⁹ and we have developed cultures, norms and moralities to support this²⁰. Such co-operative behaviour has tended to develop in relatively small groups and a key contemporary challenge is to co-operate more widely to tackle issues that have a global reach²¹.

At a societal level happiness can be contagious and provide a context for individual happiness. Giving seems to be important in this respect, it can increase the wellbeing of the giver and receiver and thus an overall culture of generosity can influence society at large through building trust. There appear to be links between levels of inequality and happiness and the impact that this can have on a sense of trust

¹⁴ Paul Dolan, "Happiness by design", Allen Lane 2014

¹⁵ World Happiness Report (2013) http://unsdsn.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/WorldHappinessReport2013_online.pdf

¹⁶ For example, Daniel Kahneman "Thinking Fast and Slow", Penguin (2012), Dan Airely, "Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces that Shape Our Decisions", Harper Collins (2009)

¹⁷ Ipsos MORI, "Perceptions are not reality: Things the world gets wrong" (2014) <https://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/3466/Perceptions-are-not-reality-10-things-the-world-gets-wrong.aspx>

¹⁸ The Economist, "Why, beyond middle age, people get happier as they get older", (Dec 16th 2010) <http://www.economist.com/node/17722567>

¹⁹ Martin Nowak, "Super Co-operators – Evolution, altruism and human behaviour", Cannongate (2011)

²⁰ Mark Pagel, "Wired for Culture – The natural history of human co-operation", Allen Lane (2012) and Joshua Greene, "Moral Tribes – Emotion, reason and the gap between us and them", Atlantic Books (2013)

²¹ Clive Gamble, John Gowlett and Robin Dunbar, "Thinking Big – How the evolution of social life shaped the human mind", Thames and Hudson (2014)

between individuals and groups in society. Equality as to the importance of individuals is therefore crucial. This was recognised by Adam Smith over two centuries ago: “In what constitutes the real happiness of human life, [the poor] are in no respect inferior to those who would seem so much above them.”²²

Fairer societies tend to be happier, more at ease/settled, with lower crime and better health²³. Societies that have developed more inclusive political and economic institutions also tend to be the most innovative, productive and prosperous, in contrast to those in which a small elite focus on extracting value in the short term²⁴. Aggregate demand tends to be higher in societies where income is more equitably distributed, given the higher propensity to consume of those with lower incomes.²⁵ The development of social capital has been identified as an important contributor to growing prosperity through, for example, the role it can play in facilitating innovation and the development of trade - as highlighted recently by the Bank of England’s Chief Economist²⁶. Work by Caesar Hidalgo²⁷ suggests that societies with stronger social capital are better able to develop the breadth and depth of networks that are more likely to enable the development of sophisticated information based economies. Macro level analysis by the OECD²⁸ and IMF²⁹ shows that widening inequality has a detrimental impact on the level and durability of economic development.

III What influences wellbeing?

The factors that influence and shape the wellbeing of individuals and society at large are complex and multi-faceted. As Carrie Exton of the OECD put it in one of the SUII GLADS seminars³⁰, “We have a list of ingredients for wellbeing, but no one set recipe”. There have been many attempts at modelling wellbeing, a number of which were explored in Neil Thin’s GLADS presentation³¹. A feature of each of them is the strong interrelationship of the various individual elements.

The elements that influence wellbeing can be summarised under ‘People, Participation and Place’.

