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Good Lives and Decent Societies (GLADS)

August 2014

Scottish Universities Insight Institute

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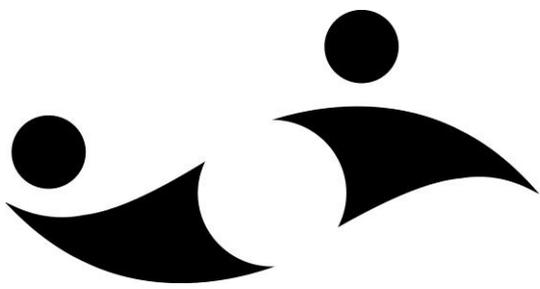
The photos are by Ilona Suojanen unless otherwise indicated.

Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

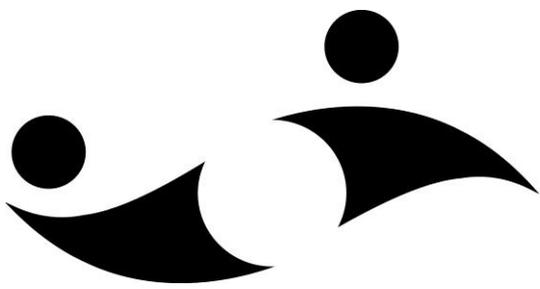
Good Lives and Decent Societies (GLADS) was a knowledge exchange event series exploring the concept of wellbeing and its relevance for policy and practice. It was funded by the Scottish Universities Insight Institute (SUII) as part of its 2014 Wellbeing Programme.

GLADS was designed to stimulate multi-disciplinary conversations between academics, policy makers and practitioners and develop cross-sectoral perspectives on wellbeing, in the context of current debates on societal progress and alternatives to GDP. It aimed to increase understanding, facilitate knowledge sharing, and generate new insights about how to integrate considerations about societal wellbeing into decision-making and action.

The project ran between February and June 2014 and mainly consisted of three events that took stock of existing work on defining and measuring wellbeing, explored good practice examples of promoting wellbeing, and discussed strategies for integrating wellbeing into policy-making and action. The GLADS seminar series provided an opportunity to examine some of the challenges of interpretation and application of the wellbeing concept and to consider the usefulness of applying a wellbeing lens to the complex themes of health, place and space, and employment and welfare.

The events attracted an excellent range of participants from varied subject backgrounds and different sectors which generated a rich exchange of perspectives. This report summarises the main themes and messages that came out from the 25 formal presentations that were given, the break-out group sessions, panel and plenary discussions, including:

- The term wellbeing is complex, multi-dimensional and requires the consideration of present and future generations.
- Efforts to understand and promote wellbeing invite a healthy debate about what really matters for society to flourish; that debate is more important than all agreeing on one definition and one measurement.
- Extensive engagement and meaningful conversations about wellbeing are key; they need to be inclusive, empowering, and positive, and need to bring in the perspectives of different groups including those that are often overlooked.
- Applying a wellbeing lens provides new insights into the connections between seemingly separate issues and can help generate more effective responses. It

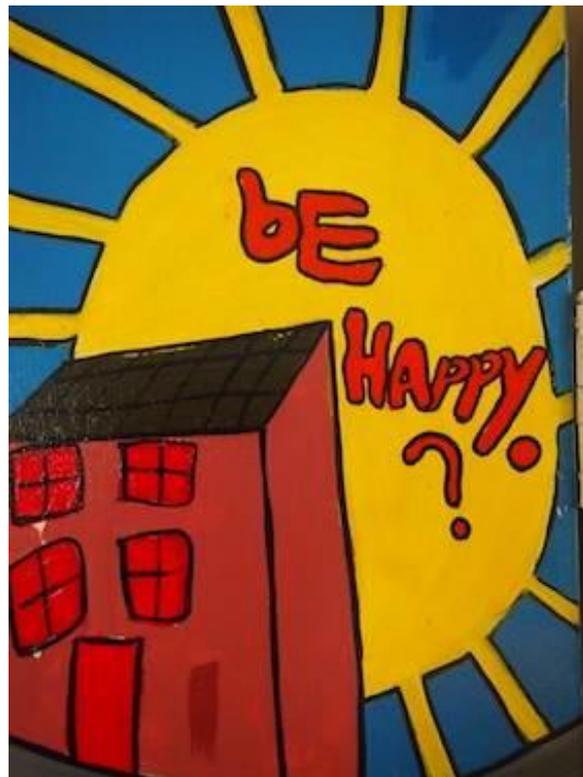


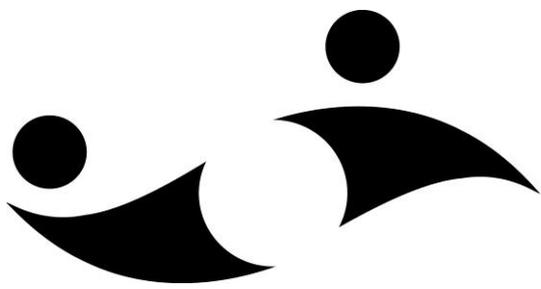
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encourages a more holistic analysis to help generate more appropriate action and interventions.

- Interest in wellbeing policy is gaining momentum and attracting the attention of a wide range of sectors and players. This should be taken as an opportunity to rethink how policymaking can be changed in order to take wellbeing into account in decisions at every policy level.
- Redesigning our society with a greater focus on wellbeing remains challenging. It requires holding onto the 'spirit' of wellbeing, the general emphasis on it, while avoiding prescriptive lists that could result in simplistic box-ticking.
- It is worth seeking to learn from others and examining the practical implications of placing wellbeing as an alternative to GDP at the centre of all decisions and actions.





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1. Introduction

This report provides an overview of the GLADS project, the main messages that came out of it and the key conclusions. The main purpose of the report is to work as a general record of the GLADS seminar series, not as a summary of each and every presentation¹. It has been written to give a flavour of the events, not a blow-by-blow account. It is principally aimed at a policy and practice audience, and more generally for anyone interested in the wellbeing debate.

1.1 GLADS BACKGROUND

Good Lives and Decent Societies (GLADS) was a knowledge exchange event series exploring the concept of wellbeing and its relevance for policy and practice. It was funded by the Scottish Universities Insight Institute (SUII) as part of its Wellbeing Programme. SUII's activities on this subject built on the Scottish Futures Forum's Rethinking Wellbeing seminar series² that ran in 2012-13. With its Programme, SUII and its partners³ aimed to contribute to the development of policy and practice in Scotland and further afield, including the refinement of the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework, 'Scotland Performs'.

