

Towards Transformative Outcomes:

Examples of how Wellbeing Frameworks have been Embedded into Policy Making



An Chomhairle Náisiúnta Eacnamaíoch agus Shóisialta
National Economic & Social Council

SECRETARIAT PAPER

No.30 June 2022

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National Economic & Social Development Office NESDO



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Dr Anne-Marie McGauran
Ms Elaine Kennedy

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Abbreviations

AGW	Auditor General for Wales	MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
BOBF	Better Outcomes: Brighter Futures	NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
CBA	Cost Benefit Analysis	NPF	National Performance Framework
CHO	Community Health Organisations	NPM	New Public Management
CSO	Central Statistics Office	OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
CYPSC	Children and Young People's Services Committee	PSB	Public Service Board
DECDIY	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth	SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs	SLF	Senior Leaders Forum
DPER	Department of Public Expenditure & Reform	SNP	Scottish National Party
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	UN	United Nations
GUI	Growing Up in Ireland		
LES	Local Employment Services		
LSF	Living Standards Framework		

Executive Summary

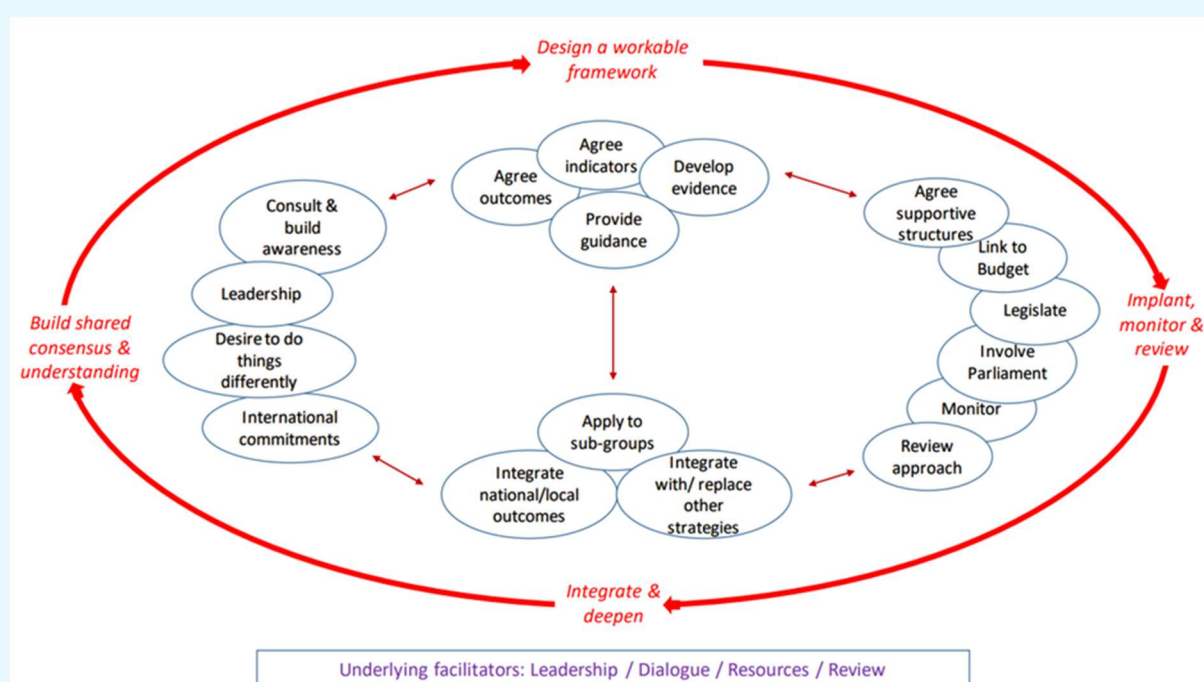
In 2020, the Programme for Government committed to developing a set of well-being indices, and to using these in a systematic way across government policymaking (Government of Ireland, 2020). The Department of an Taoiseach has been leading work on this commitment, jointly sponsored by the Departments of Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform. This work has seen consultation on the development of a well-being framework for Ireland, which has 11 dimensions of well-being, and an accompanying dashboard of 35 indicators.

As the Government further progresses the Irish well-being initiative, NESCC has researched the learning from the experience of embedding well-being frameworks into policymaking in New Zealand, Scotland and Wales. NESCC has also looked at some aspects of how well-being approaches have been applied in one sector, child well-being, in Ireland; with some reference to child well-being in Scotland and New Zealand. The outcomes of this research are outlined in this report, and have fed into further development of Ireland's well-being framework (as outlined in Government of Ireland, 2022b).

The research finds a number of key elements which have supported embedding of well-being approaches in New Zealand, Scotland and Wales, and in relation to child well-being in Ireland.

A core message is that there is no 'one size fits all'. In each of the examples, the framework is developed to suit a particular context, then an initial working framework is put in place, and there is active monitoring and review, which includes experience within specific sectors. This learning is used to re-shape and develop the well-being framework over time. As such there are four key steps in the development of embedding of a well-being framework into policy – see Figure 1. In each of the four steps leadership, dialogue with all stakeholders including the public, availability of resources to support adoption of the well-being framework, and processes of review and reflection were evident.