- People
 - *Agency* - influence and control over one’s life
 - *Purpose* – a sense of direction and meaning
 - *Resources* – sufficient income and wealth to have a reasonable quality of life without undue worry and uncertainty
 - *Health* – physical and mental

²² “*The Theory of Moral Sentiments*” (1759)

²³ Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, “*The Spirit Level: Why Equality is Better for Everyone*”, Penguin (2009)

²⁴ Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson, “*Why Nations Fail – The origins of power, prosperity and poverty*”, Profile (2012)

²⁵ Joseph Stiglitz, “*The price of inequality*”, Allen Lane (2012)

²⁶ Andrew Haldane, “*Growing fast and slow*” (February 2015)

<http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/publications/Documents/speeches/2015/speech797.pdf>

²⁷ Caesar Hidalgo, “*Why Information Grows: The Evolution of Order, from Atoms to Economies*” Basic Books (2015)

²⁸ OECD (2014), “*Trends in Income Inequality and its Impact on Economic Growth*”, OECD

Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers No. 163, available at:

<http://www.oecd.org/els/soc/trends-in-income-inequality-and-its-impact-on-economic-growth-SEM-WP163.pdf>

²⁹ <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/sdn/2014/sdn1402.pdf>

³⁰ <http://www.scottishinsight.ac.uk/Portals/50/GLADS/GLADS%2025%20February%202014.pdf>

³¹ <http://www.scottishinsight.ac.uk/Programmes/Wellbeing2014/GLADSGoodLivesAndDecentSocieties.aspx> For example Wellbeing and Poverty Pathways Briefing No. 1 - An Integrated Model For Assessing Wellbeing http://www.welldev.org.uk/wed-new/news/briefing_1_small.pdf

- *Skills/Knowledge* – to benefit from and contribute to the economy and society
- *Sustenance* – physical, cultural and spiritual
- Participation
 - *Community* – being part of a wider group, recognition
 - *Engagement/Voice* – being involved and being listened to
 - *Access* – physical and virtual
 - *Employment* – making a contribution, providing resources and status
 - *Connections* – family, friends and beyond
 - *Giving* – putting something back
- Place
 - *Safety and shelter* – home and neighbourhood
 - *Environment-natural/built* – quality of environment and physical space and accessibility
 - *Fairness* – to help build trust and community
 - *Freedom* – to express oneself and take part without fear or favour
 - *Culture* – the underlying set of social norms which guide and constrain action e.g. low levels of corruption

This is by no means an exhaustive list but it provides a flavour of some of the key elements that have been identified.

The importance of income has been subject to much discussion since the ‘Easterlin Paradox’ was first identified in the mid 1970’s³². The paradox in question is that while happiness increases in line with income at lower levels of income, as income rises beyond a certain point happiness levels off and in higher income countries happiness has not increased much in recent years despite significant increases in income. More recent work³³ suggests that the relationship between happiness and income is log-linear suggesting that there is a relationship but it is between increases in income and happiness. It appears that there is a closer relationship between life satisfaction and income than between hedonic measures of happiness and income³⁴. We also seem to adapt quite quickly to increases in income and accept them as the norm and develop new wants that need to be satisfied to maintain levels of happiness. Relative income is also a factor in influencing happiness.

A further interesting aspect of the relationship between income and wellbeing is the discovery that losses in income (or anticipated income) appear to have a disproportionate impact on wellbeing

³² Richard Easterlin “Does Economic Growth Improve the Human Lot? Some Empirical Evidence”. In Paul A. David and Melvin W. Reder, eds., *Nations and Households in Economic Growth: Essays in Honor of Moses Abramovitz*, New York: Academic Press (1974)

³³ Betsy Stevenson, and Justin Wolfers “[Economic Growth and Subjective Well-Being: Reassessing the Easterlin Paradox](#)”. *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity* (2008)

³⁴ Daniel Kahneman and Angus Deaton “High income improves evaluation of life but not emotional wellbeing” *PNAS* (September 2010) <http://www.pnas.org/content/107/38/16489>

compared to gains³⁵. This would be consistent with the concept of loss aversion whereby people will generally put greater store on avoiding loss than achieving gains³⁶.

Unemployment appears to have a significant impact on happiness on a par with bereavement or separation. Unemployment has been shown to have a more significant impact than other macro-economic factors and “estimates with European data imply that a one percentage point increase in the unemployment rate lowers well-being by more than five times as much as a one percentage point increase in the inflation rate”³⁷. It also appears that unemployment is not something that we adapt to; as Carol Graham points out “...while people can experience all sorts of negative events...and adapt back to their equilibrium levels of well-being...long term unemployment is one of the few things that individuals do not adapt back from.”³⁸ Perhaps not surprisingly, under-employment and uncertainty over employment also have a very negative impact.