The GLADS team was multi-disciplinary; it included academics from different universities and also had a strong non-academic input. The speakers and delegates at the three seminars came from a wide range of backgrounds and offered a valuable mix of perspectives on wellbeing from research, practice and policy circles.

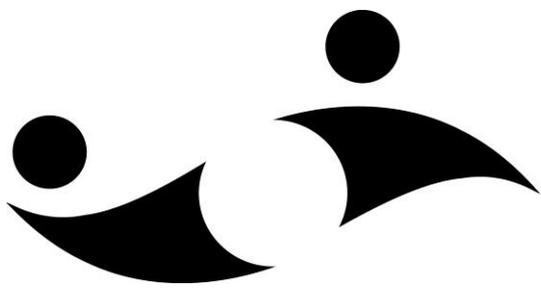
1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

GLADS was designed to stimulate multi-disciplinary collaboration between academics, policy makers and practitioners. It aimed to increase understanding, facilitate the sharing of learning and generate new insights into how to embed the multi-faceted notion of societal wellbeing and social progress into decision-making to enable everyone to live a good life in a decent society.

¹ The presentations given at each event are available on the GLADS website <http://bit.ly/1eBnEV> along with video clips, briefing paper, and the GLADS film.

² Futures Forum: Rethinking wellbeing seminar series 2012-2013, <http://scotlandfutureforum.org/rethinking-wellbeing-seminar-series.html>.

³ The Wellbeing Programme Steering Group included Scottish Government, Scotland's Futures Forum, Carnegie UK Trust, Scottish Enterprise, Scottish Environmental Protection Agency, Audit Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, David Hume Institute, SCVO and Oxfam Scotland.



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The project was articulated around three events (two one-day events and a two-day event) during the period of February to June 2014. The series started by taking stock of some of the existing work done on understanding, defining, and measuring wellbeing. It then explored wellbeing through three specific themes: place and space; health; and employment and welfare. The final event aimed to bring in an international dimension and sought to further unpack how to embed wellbeing into policy and practice.

1.3 CONTEXT

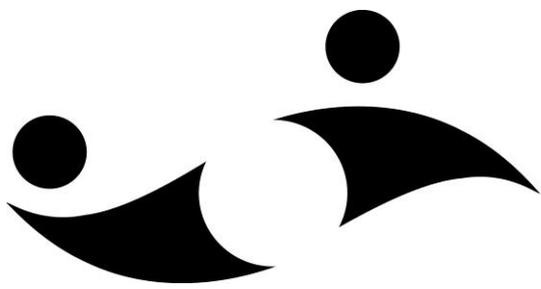
Development and social progress has historically focused upon the reduction of poverty and the acquisition of financial wealth, as measured by GDP⁴. This, however, raises questions about what it is that makes life worth living, and presents several problems. Firstly, it implies that acquiring wealth will necessarily improve people's quality of life, and yet there is extensive evidence that, at least after basic needs are met, money is not necessarily one of the key determinants of happiness. Also, economic growth can have a negative impact on wellbeing as it often leads to pollution and the depletion of resources. Conversely, events that common sense suggests may negatively impact upon subjective wellbeing – such as natural disasters, crime and divorce – can sometimes impact positively upon GDP.

Wellbeing is an important concept across policy, practice and different academic disciplines. Meaningful dialogue across such a wide range of approaches can be challenging; it is important to recognise the links between terms such as 'wellbeing' 'quality of life' and 'happiness' which, while distinct, are closely related. The concept of wellbeing refers to both individual lives and the state of society at large. Wellbeing also extends across time and many have argued that it needs to include reference to sustainability and the need to pay attention to the wellbeing of future generations.

2. Activities and impact

Around 80 people took part in the GLADS series, with a broadly equal mix of academics and third sector practitioners and relatively few individuals from the government and business sectors, which was somewhat disappointing. Some participants attended two or even all three events, which was interpreted as a positive endorsement for the project. Delegates had a wide range of backgrounds and specialisms, which made for a really interesting mix of perspectives.

⁴ See seminar 1 presentation and briefing paper: <http://bit.ly/1elBnEV>.



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A short briefing paper was produced ahead of the launch and distributed both to delegates and disseminated more widely through social media. It provided a broad overview of the context around the wellbeing debate and posed some of the questions to be explored through the series. The paper also mapped out some of the key landmarks in the wellbeing landscape, sign-posting to a number of key references.

Other dissemination efforts included the production of audio-visual podcasts of the launch and a short film⁵, based on the first two GLADS events and showed in the introduction to the last seminar to give a feeling for the general atmosphere and flavour of discussions.

A Twitter account and a blog were created for the project. Twitter proved to be a very effective way of raising the profile of the project and linking with others working on wellbeing, in Scotland, the UK and overseas. GLADS acquired over 100 Twitter followers and generated a fair amount of interest, as judged by the traffic going through the account. The GLADS blog⁶ enabled us to offer a platform to other organisations working on issues relevant to wellbeing and to host a few posts from guests such as the OECD, the Centre for Research on Families and Relationships, and the Carnegie Trust.

The GLADS team established positive relations with a number of key wellbeing actors such as Oxfam Scotland, Carnegie Trust as well as local and national policy makers that will provide a good foundation for future collaborations. Team members contributed to the Carnegie Roundtable on Measuring Wellbeing in Northern Ireland and its preceding consultation⁷. In addition, in terms of further dissemination, a paper building on the GLADS project findings and discussions will be presented at the 2014 annual ESPAnet Conference in Oslo in September.

As the seminars generated a lot of interest from a range of quarters, momentum had gathered and people seemed keen to continue with the conversation, we decided to create GLADS group on LinkedIn⁸. The intention is to build on the GLADS knowledge exchange seminars and further develop this community of interest around societal wellbeing.

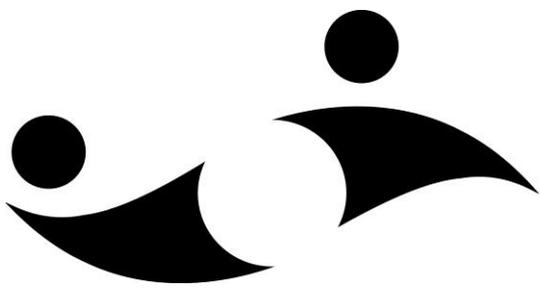
The Scottish Parliament's Scotland's Futures Forum and its partners are currently contemplating developing at least one MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) on the subject of societal wellbeing. It is felt that the insights generated through GLADS would constitute an excellent basis to build on for such an endeavour and team members have been approached to help developing course outlines.

⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MjTSsfl6el&feature=youtu.be>

⁶ <http://blogs.sps.ed.ac.uk/glads/>

⁷ <http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/changing-minds/enterprise-and-society/measuring-progress,-measuring-wellbeing/measuring-what-matters-in-northern-ireland>

⁸ https://www.linkedin.com/groups?home=&gid=8155484&trk=anet_ug_hm



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Evaluation forms were collected after each event. They offered overwhelmingly positive feedback and offered a few suggestions for improvement, which were incorporated into the planning of the May and June seminars. Quality ratings were consistently high. In particular, participants highlighted the value of bringing together a wide range of individuals working on wellbeing from different perspectives. Encouragingly, the evaluation forms showed a desire from delegates to incorporate the learning from the events into their work, to share it with colleagues, and to make contact with new people met through GLADS. More detailed feedback can be found in Appendix 1.

3. Main messages

The GLADS seminar series provided an opportunity to raise and explore some of the big questions related to the challenges of defining, measuring and promoting wellbeing through policy and practice. Consideration of different aspects of life invites a holistic approach to address the many challenges of pursuing wellbeing in the current societies. The main messages came from the mix of presentations that were given during the seminars as well as the plenary and break-out group discussions.

3.1 TAKING STOCK OF HOW TO DEFINE AND ASSESS WELLBEING

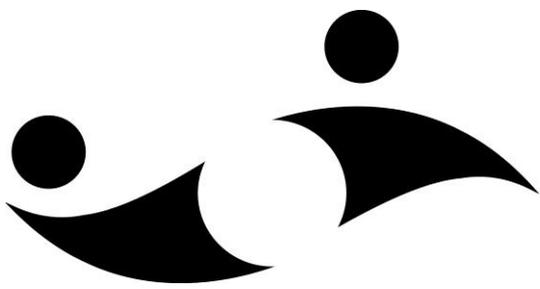
The launch event was an opportunity to take stock of the work done by different organisations in the UK and overseas to understand, define and measure wellbeing.

QUESTIONS OF UNDERSTANDING

The importance of promoting societal wellbeing is not a new idea. Eighteenth and 19th centuries Scottish figures such as Adam Smith, John Sinclair and Patrick Geddes⁹ highlighted the need to take a holistic approach to understanding the state of the country, its communities and inhabitants. Redistribution of wealth and social security was central to Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, and his *Theory of Moral Sentiment* was dedicated to exploring the factors leading to happy societies and individuals.

The concept of wellbeing is complex and multi-faceted. Discussions were had about the relationship between societal wellbeing and individual wellbeing, noting that the whole

⁹ Adam Smith (1723-1790) author of *Wealth of Nations* and the *Theory of Moral Sentiment*; John Sinclair (1754-1835) politician and writer on finance and agriculture; Patrick Geddes (1854-1932) sociologist, geographer, and pioneering town planner.



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does not equate to the sum of its parts. It cannot therefore be assumed that societal wellbeing is a simple aggregation of individuals' wellbeing.

Questions were also raised about the difference between wellbeing and happiness. The point was made that “you can sing happiness!” while wellbeing is perhaps more pleasing intellectually and analytically-speaking. Is happiness a sub-domain of wellbeing, or the other way around? It was noted that while happiness can be interpreted as a short-term subjective state of being – with wellbeing lending itself to a longer-term and possibly more objective interpretation – the use of the term ‘happiness’ is in fact rather culturally dependent and used differently in other countries (e.g. Bhutan’s Gross National Happiness).

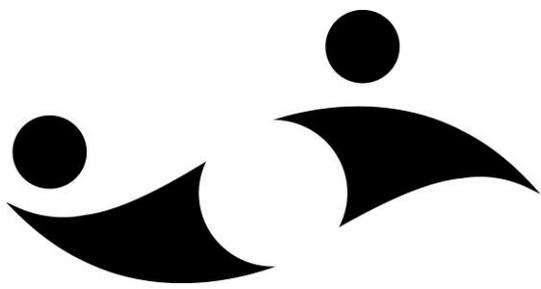
The links between wellbeing and sustainable development were also explored. Both are multi-dimensional and contain a similar range of sub-domains. They also have an important long-term element that invites consideration to be given to intergenerational issues. The OECD’s How’s Life¹⁰ publication specifically tackles this question making the point that we need to assess today’s wellbeing in the context of the resources left for future generations.



QUESTIONS OF DEFINITION

It was argued that wellbeing is ineffable, its complexity tending to slip through our grasp. Each one of us may perceive and apply it slightly differently; it also evolves over time and across the life course. The term invites healthy discussions and debates about what it means and yet, seeking to contain the term in one definition, fixed in stone and agreed by all, would likely be counter-productive.

¹⁰ OECD (2013) How’s Life? 2013 – Measuring well-being Chapter 6: Measuring the sustainability of well-being over time <http://www.oecd.org/statistics/howslife.htm>.



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In her blog post for GLADS¹¹, Carrie Exton of the OECD captures well the challenges of defining wellbeing: we have a list of ingredients for wellbeing, but no one set recipe. “There can be many different ways to find wellbeing, and both individuals and governments have to make choices about which recipe they want to follow. Nonetheless, it seems that many wellbeing recipes share a common set of basic ingredients.” Despite the inherent subjectivity of the meaning for individuals, it is however important to note that the concept is not totally ambiguous. Its cultural framing suggests that there are certain commonly shared thoughts that many people within the same culture associate with wellbeing.

The conversation about how wellbeing should be framed, and the process through which we engage in such conversations is critical and was a strong theme of the GLADS series. These conversations should be underpinned by strong values of inclusiveness, empathy, empowerment and positivity, and articulated in a holistic way around what really matters. Wellbeing debates invite considerations of society for its social goods, and encourage moving away from the prevailing and unhelpful focus on social harms.

QUESTIONS OF MEASUREMENT

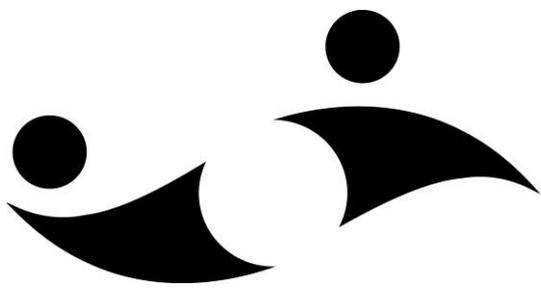
If we want to improve societal wellbeing, we need somehow to be able to account for it. However, in doing so, it is critical to bear in mind what lies behind the chosen measures and what is not captured by them.