Figure 1: Embedding a Wellbeing Approach



A second core message is that the process of embedding a well-being approach takes time and involves carefully reflecting on each step. For example, New Zealand first adopted its Living Standards Framework in 2011, while Scotland's National Performance Framework dates back to 2007. While the introduction of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 in Wales expedited the embedding of a well-being approach, the origins of the approach date back to 1998 and the original legislation on devolution.

There is a cycle of learning in which the outcomes of review and reflection on progress to date helps develop a renewed shared understanding of and consensus on a well-being approach. In turn this supports further refinement of the outcomes sought, the indicators to measure progress, and the supports needed for stakeholders to do this work. This then supports strengthening of processes for implanting, monitoring and accountability, thus facilitating further embedding of well-being approaches in policymaking.

Step One: Build Shared Consensus and Understanding

The first step, and this is evident in Ireland, is the creation of a shared consensus and understanding. The research highlights the role of international commitments e.g. on sustainability and child development; and domestic factors such as a desire to approach policy-making differently; and strong leaders and champions of well-being, often from both politicians and civil servants. This initial momentum is combined in nearly all the examples with a strong commitment to use dialogue and consultation to build awareness and wider support among stakeholders, experts and citizens.

Step Two: Design a Workable Framework

The second step, which is also reflected in the Irish work to date, is to develop working frameworks. These vary somewhat in terms of the specifics but all include the following: agreed national outcomes or objectives and a suite of indicators to measure progress. In addition, the working frameworks also prompt the development of new evidence and data sources to provide more information relevant to policy decisions on the range of national objectives. Finally, the examples studied also develop support and guidance for policy makers and other stakeholders to adopt a well-being approach.

Step Three: Implant, Monitor and Review

The examples point to different processes which are used to implant a well-being approach in day-to-day policymaking. This includes the use of legislation; specific links to the budgetary processes; and, structures, either existing or new, which increase awareness, provide guidance, and monitor progress on implementing the well-being approach. In some cases parliamentary monitoring is also developed.

The three countries studied all review their national well-being frameworks after a number of years. In some there is a legislative requirement to review the framework, and in others it is voluntary. The review processes are typically used to identify strengths and barriers in current approaches, and to help address the latter.

Step Four: Integrate and Deepen

The fourth step involved work which sought to integrate and deepen the use of the well-being framework. Examples include requiring both local and national bodies to work towards meeting national well-being objectives, and new legislation to enable organisations to work together towards shared well-being objectives. In addition, targeted approaches were used to address the well-being of particular groups. Consultation and dialogue with these groups is key.

Reflections for Ireland

The examples provide important insights for Irish work on a well-being framework. These insights are aimed at longer-term discussions and decisions on embedding well-being in Ireland. They are not intended to be directive, but rather to provide a suite of options to embed the approach in Ireland.

First, there is a need to work to develop the approach which suits the Irish context. Key to this will be a number of factors. Ongoing commitment and resources to support consultation and dialogue with stakeholders is key, including with those using services. Ensuring a pipeline of staff skilled in this type of work is also important. Further development and communication of evidence and its value is also needed, including addressing data gaps in key areas, with the commitment of the CSO to prioritising the collection of more well-being data over time welcome in this regard. And the further development of methods to assess how policies have contributed to outcomes is important, particularly in policy areas (e.g. education) where multiple factors influence the outcome.

Second, while the message that there is ‘no-one-size-fits all’ is critical, there are aspects of international work which merit further consideration in an Irish context. These include:

- the role of a structure to provide a range of supports, e.g. communication, guidance and monitoring, in the longer-term;

- the potential role for the Irish Government Economic Evaluation Service (IGEES) in providing analytical capacity;

- exploring the potential for further incorporation of well-being requirements into Budget processes over time;

- reflecting on the most appropriate mechanism, mandatory or voluntary, for review;

- exploring the role of the Oireachtas in monitoring and accountability; and

- investigating how the role of the Auditor General in monitoring implementation of well-being approaches might be used in Ireland; and assessing the contribution of possible legislative support.

Third, an important reflection is the value of actively working to co-ordinate national work with local. Approaches adopted include having a small range of key national goals which all agencies work towards. In addition, mechanisms to support joint accountability for the use of funding have also been developed, and it may be worth investigating how this can be supported in the Irish context. There is also merit in investigating the extent to which it would be useful and possible to align geographical boundaries of statutory organisations (as is currently being done with Regional Health Areas under Sláintecare), and to assess if this would assist joint working between organisations.

Finally, equity and sustainability are two cross-cutting themes of Ireland’s well-being framework, and the possibilities which a well-being framework offers to address inequalities will also be the subject of future NESC research. The examples provide insights into the methods of measuring the position of these groups, engaging with them, and targeting supports.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In 2020, the Programme for Government committed to developing a set of well-being indices to create a well-rounded, holistic view of how Irish society is faring, and to utilise these indices in a systematic way across government policymaking at local and national levels, in setting budgetary priorities, evaluating programmes and reporting progress (Government of Ireland, 2020).

The Department of an Taoiseach has been leading work on this commitment, jointly sponsored by the Departments of Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform, and supported by a wider Inter-departmental Working Group.