Increasing attention is also being given to promoting what are termed ‘good jobs’, which in addition to good terms and conditions also provide training and development and allow scope for greater initiative and control by employees³⁹. Not only does this increase employee wellbeing it also improves productivity and company performance⁴⁰. The value of good quality jobs can also be linked to the growing interest in employee-owned businesses in increasing employee wellbeing and company performance, while at the same time strengthening democracy⁴¹.

The wellbeing of a society is more than the sum of its individual parts, be they individuals, firms, communities or localities. There is a complex web of relationships that influence societal wellbeing from the external costs and benefits of private action to the positive or negative cumulative cycles that can shape the progress of an area or group of people, as identified by Gunnar Myrdal in the 1950’s⁴².

A team at the University of Aberdeen involved in the SUII ‘Path to Wellbeing’ project have developed a “social quality” framework to analyse the happiness of a society⁴³. This framework looks at four components:

- socio-economic security (social investment /“social wage”)
- social cohesion (social ties /belonging /common good /trust)
- social inclusion (participation /volunteering)
- social empowerment (control /agency /voice)

³⁵ Christopher Boyce et al “Money, Well-Being, and Loss Aversion - Does an Income Loss Have a Greater Effect on Well-Being Than an Equivalent Income Gain?” (2013) <http://pss.sagepub.com/content/24/12/2557>

³⁶ Kahneman, D. and Tversky, A “Choices, Values, and Frames” (1984)

³⁷ David Blanchflower, David Bell et al “The happiness tradeoff between unemployment and inflation” (2014) http://www.dartmouth.edu/~blanchflr/papers/jcmb_version_inflation_unemployment_%20BBMM.pdf

³⁸ Carol Graham “Comments on The effects of macro-economic shocks on wellbeing” (2013)

<http://www.brookings.edu/research/speeches/2013/04/12-effects-macroeconomic-well-being-graham>

³⁹ The Scottish Government has recently set up a Fair Work Convention tasked with promoting a fairer work place <http://news.scotland.gov.uk/News/Scotland-a-fair-work-nation-1851.aspx>

⁴⁰ Zeynep Ton “The Good Jobs Strategy (2014)

<http://cdn.executive.mit.edu/00/000147a915d7fdabc7f93519980000/file/ton-webinarthe-good-jobs-strategy-v7pdf>

⁴¹ This was the subject of an earlier SUII programme

<http://www.scottishinsight.ac.uk/Programmes/Programmes20122013/StrengtheningDemocracy.aspx>. See also David Erdal “Beyond the Corporation”, Bodley Head (2011)

⁴² Gunnar Myrdal “Economic Theory and Underdeveloped Regions” Duckworth (1957)

⁴³ Claire Wallace, “Beyond GDP: happiness is about more than just individuals”, *The Conversation* (November 2014) <http://theconversation.com/beyond-gdp-happiness-is-about-more-than-just-individuals-33768>

A key feature of healthy and happy societies appears to be the importance of dialogue between different interests, communities etc. To be effective this dialogue must be: inclusive, empathetic, empowering, creative, systemic, multi-generational and focus on the potential of communities.