In the 18th century, John Sinclair first used the terms ‘statistics’ and referred to it as “an inquiry into the state of a country, for the purpose of ascertaining the quantum of happiness enjoyed by its inhabitants, and the means of its future improvement.” While the purpose of statistics seems to have evolved considerably from that of assessing the nation’s happiness, efforts to measure wellbeing – both objective and subjective wellbeing – have so far very much focused on statistics and quantitative models. Seeking to measure and report on wellbeing quantitatively is useful ... up to a point.

Through the National Outcomes and National Indicators that make up Scotland Performs¹², the Scottish Government aims to develop a dashboard approach to measuring wellbeing and reporting on the country’s success, progress and performance. Work is currently under way to engage stakeholders and refine the indicators.

¹¹ Exton, C (2014) Well-being: All in the eye of the beholder? <http://blogs.sps.ed.ac.uk/glads/2014/04/11/well-being-all-in-the-eye-of-the-beholder/>

¹² <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/Performance/scotPerforms>



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The UK Government's Office of National Statistics has also developed a wellbeing index¹³ following a national debate and programme of public engagement to ascertain what matters most to people. The resulting index is structured around ten domains, each containing three to five measures of a mixture of subjective and objective wellbeing. Also, the OECD's Better Life Index¹⁴ and How's Life report provide quantitative assessments of wellbeing through eleven topics. The framework focuses on individual wellbeing, encompassing a mixture of objective and subjective measures, as well as indicators of quality of life and material conditions. The Prosperity Index by the Legatum Institute¹⁵ offers an international comparison of countries' prosperity based on both income and wellbeing.

While all of the attempts above have their place and help to disentangle some of the complexities, it is acknowledged that numbers do not mean anything on their own and need to be complemented by meaningful conversations that can be reported alongside. Wellbeing cannot be fully accounted for through numbers, deemed too reductionist. What cannot easily be counted may in fact be what matters most. Wellbeing also needs to be assessed qualitatively, to offer a stronger and more meaningful narrative. Public participation, particularly with groups seldom heard, is key to bring in that qualitative element. Oxfam's Humankind Index¹⁶ - based on a wide programme of engagement to understand what the people of Scotland value - is a step in the right direction.

3.2 UNDERSTANDING MAJOR SOCIETAL CHALLENGES THROUGH A WELLBEING LENS

The focus of the two-day event in May was to examine how applying a wellbeing lens can help develop a better understanding of complex societal issues and can offer new insights into different ways of tackling these through better informed decision-making and action.

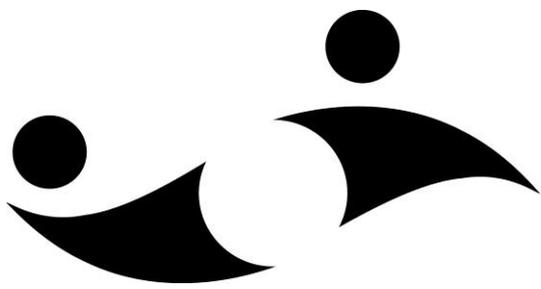
Wellbeing was approached through three themes: health, place and space, and employment and welfare. These were felt to be particularly relevant given the persistent and intractable challenges present in Scotland, such as health inequalities, social exclusion, poverty and unemployment, regeneration, or rising fuel costs.

¹³ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/user-guidance/well-being/index.html>

¹⁴ <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/>

¹⁵ <http://www.prosperity.com/#/>

¹⁶ <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/our-work/poverty-in-the-uk/humankind-index>



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THE VOICES OF PEOPLE NEED TO BE HEARD

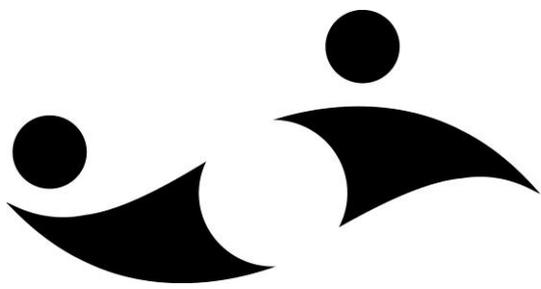
One of the strong themes coming through the varied presentations and group discussions was the need to hear the voices of citizens. There was a strong agreement among delegates that meaningful participation and engagement from all parts of society and different individuals was a key to enhancing wellbeing and should form a critical part of the wellbeing approach.

Children's voices are often left out of policy and service planning discussions, even though they are mentioned when justifying the need to focus on wellbeing. Questions relating to children's wellbeing are usually asked of mothers, who indeed have a very valid but different perspective. Children offer a unique perspective on the challenges that families, schools and communities face and their solutions are often simpler and more creative than those put forward by adults. It is also worth noting that children, just like individuals of any age group, have the right to express and verbalise their thoughts and feelings; they want to be valued for what they can offer the world now as children and not as citizens-to-be.

While the importance of listening to and including children is essential, there are many different ways to hear the voices of children in our social and political landscape. The Children's Parliament Streets Ahead project¹⁷ was undertaken in the East End of Glasgow to explore how children feel about their life, and what they need in order to be healthy, happy and safe in their community. Twenty children aged 9-11 from three local primary schools took part in a series of workshops that led to the creation of a large-scale, audio/visual mural that depicted the key issues facing their community and expressed their desire to live in a place that is peaceful, accessible and hopeful (see pictures below). A short film was also made of the project in order for the children to share their experiences, thoughts and feelings about what enhances and jeopardises their wellbeing - all key messages for policymakers and service providers to hear and take into consideration in their decision-making. The Children's Parliament is also currently developing a survey questionnaire - My Life in Scotland¹⁸ - to measure the subjective wellbeing of children aged 8 to 18 living in Scotland.