The Government published its first report on a new Well-Being Framework for Ireland in July 2021 (Government of Ireland, 2021). The report provided an initial vision for well-being in Ireland, and a conceptual framework with 11 dimensions of well-being, based on the dimensions of the OECD's *How's Life* framework (OECD, 2020). An accompanying dashboard of 35 indicators measuring well-being in Ireland has also been developed by the CSO (2021).

Accompanying the first Government report on well-being, NESC published a Consultation report on Ireland's Well-being Framework in July 2021 (NESC, 2021). The NESC report outlined the case for adopting a well-being framework, and the views of key stakeholders on the suitability of the proposed Well-Being Framework for Ireland. These views were gained through the deliberations of a Stakeholder and Expert Group, and a survey of 450 stakeholder organisations from a variety of sectors – economic, social and environmental.

Since the publication of these reports, the Department of an Taoiseach has overseen further work to develop Ireland's initial Well-Being Framework. This includes a public consultation that ran from October 2021 to January 2022, which centred around a comprehensive communications campaign; an online stakeholder event; an online survey; thematic workshops with Public Participation Networks and young people; and interactive presentations. An online Well-being Portal, in addition to the CSO's Well-being Information Hub, was also launched, providing comprehensive accessible information and an interactive dashboard of key indicators, respectively.

Additional research has also been carried out, across Government, to further develop the Well-being Framework. This includes a Department of Finance review examining how sustainability is integrated into Ireland's Well-being Framework (Department of Finance, 2022). The Department of Public Expenditure & Reform (DPER) is also continuing to develop approaches to utilising the Well-being Framework to examine the relationship between public policy and well-being.

Further, NESC has been undertaking research to understand how well-being frameworks are integrated into policymaking, and how they support transformational change. NESC's Consultation report (NESC, 2021) recommended that research on a small number of countries would be carried out to see how these frameworks have operated internationally. It also recommended that research be carried out on how Irish sectoral programmes successfully linked indicators to outcomes and to resource allocation decisions. Therefore, this current NESC report looks at the experience of adopting well-being frameworks in three countries – Scotland, New Zealand and Wales. There is also a focus on how well-being approaches have been applied in one sector in Ireland, that of child well-being, with examination of key programmes in this sector which link indicators to outcomes. There is also some reference to how Scotland and New Zealand approach child well-being.

The results of this NESC research, along with the those of the public consultation, and the research undertaken by the Departments of Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform, have informed further development of Ireland's Well-being initiative. This NESC research is one input into a second Government Report on a Well-being Framework for Ireland (Government of Ireland, 2022). The Government report, published in June 2022, captures the outcomes of this second phase of work, reflected in an updated Well-being Framework for Ireland, which includes 11 dimensions of well-being, with sustainability (via a tagging approach) and equality as cross-cutting themes. It also includes an initial approach for embedding this initiative over time into policy making. This includes annual published high-level analysis of the well-being dashboard and incorporation into the Budget process; complementary continued embedding into expenditure and evaluation policy; promotion of relevant research and policy developments; and clear supporting structures. This

cross-government initiative will continue to be led by the Department of the Taoiseach, and jointly sponsored by the Departments of Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform.

1.2 Focus and Methodology of the NESC Research

This current NESC report looks at the experience of adopting well-being frameworks in New Zealand, Scotland and Wales, for a number of reasons. They are of similar population size to Ireland,¹ and there are similarities in their systems of government and public administration, given their history. Information on their work is also available in English. As these countries began embedding a national well-being approach into policies earlier than Ireland, they can provide useful lessons on the best foundational infrastructure to support this approach to policymaking and implementation. They also provide examples of what has worked well and what has been less successful.

The research also looks at some aspects of how well-being approaches have been applied to child policy in Ireland, Scotland and New Zealand. This is for a number of reasons. First, as noted above, NESC's first report on well-being (NESC, 2021) recommended examining in more depth how selected sectoral programmes in Ireland successfully linked indicators to outcomes, and to resource allocation decisions. The sectoral policy areas suggested were those of health and children. Second, Ireland's overarching Well-Being Framework is at a relatively early stage of development (see Section 1.1), and so the learning to date from implementing it is limited. However, in the area of child well-being, over the past 20 years Ireland has developed a number of outcomes-focused frameworks to improve the lives of children.² They have many of the typical elements of well-being approaches, such as an overarching vision, a number of high-level goals, indicators and monitoring, consultation with stakeholders, a strong evidence base, structures for collaboration, etc (see Section 2.2). Looking at the extent to which these frameworks have been embedded in Irish policymaking over time, and the facilitators and barriers to this, provides context-specific information of relevance to how a national well-being approach can be embedded in Irish policymaking. Thirdly, child well-being is a key part of overall well-being, and both New Zealand and Scotland have developed processes to integrate child well-being into wider national well-being approaches. Considering these is useful for looking at how specific groups can be supported through well-being approaches. Therefore some evidence was collected on these to provide useful comparison for Irish practices.

The methodology adopted for the research is outlined in Box 1 overleaf.

1.3 Outline of the Report

Chapter two of this report outlines briefly the impetus for developing well-being approaches, what is meant by a well-being approach, and the key elements of these approaches. It considers the impact of using such approaches. It also outlines the key elements of the approach to well-being taken in Scotland, New Zealand and Wales; and in Ireland in relation to child well-being.

