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25 February 2021

**Re: 2021-22 Draft Budget Consultation**

Dear Sir/Madam

The Carnegie UK Trust welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Department of Finance's 2021-22 draft Budget consultation.

The Trust was established in 1913 to improve the wellbeing of people in the UK and Ireland. Since then, we have undertaken a significant body of work on societal wellbeing and wellbeing frameworks, a term we use to describe legislative and non-legislative policies that seek to put sustainable development and the wellbeing of current and future generations into policy practice. For us, wellbeing means everyone having what they need to live well now, and in the future.

Our work to date has included international case studies, partnership working with the OECD, and direct engagement in developments in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. We believe that the next budget could offer a renewed opportunity to learn from and build on existing wellbeing legislation and policy, complementing the outcomes in the Programme for Government (PfG).

Given the cross-party commitments to the 12 outcomes contained within the current PfG, we are disappointed that Departments were inconsistent in the links made between their spend, and the outcomes they seek to address within the draft 2021-22 Budget. With notable exceptions of the Department of Justice and the Department of the Environment, there appears to be a very limited interpretation of what outcomes they could address, overlooking the holistic approach implied in the PfG. It is concerning that some Departments seek only to work on one specific outcome, while others made no reference to the outcomes in their budget proposals. Further to this, we note that the draft budget indicates where Department budgets are to be increased but lacks important information to highlight if these increases would contribute to the 12 population-level outcomes in the current PfG.

Honorary President: William Thomson CBE  
Chair: Sir John Elvidge  
Chief Executive: Sarah Davidson

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We recognise that moving towards approaches that align programmes (and therefore funding) with wellbeing outcomes for populations requires a significant change in both culture and practice within the Northern Ireland Executive. It is also worth stressing that the Northern Ireland approach also goes beyond outcomes-based accountability methodology, as it relates not only to project and programmes, but also to population level outcomes. The Executive would find more direct comparators, and methodological support, within the international community on societal wellbeing (led by the [WEGov initiative](#)). Further work is required to increase understanding and embed this shift.

To support civil servants, the Trust would welcome further guidance to evidence the connection between potential spend and the population level outcomes this spending seeks to address. At present, guidance is available through the Better Business Cases Northern Ireland portal. However, the relationship between programme and population outcomes is not well articulated (in some cases such as the guidance on creating Report Cards population level changes appear to be specifically excluded). The golden thread between projects, programmes and population that should exist through the current 12 outcomes struggles to find its place in financial documentation.

We would also urge the NI Executive to be bolder in its exploration of opportunities to pool funding between departments, while still ensuring accountability. Other countries, such as New Zealand, have pursued legislative change to allow them to operate in a more collaborative and joined-up way between departments, to support the whole-of-government approach they seek to obtain. We appreciate that the situation in Northern Ireland is more complex but would welcome further exploration of what might be possible to ensure that the Executive can live up to its stated goals of improving wellbeing for all.

You may also be interested in the Trust's forthcoming report on [Children's Wellbeing and the Scottish Budget](#), in partnership with Children in Scotland and Cattanach, and researched by Dr Katherine Trebeck. This will be published next month and we would be delighted to share a copy with you.

Should you wish to discuss any of the comments raised in this response further in advance of that session, please do not hesitate to contact me at [Hannah.Ormston@CarnegieUK.org](mailto:Hannah.Ormston@CarnegieUK.org). Our Chief Executive, Sarah Davidson is looking forward to providing evidence to the Committee on the 14 April 2021, and she will of course be happy to elaborate on these points as they connect to public sector reform.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "H. Ormston .". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Hannah Ormston  
Carnegie UK Trust