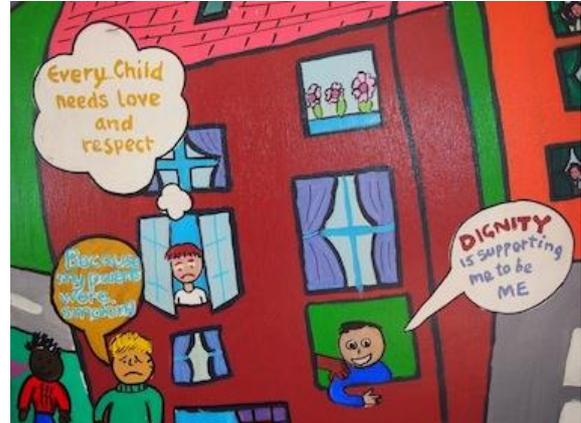
¹⁷ <http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/streetsahead.html>

¹⁸ <http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/my-life-in-scotland.html>



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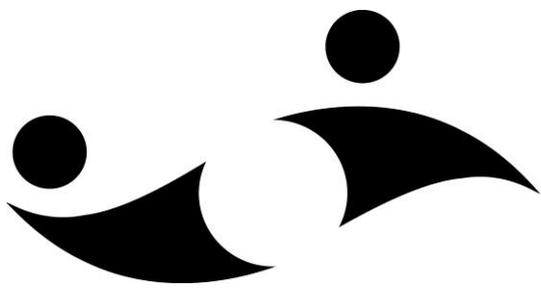
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We heard from Planning Aid Scotland, that it is not only young children who have ideas to share and suggestions to make, teenagers do too, especially as they do not always easily find their place in the community. They often feel like unwanted visitors in public places; yet, they also need spaces to meet, relax and enjoy being outdoors. Having a positive feeling of belonging to the community is critical to their wellbeing; they should be given a say in making this a welcomed reality for all. In doing so, the language and means of engagement require careful consideration to be made relevant and appropriate for the targeted audience.

So how to reach out and encourage all members of local communities to participate in decision-making? How to get people to hold meaningful conversations and act upon them in partnership with others? Glasgow City Council developed a highly participatory approach to planning and regeneration - the Healthy Sustainable Neighbourhood Model¹⁹ - and applied it to one of the Equally Well test sites in order to reduce health inequalities and enhance wellbeing. They asked people to take pictures on their daily journeys in the East End and use those to tell how they felt about living there. Through this approach, the Council recognised the cultural and societal variations and acknowledged that local people are experts in their own lives and in what it is like to live in (often very stigmatised) deprived neighbourhoods. Giving people a genuine opportunity to engage and contribute to decision-making showed very positive results. It not only boosted the individuals' confidence and self-esteem, but also empowered local communities, creating new networks in the area, which led to two allotments being created, people going on to further and higher education, and new small-scale businesses being established. The key is to genuinely engage with local people, stimulating conversations in ways that give them a real opportunity to be heard, and ensuring that everyone's input is invited and facilitated; doing things *with* people, not *to* people.

¹⁹ http://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/0000/3443/PLANNING_FOR_BETTER_HEALTH_final.pdf



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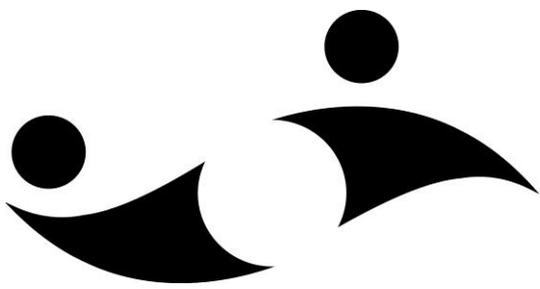
CREATING BETTER PLACES AND SPACES FOR THE CITIZENS IS IMPORTANT

Open and green spaces have a significant impact on people's wellbeing, and where they lack or are of poor quality, the effects can be very detrimental. Even though it is not yet clear how the mechanism works and whether it is the physical activity or simply being out in a green open space that boosts happiness, there are clear signs that accessing quality greenspace is good for people. As the OPENspace presentation highlighted, the outdoor environment has a great influence on many aspects of physical and mental health, which is evidenced by self-reports and measures of cortisol levels.

Providing green, open spaces for all to enjoy offers opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to at least momentarily get away from the stress of daily lives and to increase social engagement, both understood to be very important to our wellbeing. Having positive experiences of the green outdoors in childhood has lasting effects, as it encourages good habits that continue into adulthood.



It is not only the open, green spaces that need attention, but also the built and urban environments. Street design and the way urban spaces are planned also very much influence how we feel living, working in, or visiting cities. Making urban spaces places accessible, attractive and convivial enhances the populations' wellbeing and feelings of safety. Living Streets talked about how focusing attention and efforts on street design and neighbourhood planning can make a big contribution to promoting more active lifestyles through walking, thereby having a positive knock-on effect on health. Planning decision-making should therefore give more consideration to the needs of people on foot. For example, the city of Dundee has seen a lot of changes being implemented in the city centre to refocus on giving priority to people on foot and bike. Pedestrians are given priority, pavements have been widened and the flow of motorised traffic has been rearranged. Importantly, many effective measures are inexpensive and highly cost-



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efficient; a coherent and holistic approach can deliver great benefits through small interventions.

NHS Health Scotland is working with partners to develop a new Place Standard building on earlier policy statements on architecture and place. The new toolkit articulates what makes a good and sustainable place and how it can influence liveability, social sustainability, and citizens' quality of life and wellbeing. By approaching this work through a wellbeing lens, opportunities have arisen to refine goals and priorities, broaden the understanding of the relationship between physical environment and health, and also to strengthen the arguments and the case for action.

There are also several on-going studies about understanding the importance of space to wellbeing, including with the use of mobile neurologic tests measuring how people react to their environments (e.g. to find the city stress hotspots) and to better understand how outdoor spaces can influence disadvantaged communities.

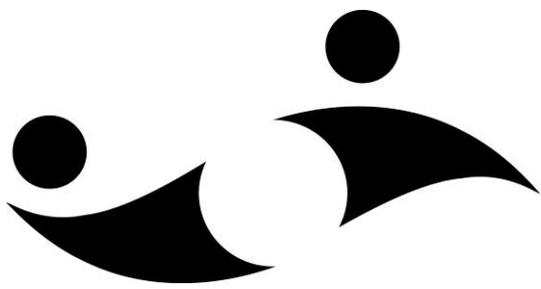


HEALTH SHOULD BE ON EVERYONE'S AGENDA

It has been well documented that being healthy and living a long life free of illness and disability is one of the things people value the most²⁰. The state of one's health, physical and mental, is influenced both negatively and positively by a number of factors, including the physical environment in which one lives, and employment prospects. NHS Health Scotland has developed mental health indicators²¹ for adults and also for children and young people. This work focused on mental wellbeing and allowed for a new measure of positive mental health to be devised: the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) now widely used for data collection. The indicators allow monitoring of trends in the mental health of Scotland's population and can be used to inform policy and practice

²⁰ OECD (2013) How's Life <http://www.oecd.org/statistics/howslife.htm>

²¹ <http://www.healthscotland.com/scotlands-health/population/mental-health-indicators.aspx>



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decision-making. They enable better insights into the contextual factors affecting individuals' mental wellbeing.