Chapter 3 outlines Step 1 of adopting a well-being approach – building shared consensus and understanding of a well-being approach. It looks at the type of context which has supported the introduction of well-being approaches in Scotland, New Zealand, Wales; and in Ireland in relation to child well-being. It covers the impetus for adopting this approach, and the importance of leadership. It then looks at awareness of well-being approaches and buy-in to them in the countries studied. This involves communication about well-being, and consultation on adoption of well-being approaches.

Chapter 4 outlines Step 2 – how a workable well-being framework is designed. It describes the elements of a well-being framework used to initially establish a well-being approach in policymaking in the countries studied. These elements are outcomes, indicator suites and an evidence base. The guidance provided to those implementing well-being approaches is also discussed.

¹ New Zealand has a population of 5.08 million; Scotland 5.45 million; Ireland 5.03 million and Wales 3.1 million.

² The National Children's Strategy, Our Children — Their Lives in 2000, and Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People in 2014.

Chapter 5 moves on to Step 3 – the implanting, monitoring and review of well-being frameworks. It outlines tools used to embed the frameworks into standard ways of working in policymaking in New Zealand, Scotland and Wales, and in Ireland in relation to child well-being. The tools used include structures, legislation, budgetary processes, the work of politicians and parliament, and accountability and monitoring systems. As a well-being approach becomes more operationalised, it also becomes necessary to review it, and feed learning back into the earlier stages of developing the approach. The approaches taken in the countries studied are outlined.

Chapter 6 looks at Step 4, the integration and deepening of a well-being approach as it becomes more deeply operationalised. These include the challenges of embedding another framework in to a policy-making and implementation system that already has a wide variety of frameworks; how to link national and local approaches, and some reflections on how to focus on particular groups in a well-being approach.

Finally, Chapter 7 summarises the key findings outlined in the report, and provides some concluding reflections on the learning for Ireland. It also includes some reflections on the elements which facilitate a well-being approach in all stages of development and implementation – leadership, dialogue, resources and review.

Box 1: Methodology

This report was prepared based on a number of information sources. First, background information was gleaned from academic literature and reports published by Governments and international organisations focusing on well-being. Interviews, usually between 60 and 90 minutes in length, were also carried out online with 37 people, on various aspects of embedding well-being into policy. Interviewees were chosen to provide a multi-sectoral view on the development and implementation of well-being frameworks. They were from a range of sectors – Government departments and agencies, politicians, NGOs, and researchers from universities or other research organisations. They held a variety of roles, e.g. designing well-being frameworks, implementing them, monitoring their implementation, or researching well-being approaches. Researchers often provided information on developments in a number of countries; while interviewees from other sectors tended to provide detail on well-being approaches in their own country. The interviewees were identified in two main ways – both through their official participation on structures linked to the well-being frameworks, and through suggestions made by other interviewees. Details are as follows:

	International	Scotland	New Zealand	Wales	Ireland	Total
Interviews with academics/researchers	2		1	1		4
Interviews with politicians					1	1
Interviews with Government department personnel		3	5	1	9	18
Interviews with State agency personnel		2		2	2	6
Interviews with NGO personnel	1	2			5	8
Total	3	7	6	4*	17	37

***Note:** The international interviewees provided significant details on the Welsh well-being framework, as well as on a range of other countries.

Chapter 2

A Well-being Approach

2.1 The Origins of Well-being Approaches, and Why they are Adopted

A greater focus on well-being in public policy began with recognition that GDP does not provide a sufficiently detailed picture of the living conditions that ordinary people experience. GDP growth has been a yardstick for economic performance and welfare and is considered essential for achieving a number of key objectives, including eradication of extreme poverty, and adequate financing of social programmes. However, there is growing consensus that it is limited in its ability to capture many critical dimensions of human life (Durand and Exton, 2019). For example, it does not measure leisure time, health, social connections, or the quality of working environments; and does not reflect inequalities. GDP also fails to capture the value of unpaid work, including providing care (Wallace, 2019). Furthermore, GDP does not consider the unintended consequences of economic growth, including the impact on the environment (Exton and Shinwell, 2018). While criticisms of GDP have existed since it was first adopted, the financial crisis, and growing inequality and environmental concerns, have led to stronger critiques of its use.

Therefore, a shift has occurred internationally to look beyond GDP to bring a focus to measures that capture people's living conditions and quality of life (Durand, 2018). There is increasing recognition that measures of current and long-term well-being can capture human experience and welfare more adequately than GDP (Boarini *et al.*, 2014). This has led to a number of initiatives to look beyond the functioning of the economic system to the diverse experiences and living conditions of people and households, and to incorporate a greater focus on the environment.

Such initiatives include the OECD's *Better Life Initiative*, launched in May 2011. This includes the *How's Life?* report, which provides a comprehensive picture of well-being in OECD countries and other major economies, by looking at people's material conditions and quality of life across the population. The report is complemented by the *Your Better Life Index*, an interactive web-based tool that allows citizens to measure and compare well-being across countries according to the importance they give to the various dimensions of people's well-being (OECD, 2013). Another initiative is the establishment of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission by the French President in 2008, to propose a wider range of measures of economic performance and social progress.