'Place' often provides the stage where the interrelated influences on wellbeing are played out. As Patrick Geddes put it "a city is more than a place in space, it is a drama in time"⁴⁴. This can be very localised in the home itself, which is generally seen to have a positive influence on wellbeing providing physical shelter, safety and emotional, loving, personal, collective and inter-generational space. The nature of home is also evolving, for example, for some it is also increasingly a place for work. While generally positive in some cases the home can also be a place of torment, which can damage wellbeing. On a wider spatial dimension the neighbourhood can have a profound impact on wellbeing, both negative and positive. It can provide opportunities to make connections and build community, but it can also be a source of fear and disempowerment. One obvious counterweight to this is through the active enablement and engagement of communities in designing and improving housing and their local area.⁴⁵

The wider environment also has a significant influence on wellbeing. For example access to urban greenspace can help improve both physical and mental health by reducing stress and associated damaging cortisol levels⁴⁶. In addition, it also provides the opportunity for increasing social engagement. While not having as big an impact as some other influences it is still significant (10% of the impact of employment). Similar impacts have been found for access to water.⁴⁷

A good physical environment can also help encourage increased physical activity. The increased wellbeing that comes about through increased physical activity in a good environment highlights the importance of considering wider synergies in promoting wellbeing⁴⁸. For example not only can walking and cycling have a direct impact on wellbeing, they can also have an indirect impact via lower carbon emissions and an improved environment, better physical and mental health with lower remedial costs, less sick-leave, higher productivity/incomes, increased tax revenues, greater public investment and so on.⁴⁹

IV How can wellbeing best be assessed?

Measurement can help policy makers to better understand what influences wellbeing and the progress that can be made. However given that the influences on individual and societal wellbeing are – as noted above - multi-faceted, complex and interrelated, so too is its measurement. Indeed a key feature of any measurement framework is the need to capture something that is more than the sum of its component parts. There is also a danger that overly focussing on what can be "measured" might distract attention

⁴⁴ Patrick Geddes "Civics: as applied sociology" *Sociological Papers* (1905)

⁴⁵ "Home not housing" *Final report* (2014)

<http://www.scottishinsight.ac.uk/Portals/50/Home%20not%20Housing/Home%20not%20Housing%20Final%20Report.pdf>

⁴⁶ Catharine Ward Thompson, "The role of access outdoors for mental health" (2014)

<http://www.scottishinsight.ac.uk/Portals/50/GLADS/CWT%20GLADS%20Seminar%2014%20May.pdf>

⁴⁷ Mathew White, "Longitudinal effects of moving to greener urban areas", "Does living by the coast improve health and wellbeing?" <http://www.eceh.org/people/dr-mathew-white/>

⁴⁸ <http://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/jun/09/cities-physically-active-residents-more-productive-healthier-walking-cycling-economic-benefits>

⁴⁹ Rona Gibb "Let's Get Scotland Walking", presentation to Walking for Wellbeing Project

<http://www.scottishinsight.ac.uk/Portals/50/ias%20documents/Walking%20for%20Wellbeing/NWS%20-%20Walking%20for%20Wellbeing%20-%20June%202014.pdf>

from the underlying purpose of adopting a wellbeing framework. As Joseph Stiglitz has remarked “Our metrics will never be a substitute for public dialogue and thinking about what constitutes a good society.”⁵⁰

It is now widely accepted that the assessment of a society’s progress goes beyond the measurement of economic performance and in particular the growth in GDP⁵¹. At a global level this has been reflected in the UN’s work on sustainable development goals⁵². Many countries and regions are also developing processes to measure progress on a broader front⁵³. Analysis of different approaches such as that carried out by the Carnegie UK Trust⁵⁴ have identified a number of domains (such as income, employment, housing, health, work-life balance, social connections, civic engagement, environment, security, subjective wellbeing) that are used in many approaches. Trying to take a holistic view is also a common feature. One conclusion that can be drawn is that there is no simple answer as to how it should be done, but it’s generally recognised that Scotland through its Government⁵⁵ and NGOs⁵⁶ is one of the world leaders in the field.

During the course of the SUIL programme a number of issues were identified that need to be considered in developing a wellbeing measurement framework. These can be summarised as follows:

How to effectively engage citizens in the development and monitoring of measures? As the OECD’s Istanbul directive puts it “We need to encourage communities to consider for themselves what progress means in the 21st century”⁵⁷. (Oxfam used a survey of around 3000 people to identify priorities in the development of its “Humankind Index”)

How can the qualitative ‘spirit of wellbeing’ best be captured? Is there a role for ‘stories’ to add colour to more objective measures?