At a more local level, NHS Lothian has been working with local universities and colleges to improve the wellbeing of students and staff. This is part of the wider Sense of Belonging Strategy²², which seeks to promote the wellbeing of the Lothian's population at large. In recognition of the high percentage of the local population either studying or working in further and higher education establishments, efforts are being made to understand levels of wellbeing and what influences it. This work has highlighted that, while applying a wellbeing approach can challenge usual decision-making processes, it shapes the discourse and ways to consider issues in a positive way; it encourages a wider range of people to collaborate, thus allowing new connections to be made and more creative solutions to be found.

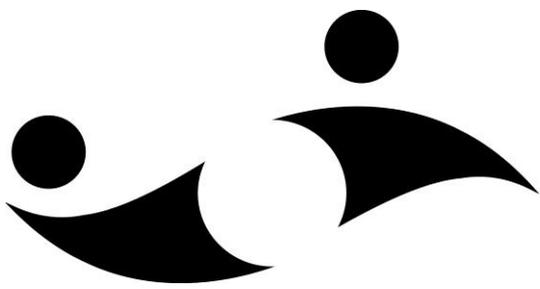
Another example of efforts being made to better understand wellbeing at a local level is the Understanding Glasgow project²³. Taking a holistic approach to growing a healthier Glasgow, this new initiative aims to engage and inform wide-ranging audiences on the wellbeing of Glasgow's population. This has involved creating an accessible resource containing a basket of indicators and an interactive game - the Glasgow Game - to facilitate conversations with decision makers and civic organisations about Glasgow now and in future. Recognising the complexity of wellbeing, the indicators focus on broad themes that are clear priorities for the city; they provide both a strategic overview as well as trend data to allow monitoring and comparisons to be made across the city and with other cities. There have been great changes in the city of Glasgow in the last hundred years and as the city has grown, stark differences have developed between neighbourhoods. The Glasgow Game draws on personal experiences of life in the city and seeks to encourage the active engagement and participation of a wide range of actors who have a role to play in shaping the future.

IMPROVING WELLBEING AT WORK

As most of our time awake is spent at work, wellbeing in the workplace is critical to the overall wellbeing of the working-age population. Companies hold some responsibility for the wellbeing of their employees; staff's experience of the workplace therefore needs to be taken seriously. It has been well documented that businesses benefit from people feeling happy at work: staff happiness is associated with commitment, motivation and energy, resilience, increase in solidarity and tolerance, decrease in sick leave rates and improved

²² <http://www.nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk/OurOrganisation/Strategies/Documents/SenseOfBelonging.pdf>

²³ <http://www.understandingglasgow.com/>



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understanding of work. Investing in the wellbeing of the employees is therefore profitable, as happy employees are also better employees²⁴.

Creating and maintaining wellbeing in organisations is always a challenge. The focus on happiness and wellbeing should be seen as an opportunity to encourage more effective HR and management practices. HR initiatives, however, often have little impact on their own or if they are poorly implemented. For instance, running “wellbeing days” will do little in the absence of more coherent programmes ensuring that well-intended policies are effectively put into practice, with appropriate follow-up and genuine efforts to tackle issues affecting staff wellbeing.

The responsibility for promoting wellbeing needs to be shared: involving employees can, in itself and if done well, boost wellbeing. However, managers are often not appropriately trained to promote wellbeing and are not adequately supported to do so either. It's crucial to recognise that: initiatives must be tailored to the needs of organisations and employee groups; those involved in implementation should also be involved in the design and delivery of initiatives; and, critically, that poor implementation can be worse than doing nothing at all and reduce wellbeing.

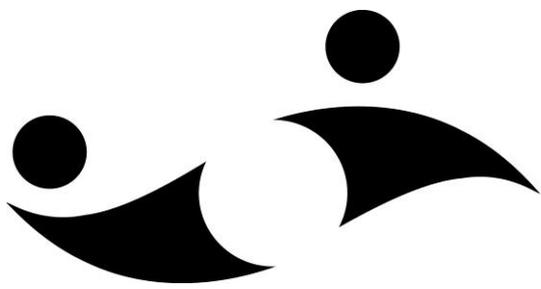
“Applying a wellbeing lens to issues relating to place-making, employment, and health requires thinking 'out of the box'; it offers new insights into the connections between seemingly separate issues and can help generate more appropriate action and interventions.”

3.3 PERSPECTIVES ON EMBEDDING WELLBEING INTO DECISION-MAKING

LEARNING FROM OTHERS

It could be argued that the role of the welfare policies is to provide a safety net and encourage people to reach their potential, irrespective of where, when and to whom they were born. While most European states have developed such safety nets, Nordic countries are often quoted as particularly successful in this respect.

²⁴ Lyubomirsky et al. 2005. The Benefits of Frequent Positive Affect: Does Happiness Lead to Success? <http://sonjaljubomirsky.com/wp-content/themes/sonjaljubomirsky/papers/LKD2005.pdf>.



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Delegates heard about Denmark - amongst the happiest nations according to international happiness surveys - where welfare policies take a life course perspective and are based on the idea that paying high taxes yields returns for everyone at different stages in their life: from children in their early years through to older and retired people. Thus, the welfare model is based on an intergenerational contract. Welfare policies are seen less as a heavy cost as in many other countries, but as an investment in people, with the aim of creating a sustainable model that is also socially just. For example, early years education and care is heavily subsidised as it is recognised to be critical both for children's life outcomes and to encourage women into work.

Another illustration of the importance of promoting wellbeing was provided through a presentation on a case study from Zambia that showed the role of enhanced subjective wellbeing in addressing poverty. Wellbeing offers a person-centred approach to development, and helps to avoid a type of economic growth that risks focusing on jobs for young men, at the expense of women and the elderly. Social solidarity is strongly grounded in Zambian society with wellbeing often meaning having enough to look after one's family. Listening to people and engaging them in the development process has been found to be key to creating greater wellbeing.