A well-being approach recognises the need move beyond GDP as a sole measure of progress and to also view progress through the lens of the lived experience of citizens. It broadens the way progress is assessed, looking at it holistically across three broad areas: economic, social and environment; and in a future-focused way by considering impacts on future generations (NESC, 2021).

The adoption of a well-being approach is also part of a move to address fragmentation in new public management (NPM) approaches. NPM tends to have less focus on the over-arching outcomes, collaboration and joined-up approaches to policy making that a well-being approach encourages (Wallace, 2019). However, such work is not new, and well-being approaches often build on earlier approaches and structures to support collaboration and encourage a stronger focus on outcomes. In Ireland such approaches include tailored universalism (NESC, 2005), prevention and early intervention, poverty proofing, and performance and equality budgeting. Structures developed in Ireland in this vein include for example, RAPID,³ local area partnerships, and social partnership structures. Earlier approaches to co-designed services include, for example, the LES.

Other impetuses for developing a well-being approach include international commitments (such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs), and/or a push from civil society. Societal pressure to focus on the environmental impacts of development, and on inequalities, has also led to investigation of the well-being approach. Political leadership is another important motivation for investigating a well-being approach, an issue that will be explored later in this report. A further benefit of a well-being approach is that it can offer a long-term approach which can balance shorter term political cycles (Little, 2007).

³ Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development. The over-arching objective of the Programme is to facilitate a more integrated approach to funding and supports in disadvantaged areas in order to enhance urban communities and provincial towns, address disadvantage and improve social cohesion.

2.2 What is Meant by a Well-being Approach?

It can be difficult to define a well-being approach, as it tends to mean different things to different people. Some of the debates on this are outlined in Box 2.

Box 2: Defining the Wellbeing Approach

The well-being approach has proven to be a rather elastic concept, and so it is important for decision-makers to be cognisant of the different definitions of well-being, as well as the implications of choosing one definition over another. In practice, governments implementing a well-being approach might take a hybrid form, drawing from several well-being approaches (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2021).

Dodge *et al.*, (2012) define well-being as ‘the balance point between an individual’s resource pool and the challenges faced’. This definition focuses on a state of equilibrium that can be impacted by challenges. Meanwhile, the OECD measures well-being by looking beyond the function of economic systems to the experiences and living conditions of people (OECD, 2013). And in its 2019 well-being budget, the Government of New Zealand defined well-being as when ‘people are able to lead fulfilling lives with purpose, balance and meaning to them’ (New Zealand Government, 2019a).

Wallace (2019) suggests that well-being needs to be measured from a personal and societal perspective. Personal well-being focusses on subjective measures, while societal measures are fact-based and observable; for example, educational attainment. For personal well-being to flourish, basic needs that contribute to societal well-being need to be met, for example, access to adequate housing.

The Nordic Council of Ministers (2021) define a Well-being Economy as one which delivers human and ecological well-being. Chrysopoulou *et al.*, (2021) suggest that a Well-being Economy starts with the idea that the economy should serve people and communities, first and foremost. What sort of economic activity is needed and for whom, and what are the enabling contexts that allow flourishing for all and harmony with nature?

While there may not be an agreed, defined approach to well-being, proponents of the approach agree that the ultimate goal of public policy should be to improve well-being for all citizens (Weijers and Morrison, 2018). Passively monitoring well-being is not enough, and active change to budgets and policymaking is required (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2021). A well-being approach should reframe the role of Government in order to understand and measure the contribution that is being made to social progress. The approach consists of a measurement framework and a set of public policy reforms aiming to improve well-being, which will reflect the complexity of well-being needs (Trebeck and Baker, 2021).in correct margins.

Despite the varying views on how to define a well-being approach, there are however typical elements adopted internationally to include a well-being approach in policymaking and implementation. The typical elements found in these approaches, as outlined in NESC (2021), consist of the following:

- A high level statement of ambition, comprising national goals, or outcomes, or priorities.
- Measurement of performance in these national goals against a dashboard of indicators. The dashboards vary in size. Some countries have a small number of headline indicators and a larger set of more finely grained ones.
- Regular publication of performance reports, to support monitoring and accountability. These are typically published annually, and are often submitted to Parliament. Some aim to frame budget discussion.

-
- Public involvement in developing the well-being goals, often with lengthy consultations, of both experts and citizens. Some countries have instituted ongoing consultation processes for policy implementation.
-
- Going beyond reporting, some countries have legislation to ensure continuity in and accountability for the well-being approach. Some have institutional structures with responsibility for well-being, some new and some pre-existing. The structures have a variety of roles, with some established to push forward the well-being agenda, while others aim to improve co-ordination.
-
- Application to budgeting – this varies from using the indicator dashboard to frame budget discussions, to assessing budget proposals for their impact on well-being.
-
- New ways of working, with support and guidelines provided in a number of countries.
-

Adopting these elements of a well-being approach can help orientate work in the policy system to improve individuals' lived experience. It can involve citizens and create a shared vision, mobilising action by linking policy action and review to the measured lived experience of citizens.

It is important to note that public policy already has a strong focus on improving well-being. However, a well-being approach aims to develop this further. Looking at the elements typically found in a well-being approach, it can be distinguished from previous approaches in how it aims to more systematically consider a wider range of variables in decision-making, such as in national Budget processes; in how it creates new evidence to be used in decision-making; in how it systematically brings in a wide range of voices, e.g. to help choose national outcomes; and in how it relies on a variety of accountability mechanisms.

