

What should be in a wellbeing law?

We have been working with governments and civil society organisations for over a decade to develop holistic frameworks for societal wellbeing that can deliver better policy-making, fit for the 21st Century. As the Labour Party considers a new wellbeing law, we set out what we think should be included.

1

A definition of societal wellbeing

Societal wellbeing is about encapsulating all the things we need to have a good society – now and in the future. It brings together, in one framework, environmental, economic, social and democratic outcomes. The term societal wellbeing indicates that the economy and public services are means to the goal of societal wellbeing, not ends in themselves.



Legislation on societal wellbeing must apply to all areas of policy-making, not limited to one department or a single issue. Governments that implement a wellbeing framework usually start with a statement of intent, putting societal wellbeing at the front and centre of their mission. The **Scottish National Performance Framework** sets these outcomes in the context of the vision and values of the country.

A commitment to put societal wellbeing at the heart of policy making

2

3

A duty to consult on what makes a good society

The categories ('domains') of societal wellbeing are considered to be universal in advanced democracies. But how they are experienced is specific to a particular time and place. For example, education is part of all wellbeing frameworks, but what is considered 'a good education' differs and is subjective. Citizens should be involved in determining what a good society is and what the priorities for action should be, like they did in Wales during **The Wales We Want** conversation. It must not be a technocratic exercise. Wellbeing frameworks phrase the agreed goals or outcomes in positive, asset based language.



A common complaint of policy-making is that it focuses on short-term election cycles. Restricting practice to what is achievable in this period impedes the shift towards prevention. Wellbeing frameworks should be designed to last more than one parliamentary term to support medium-term decision making.



4

A medium-term timetable to revise the framework (8-12 years)

5

A statutory approach to ways of working

Wellbeing frameworks support improvements in wellbeing directly, by providing information to improve policy-making, and indirectly by changing the culture of policy-making. They support a new approach to governance, a wellbeing approach, which focuses on prevention, participation, horizontal integration of public policy and localism. These ways of working should be set out in the legislation to hold public bodies to account.



Wellbeing frameworks include a set of agreed indicators to measure progress. **Scotland** has the most at 81 indicators. These are increasingly reported in 'real time' but annual reports should be required to communicate back to the public in an visual, interactive way on the story of what progress is being made, and should be the subject of an annual debate in Parliament to ensure scrutiny and accountability.



A duty to report on progress towards societal wellbeing

6

A wellbeing assessment framework for appraising budgets

7

The biggest barrier to implementing wellbeing frameworks in public policy is the way that budget decisions are made. A wellbeing framework requires much more joined up thinking, and shared budgets focused on the citizen, not government departments or professional silos. **New Zealand** has made a great start on a wellbeing budget approach. The current focus on cost-benefit analysis in the Green Book should be revised to carry out a multi-dimensional assessment of wellbeing.



The experience of **Wales** shows the powerful effect of a champion within the system advocating for wellbeing and supporting the public, media and civil society to hold decision makers to account on the delivery of the ways of working and the wellbeing approach more generally.



A Commissioner for Societal Wellbeing

8

To read more about our work on wellbeing visit:

www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/theme/enabling-wellbeing