In the UK, the work on the Legatum Institute Prosperity Index²⁵ and its commissioned report²⁶ on *Wellbeing and Policy* have highlighted how a better understanding of what affects those factors that underpin wellbeing can help steer towards more efficient and effective government decision-making. Cost-benefit analysis does not traditionally take account of wellbeing factors and can therefore be misguided and misleading. A different analysis that seeks to apply a wellbeing lens can help deliver a more accurate assessment of benefits, thus generating better policies.

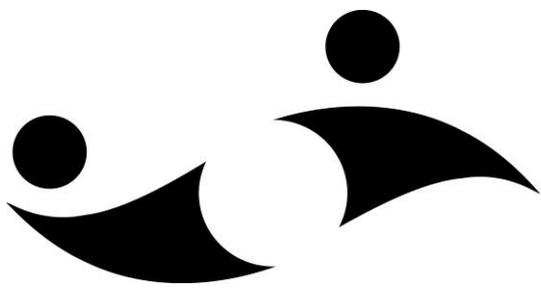
RESHAPING THE NATIONAL PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

The discussion exercise during the last seminar was focused on the National Performance Framework / Scotland Performs.²⁷ The Scottish Government is currently revising Scotland Performs as it is widely acknowledged that the current set of outcomes and indicators is far from perfect. When it was originally developed, the National Performance Framework was very much driven by the availability of suitable data to report on the indicators.

²⁵Legatum Institute (2013) *The 2013 Legatum Prosperity Index*, London: Legatum Institute.

²⁶ O'Donnell, G., Deaton, A., Durand, M., Halpern, D. and Layard, R. (2014) *Wellbeing and Policy*, London: Legatum Institute.

²⁷ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/Performance/scotPerforms/NPFChanges>



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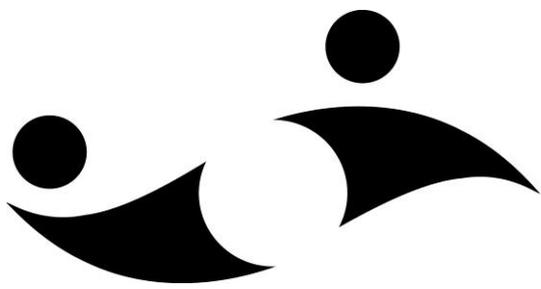
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Comments and suggestions made regarding the National Performance Framework as a whole are summarised below. More specific notes about each of the Strategic Objectives of Scotland Performs can be found in Appendix 2.

The overall presentation of Scotland Performs is quite confusing and could be made more user-friendly and readily accessible to the public at large. The government often refers to the national outcomes by their number, yet they are not numbered in the NPF.

- The relationship between the different levels of the NPF is not clear. Participants suggested having fewer levels in the hierarchy and more explicit links between different levels e.g. indicators and purpose targets.
- The distinction between the 'high level targets' and 'purpose targets' is not clear; they could be brought together on the same page.
- There is a tension between compartmentalised over-simplification and complexity. Although the Framework offers the beginnings of connectivity, it still runs the risk of creating artificial boundaries between issues and needs connections to be made more explicit, calling for more holistic approaches.
- Very much in line with the debate on alternatives to GDP as discussed in the Stiglitz/Sen/Fitoussi report²⁸, there were calls to place less emphasis on economic growth, often associated with consumerism and considered unsustainable, and instead make the pursuit of societal wellbeing explicit in the overarching government purpose. More emphasis should be placed on satisfaction – from the Latin 'to make enough' – rather than 'more is better' (which the pursuit of never-ending GDP growth assumes).
- It's not immediately clear what the 'strategic objectives' actually mean. They are very vague and subject to wide-ranging interpretation. The same is true, though to a lesser extent, of the 'national outcomes'.
- There are concerns about the lack of guidance regarding the interpretation of the strategic objectives, outcomes, and indicators and their use in practice, especially where there is apparent tension between different outcomes and indicators.
- Process outcomes should be considered to reflect how a wellbeing approach is embedded in all policy development and implementation.

²⁸ <http://www.stiglitz-sen-fitoussi.fr/en/index.htm>



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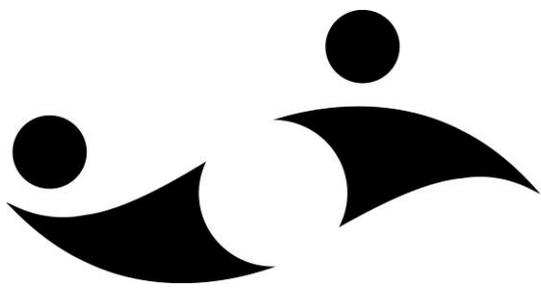
4. Key conclusions

The GLADS series highlighted the multi-dimensional and intergenerational nature of societal wellbeing. The term is complex and multi-faceted; it doesn't lend itself to a simple definition. Factors that influence wellbeing relate to the interactions between different aspects of life, both at individual and societal levels, for instance: living standards, health, education, social interactions, community cohesion, environmental quality, and governance. Attempts to understand wellbeing invite a healthy debate about what really matters for society to flourish. It's been argued that wellbeing is ineffable, somehow beyond words, but that the debate that it encourages is, in itself, more important than pinning down a definition for all to agree on. In a similar way, measuring wellbeing is rather difficult – it is an abstraction useful for aggregate, instrumental assessments, but cannot capture the difference in individual meanings different people associate with it.

The process by which we engage people in conversations about what makes for greater – or lesser – wellbeing is key; it needs to be inclusive, empowering, and positive. It needs to consider individual life and wider society in a holistic way and take account of different perspectives through the voices of e.g. children and young people, the elderly, the disenfranchised. Developing creative and meaningful ways to hold these conversations, at national, local and individual levels, is central to promoting greater wellbeing. This chimes well with the phrase: “doing with, not doing to people”.

Applying a wellbeing lens to issues such as place-making, employment, and health requires thinking 'out of the box'; it offers new insights into the connections between seemingly separate issues and can help generate more appropriate action and interventions.

The GLADS series illustrated that wellbeing has been gaining momentum and rising up the political and societal agenda. It would appear that it has been recognised as a useful way of capturing the interconnectedness of our complex world and developing new responses to some of the intractable challenges we face e.g. unhealthy lifestyles, unsustainable economic systems, deteriorating natural environment, community regeneration. A wellbeing approach also calls for greater and more meaningful citizen engagement to explore problems and find ways to overcome them. This resonates well with current efforts to rethink democracy, enhance community empowerment, and develop new relationships between citizens and the authorities / service users and service providers.



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APPENDIX 1

In the feedback forms the following comments were made in answer to the question ‘what was the most interesting / useful element(s) of the event?’ posed after each workshop:

“Excellent speakers. A good variety of perspectives.”