2.3 Well-being Approaches: Four Working Examples

The following Sections will provide background detail on the approach taken to well-being in New Zealand, Scotland, Wales; and to policy to improve the lives of children in Ireland, New Zealand and Scotland.

2.3.1 New Zealand

New Zealand's Treasury began to develop a well-being framework in 2011. The first to be developed was the Living Standards Framework (LSF) (The Treasury 2021a) which is modelled on the OECD's How's Life Framework. The LSF has been revised a number of times, and the current iteration contains 12 domains of well-being underpinning individual and collective well-being, as well as a focus on institutions and governance, and the factors underpinning New Zealand's wealth. See Figure 2.

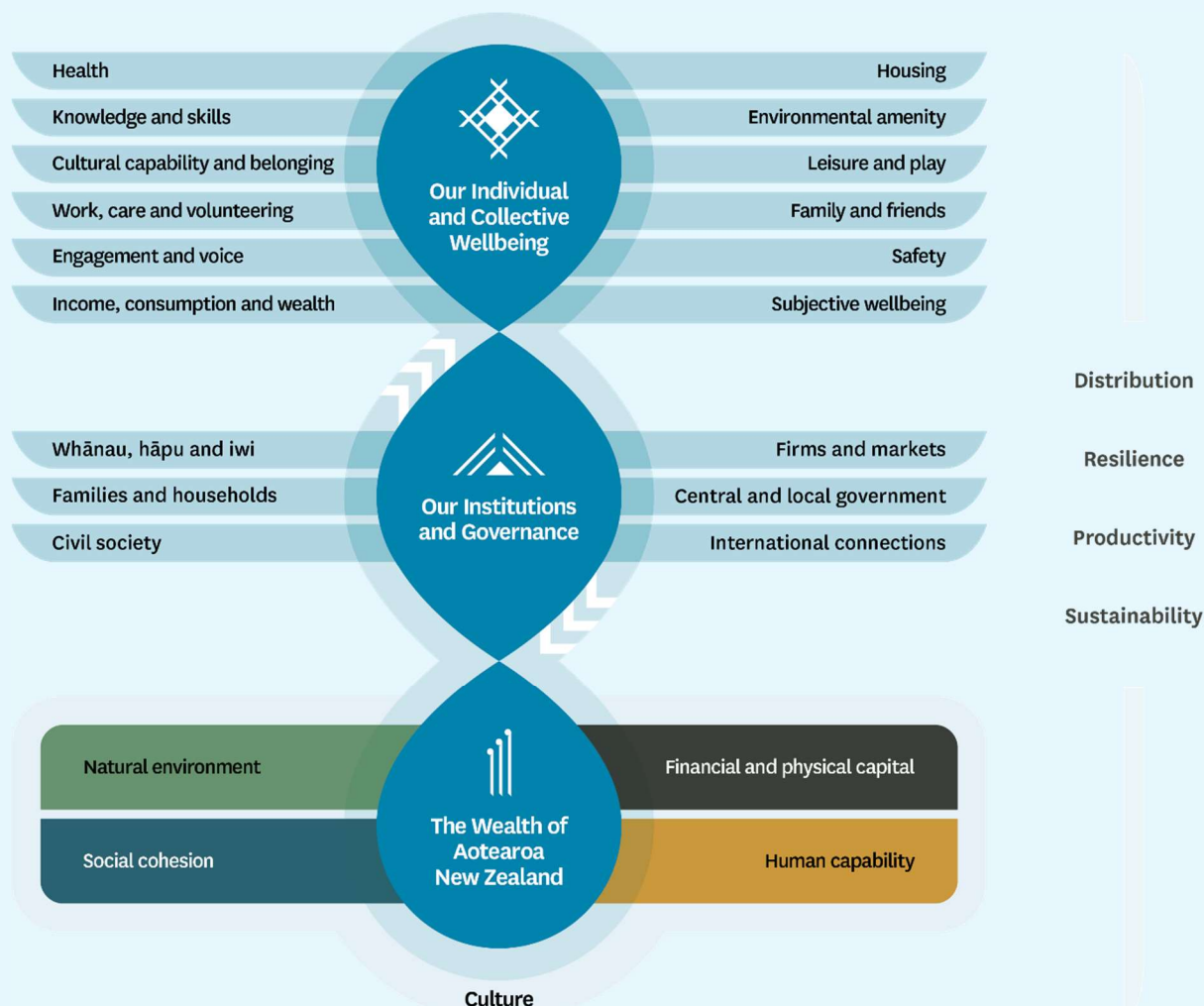
New Zealand's well-being approach is led at multiple levels in a polycentric way. There are a number of other wellbeing frameworks used across the country, e.g. a regional framework used in the Waikato Region, a dedicated child wellbeing framework; and the He Ara Waiora framework, which reflects a Māori view of well-being, (The Treasury, undated), which was published in 2018. See Figure 3.

The frameworks are used together to help the Treasury understand what contributes to optimal living standards in New Zealand. They are used as analytical tools which help identify a wide range of policy impacts.

There is also a dashboard of 103 indicators linked to the LSF. These indicators monitor well-being, using both subjective and objective measures.⁴ This was expanded during the 2022 refresh of the Framework.