What’s the right balance between surveys of subjective wellbeing and objective measures of what influences wellbeing? What should be the balance between perception and reality?

How can synergies between different domains best be captured?

Are dashboards of indicators a better approach than the construction of a single index? Dashboards can be complex but can capture nuances. Whereas an index is more straightforward (with the replacement of GDP seen by some as a ‘holy grail’) but the weighting of domains and indicators can be complex and hinder transparency.

The availability of data sometimes means that proxy measures have to be used, this can sometimes obscure a focus on the desired outcome.

⁵⁰ Keynote address, 4th OECD World Forum, New Delhi (2012) <http://www.oecd.org/site/worldforumindia/OECD-World-Forum-2012-India-proceedings.pdf>

⁵¹ Enrico Giovannini, “Measuring and Fostering Well-being” Presentation in Scottish Parliament (January 2015) <http://www.scottishinsight.ac.uk/Portals/50/ias%20documents/Wellbeing/wellbeing-edimburgo.pdf>

⁵² <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgsproposal>

⁵³ For example the Canadian Index of Wellbeing <https://uwaterloo.ca/canadian-index-wellbeing/>

⁵⁴ “Shifting the dial in Scotland” (2013) <http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/getattachment/ad9d0fe0-b76f-49b2-b2af-7455dd912b02/Shifting-the-Dial-in-Scotland.aspx>

⁵⁵ <http://www.gov.scot/About/Performance/scotPerforms>

⁵⁶ <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/our-work/poverty-in-the-uk/humankind-index>

⁵⁷ <http://www.oecd.org/newsroom/38883774.pdf>

One of the aims of the SUII programme was to make an input to the development of the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework (NPF). During the course of the programme a number of suggestions for development of the NPF were made and they are summarised below:

Reframe the overall purpose statement to provide a more explicit wellbeing focus

Give greater emphasis within the NPF to:

- *measures of distribution,*
 - income & wealth, health, inter-regional, inter-generational
- *measures that focus on a place's assets (as well as deficits)*
- *measuring progress over the life course*
- *unemployment (particularly long term and youth)*
- *qualitative assessment*
 - social quality/quality of relationships
 - home/neighbourhood quality
 - quality/flexibility of work
- *volunteering*
- *access to the natural environment*
- *ethical business practices (e.g. good employment practice)*

It was recognised that it is all too easy to keep on adding measures and there is a danger that the exercise could become too complex and confusing. It was therefore suggested that thought should be given to a 'one in, one out' approach although it was accepted this could also have the problem of appearing to downgrade certain existing NPF 'outcomes'.

During the course of the SUII programme, volunteering was used as a case study for indicator development. Volunteering is a powerful tool for change and brings wellbeing benefits both to those who receive and those who give. It has been estimated by Volunteer Scotland that the economic value of volunteering in Scotland is over £2.6 billion⁵⁸. Volunteering can be both formal (via organisations etc.) and informal (in local communities etc.), it is proposed that both are captured in the NPF. The suggested measures are:

Formal: % of adults providing unpaid help to an organisation or group in the last 12 months - baseline 29.4 (2012) – Scottish Household Survey

Informal: % of adults providing unpaid help to an individual who was not a relative - baseline 42% (2013) – one off Volunteer Scotland survey (need for regular addition to SHS)

V Embedding and promoting wellbeing

Using a wellbeing framework to guide policy and practice has a number of important benefits, including:

⁵⁸ <http://www.volunteerscotland.net/policy-and-research/resources/assigning-economic-value-to-volunteering/>

Enabling citizens to actively engage in policy and practice development and evaluation;

Providing a focus for assessing and evaluating strategic direction, budgets and specific policies and improving accountability. This could be in a parliamentary context or it could be more widely in the development of a participatory democracy (e.g. the Oxfam policy assessment tool)⁵⁹