“Helped to connect normally separate topics and themes.”

“Framing of what wellbeing means and taking part in discussions was extremely helpful.”

“The breadth of experience and thoughtful level of discussion. Also the international dimension and balance between theory / policy and practice.”

“Getting an overview of the range of things happening in Scotland.”

“Finding out the range and depth of interest and passion re. wellbeing.”

“Valuable new contacts made.”

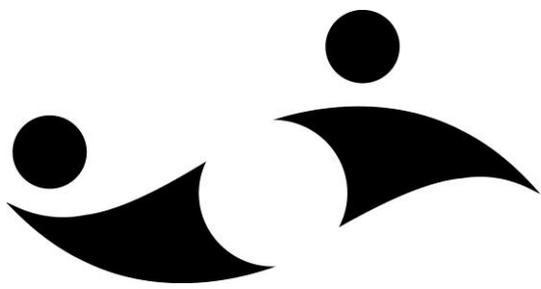
“Meeting people from different organisations and perspectives.”

“Getting ideas about implementing wellbeing research in policy.”

“People with different perspectives, professions and backgrounds made the discussions interesting and broadened my knowledge.”

“All the events have been really well planned with a great range of topics / speakers.”

Some participants also called for greater clarity on the practical use, and tangible application of the series’ findings. A suggestion was made “to collate and evaluate what is going on, what works and what doesn’t, in an effort to promote and expand what works”.



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APPENDIX 2

In the last GLADS event, the strategic objectives, purpose targets, outcomes and indicators of the National Performance Framework were examined through a wellbeing lens, in an effort to identify gaps and areas for improvement. Delegates were divided into five groups; each considering one of the five strategic objectives of Scotland Performs.

GREENER

Participants discussed that while a number of national outcomes could be used to further the greener agenda (e.g. Nrs 4, 6, 10, 12, 14), they were subject to interpretation and could therefore easily fail to do so effectively. Similarly, Nr 1 which relates to Scotland being the most attractive place to do business in Europe could, depending on its interpretation, significantly hinder efforts to progress the greener strategic objective through other national outcomes. The same applies to some of the national indicators - e.g. access to housing and increasing the number of new homes - which aren't sufficiently explicit about the need to be environmentally sustainable.

It was felt that the following should be added to the national outcomes:

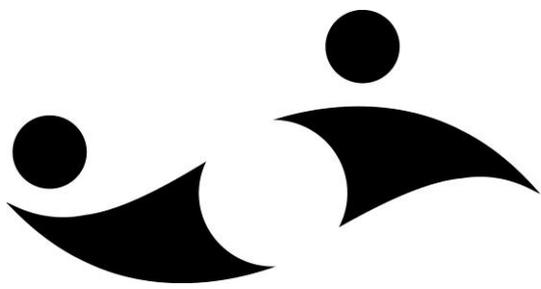
- We value and acknowledge the importance of the natural environment for our physical and mental wellbeing.
- We are able to access and enjoy high quality natural environment.

It was suggested to add national indicators covering the following:

- proportion of public sector organisations and private enterprises engaging in greener practices, including through their suppliers
- community engagement in developing greener neighbourhoods
- improve access to quality greenspaces in built-up areas

HEALTHIER

- There is a big leap between the outcomes – many of which are inarguable and have a welcomed positive wording that reflects ambition – and bitty and narrow indicators, which are over specified and conceptually weak.
- The indicators are mostly deficit led and reflect a model of 'doing to people' rather than 'doing with people'. An asset-based focus needs be better reflected, instead of the current deficit-led model model.



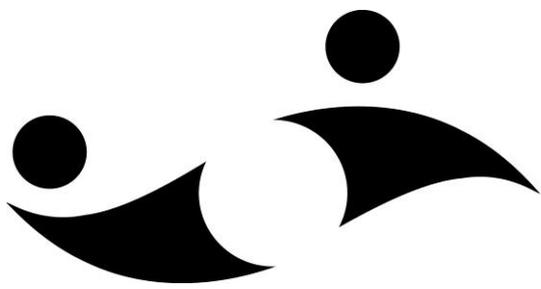
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- The indicators appear to be mostly based on what data is already available and yet, the data is not there to support many of the indicators.
- Health inequalities and social determinants of health aren't sufficiently captured and need to be better reflected throughout.
- There are no indicators about unemployment, yet we know that it is critical to wellbeing.
- Positive, quality relationships, which we know are critically important to wellbeing, are not reflected in what is measured.

WEALTHIER AND FAIRER

- Some targets are not sufficiently meaningful and measurable, but rather aspirational and not always within the remit of government.
- "Improving Scotland's reputation" is difficult to measure through one indicator and wouldn't necessarily be a reflection of governmental activity. Besides, it is arguably futile to attempt to take such measurement, when in fact the governmental contribution to the country's reputation would simply flow from action in the range of other domains represented across the Framework.
- Some indicators are too vague e.g. 'improve children's services' - it's not clear whether 'improvement' refers to availability, quality, or access to services.
- Indicators should not purely focus on averages, but also offer measures of distribution. 'Reduce income inequality' appears in one of the purpose targets but there is no indicator to measure inequality. Besides, a distinction needs to be made between income and wealth, inequalities in both need to be captured.
- The wealthier and fairer aspirations are not clear: are they about everyone getting the basics or should we strive for equal access to the best quality?
- Quality of work is missing and should be captured in a new indicator. Delegates would encourage the Scottish Government to explore suitable data sources.
- The proportion of employers' paying the Living Wage should also be included somehow, so that the indicator would not simply be about 'increasing the number of businesses' but increasing the number of businesses which offer decent work.



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SMARTER

Some gaps were identified and the following suggestions for new goals were made:

- increasing the number of younger Scottish people with educational or professional experience
- increasing high fast internet connection in all parts of the country and making it accessible to all levels of community
- increasing the flexible work arrangements, supporting employees self-designing their work
- increasing number of organizations with “employee supporting volunteering” opportunity
- increasing levels of generalized trust and perceptions of autonomy
- increasing the number of people volunteering regularly, towards volunteering society
- focusing on quality, affordability and equality
- focusing on understanding, instead of measuring the same aspects repeatedly

SAFER AND STRONGER

- national outcome of ‘taking pride in our national identity’ was strongly criticised and recommended to be taken out
- focusing on providing safe and secure communities, of which volunteering is a good indicator
- wellbeing approach needed when planning the framework