⁴ See [Living Standards Framework - Dashboard \(treasury.govt.nz\)](https://treasury.govt.nz/living-standards-framework) accessed 14.03.22.

Figure 2: New Zealand's Living Standards Framework, 2021



Source: (The Treasury, 2021a).

The New Zealand well-being approach is heavily focussed on the national Budget process. The primary purpose of the frameworks is to inform Treasury advice to Government on policy priorities for improving well-being, such as advice on well-being objectives; and for well-being and stewardship reporting. Five well-being objectives are selected for each year's Budget, and Ministers must show how their Budget bids would help achieve these. The objectives for Budget 2022 were:

- Just Transition
- Physical and Mental Well-being
- Future of Work
- Māori and Pacific Peoples
- Child Well-being

New Zealand introduced the Public Finance (Well-being) Amendment Act 2020 to help embed well-being objectives into the budgeting process. Under this Act, the Budget Policy Statement must state the well-being objectives that guide the Government's Budget decisions. In addition, the Fiscal Strategy Report, which is presented on Budget Day, must explain how well-being objectives have guided the Government's Budget decisions; and provide an assessment of the extent to which the fiscal performance of the Government has been consistent with its strategy. The Child Poverty Reduction Act 2018 also requires the government to report each Budget Day on a set of child poverty measures (New Zealand Government, 2018).

The Treasury has developed a cost-benefit analysis tool, 'CBAX', to help evaluate Budget proposals and monetise impacts (The Treasury, 2021b). It is a spreadsheet outlining values for various outcomes, ranging from the cost of improved contact with neighbours to the fiscal savings from avoiding diabetes (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2021). This data can be used by different organisations to run cost-benefit assessments as part of background analysis for annual Budget proposals.

New Zealand also has the Child and Youth Well-being Strategy,⁵ launched in 2019. It has six high-level outcomes, and includes 36 indicators to measure progress towards achieving the outcomes, with annual reporting on progress towards these outcomes. The strategy is complemented by a programme of action that sets out policies, initiatives and plans across the New Zealand Government that contribute to the achievement of the Strategy's outcomes and vision.

⁵ See <https://childyouthwell-being.govt.nz/our-aspirations/strategy-framework>, accessed 14.03.22.

Figure 3: The He Ara Waiora Framework for Well-being

ENDS – what is important for waiora

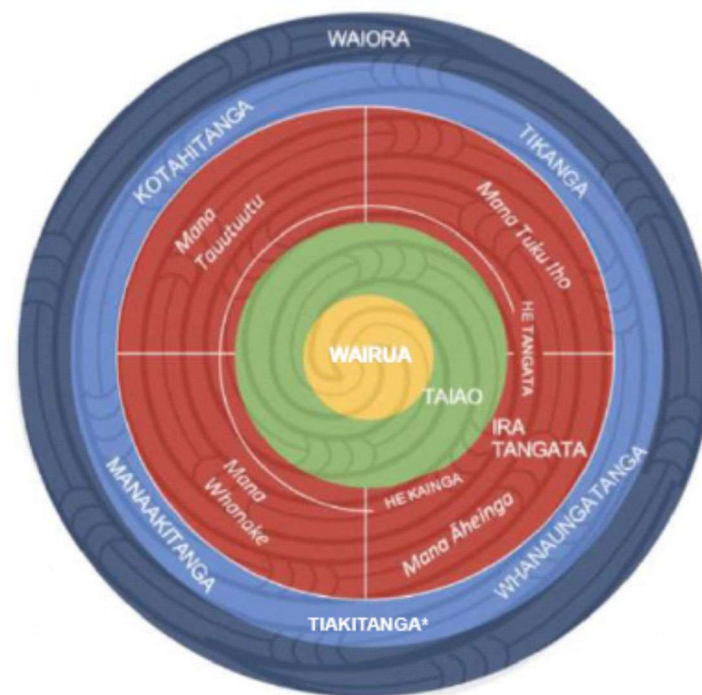
Wairua (spirit) is at the centre to reflect that it is the foundation or source of wellbeing. Values, beliefs and practices related to wairua are essential to Māori conceptions of health and wellbeing.

The wellbeing of **Te Taiao** (the natural world) is paramount and inextricable from human wellbeing. There are responsibilities and obligations to sustain and maintain the wellbeing of Te Taiao.

Te Ira Tangata (the human domain) encapsulates human activities and relationships.

People (**tangata**) and collectives (**kainga**) thrive when they:

- Have a strong sense of identity and belonging (**mana tuku iho**)
- Participate and connect within their communities, including fulfilling their rights and obligations (**mana tautuutu**)
- Have the capability to decide on their aspirations and realise them in the context of their own unique circumstances (**mana āheinga**)
- Have the power to grow sustainable, intergenerational prosperity (**mana whanake**).



MEANS – principles for how to approach the creation of waiora (wellbeing)

Kotahitanga means working in an aligned, co-ordinated way across the system and in partnership with business, communities, iwi and whānau.

Tikanga means that decisions have to be made in accordance with the right processes. This includes working in partnership with the Treaty partner.

Whanaungatanga means fostering strong relationships and networks, both through kinship and shared interests.