Supporting policy makers and practitioners (for example it could play an important role in implementing the recommendations of the Christie Commission⁶⁰). In particular it helps to:

- Stimulate dialogue and engagement
- Identify gaps and pose questions
- Focus on prevention
- Join up action

In addition to focussing attention on those things that were identified as influencing wellbeing in as systematic a way as possible, the one overriding conclusion to emerge from all of the projects in the programme was the importance of actively enabling, empowering and engaging citizens to be more actively involved in setting direction, deciding priorities, developing policies, identifying measures and monitoring progress. This will involve moving away from the more traditional approach of deciding, designing and delivery towards what the Carnegie UK Trust calls an “Enabling State”⁶¹. As the OECD puts it “Placing people’s lives — their needs, their ambitions and their feelings — at the centre of development policy should be the fundamental goal.”⁶²

This will have a double benefit - it will directly enhance wellbeing by making people feel more in control of their own destiny and at the same time it will improve policy and practice by making it more relevant to people’s needs. A recent poll conducted on behalf of the Carnegie UK Trust suggests that there is demand to get more involved⁶³. This expressed desire could also be used to develop a stronger more participatory democracy and build on the energy generated, for example, by the recent Scottish referendum campaign.

“The referendum itself was ... acclaimed internationally for the high standard of democratic debate and engagement. It has resulted in the people of Scotland now being more engaged and committed to seeing our country change and grow than at any time. All of us have a duty to harness and encourage that sense of democratic participation – as First Minister I intend to lead by example.”⁶⁴

What’s more there is growing willingness and ability in Scotland in the public, private, third and academic sectors to help enable, empower and embed such an approach⁶⁵.

⁵⁹ <http://policytool.humankindindex.org/>

⁶⁰ *Report on the Future Delivery of Public Services by the Commission* (2011)

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/352649/0118638.pdf>

⁶¹ <http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/changing-minds/people---place/enabling-state>

⁶² *Report of 4th OECD World Forum, New Delhi* (2012) <http://www.oecd.org/site/worldforumindia/OECD-World-Forum-2012-India-proceedings.pdf>

⁶³ <http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/news---events/latest/greater-power-for-communities-is-a-general-electio>

⁶⁴ *Scottish Government, “One Scotland – The Government’s Programme for 2014-15”* (2014)

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0046/00464455.pdf>

⁶⁵ *As exemplified by the Flourish*

http://www.scottishinsight.ac.uk/Portals/50/ias%20documents/Reports/Flourish_Final%20Report.pdf and *Path to Wellbeing* <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/engage/public/wellbeing-323.php> projects

VI Conclusions

A wellbeing approach takes a balanced and broad-based approach to understanding, assessing and improving the lives of citizens. The influences on wellbeing at an individual and societal level are many and varied, both tangible and intangible, with the whole often being more than the sum of the parts as different influences interact with each other generating virtuous or vicious cycles of development. A broad conclusion that can be drawn from much of the work relating to wellbeing is that fairer societies tend to be happier, have fewer social problems and are more likely to generate positive self-reinforcement that increases trust, improves cooperation, increases prosperity and reduces remedial social spending.

Measurement can help to increase understanding, assess progress and focus resources, but it must be used carefully. A number of approaches have been adopted worldwide, many with shared domains and interests. Both indexes and dashboards of measures have been used, each with their own pros and cons. While Scotland is considered one of the leading countries in the world in measuring wellbeing, a number of opportunities have been identified to further develop a wellbeing perspective within the National Performance Framework, for example in the use of distributional measures and more qualitative indicators.

The utility of a wellbeing approach to policy making and practice is that it offers a way to actively engage citizens, help join up actions and identify opportunities for often cost-effective preventive investment. The active engagement, enabling and empowerment of citizens increases the likelihood of positive policy and practice outcomes and helps strengthen democracy. It also helps improve wellbeing in itself by giving citizens a greater sense of agency over their lives.

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