Manaakitanga means maintaining a focus on improved wellbeing and enhanced mana for all New Zealanders. It means supporting each other and demonstrating an ethic of care for our fellow New Zealanders. Distributional analysis is important to identify and address inequities.

Tiakitanga* means guardianship, stewardship (e.g. of the environment, or other important processes and systems that support wellbeing).

** Under discussion for inclusion in the framework*

Source: (The Treasury, undated).

2.3.2 Wales

Wales uses legislation as the main vehicle to embed the well-being approach. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 received Royal Assent in April 2015, with most of its provisions coming into force from 1 April 2016. The Act aims to put sustainable development at the centre of decision-making, and is designed to ensure actions meet the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Corbyn, 2018).

The Act puts in place seven long-term well-being goals for Wales, outlined in Figure 4.

Figure 4: The seven well-being goals for Wales



Source: <https://gov.wales/well-being-of-future-generations-wales>, accessed 09.06.22.

The Act also places a duty on public bodies to set and publish objectives to show how they will achieve the vision for Wales set out in the well-being goals. Public bodies are encouraged to ensure that corporate planning becomes the mechanism for the setting these objectives. The objectives are to be reviewed as part of the annual reporting process, but can be revised or reviewed at any time. At the same time as publishing objectives, a public body must also publish a well-being statement, and the bodies are required to maximise their contribution to delivering each of the well-being goals, and to take action to make sure they meet the objectives they set (Corbyn, 2018).

At national level, the Welsh Government publishes well-being objectives, which it uses to maximise its contribution to Wales' seven long-term well-being goals. In 2021, a set of 10 well-being objectives was included in the Government's Well-Being Statement (Welsh Government, 2021b). There is a requirement to publish annual progress reports showing progress towards meeting well-being objectives, by making reference to the national indicators and milestones (Corbyn, 2018). There are 50 national indicators to help measure progress towards the national goals, as well as 8 national milestones to be reached by 2050 (Welsh Government, 2022).

The Act details five ways of working which public bodies need to use to promote sustainable development. These are: thinking for the long-term, prevention, integration, collaboration and involvement. To support public bodies putting these five ways of working into practice, the Future Generations Commissioner and the Welsh Government published a Future Generations Framework for Projects (Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, undated) in January 2018. The Framework is used to provoke thought and discussion, and assist in decision-making about new ways of working, to ensure services are resilient and to improve the well-being of people now and in the future. It is intended that it is used by those who design and oversee provision of services. Use of the framework is non-statutory and optional (Corbyn, 2018).

In 2016, the first Future Generations Commissioner for Wales was appointed. The Commissioner's role is to promote the sustainable development principle, act as a guardian for the interests of future generations in Wales, and to support the public bodies listed in the Act to work towards achieving the well-being goals. The Commissioner holds office for a 7-year period. The Commissioner is required to publish a number of reports at regular intervals, which outline progress on implementing various provisions of the Act.

Under the Act, the Auditor General for Wales (AGW) also carries out examinations of the public bodies listed in the Act, to assess the extent to which a body has acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle. The AGW must examine each public body at least once in a five year period and must present a report on the examinations to the National Assembly for Wales before each Assembly election. In 2017, the AGW and the Future Generations Commissioner signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The MoU provides a basis for how they will cooperate to deliver on areas of common interest, and specifically on the related responsibilities set out in the Act (Corbyn, 2018).

2.3.3 Scotland

Scotland's National Performance Framework (NPF) was introduced in 2007. It sets out an overall purpose and vision for Scotland. The purpose explicitly includes 'increased well-being'. The NPF contains 11 broad National Outcomes to support the purpose, as outlined in Figure 5.

Each of the 11 National Outcomes has a set of indicators underpinning it, to measure progress towards the outcome. Altogether there are 81 national indicators in the NPF. The indicators incorporate a wide range of different types of data, both objective and subjective, from social attitudes and perceptions to economic and environmental statistics (Scottish Government, 2019b).

The purpose of the NPF is to inform discussion, collaboration and planning of policy and services across Scotland, encompassing the public sector, businesses, civil society and communities. It is also Scotland's framework to localise the UN's SDGs (Scottish Government, 2019).

Scotland, like Wales, uses legislation as the main vehicle to embed the well-being approach, although the legislation does not go as far. Under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act, 2015, there are legal requirements for well-being approaches to be taken into account in the work of public bodies. Provisions under the Act require public authorities to take the NPF framework into account when carrying out functions (Scottish Government, 2017b).

Priority budgeting also aims to allocate money to services that should contribute most to priority outcomes. The Scottish Government has produced a booklet to guide policy maker' Budget decisions. The booklet challenges policy

makers to think about six key questions in a systematic way and identify way in which Budget decisions could be improved to advance human rights and address inequalities (Scottish Government, 2019a).⁶

The Auditor General is involved in monitoring the extent to which a well-being approach is embedded. Audit Scotland interacts with the NPF to ensure public bodies measure outcomes from policies.

Legislation requires that the NPF is reviewed every five years, with extensive public and stakeholder consultation. This process is led by the National Performance Unit within the Scottish Government (*ibid.*).

Figure 5: Scotland's National Performance Framework



Source: <https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/> accessed 09.06.22.

⁶ The six key questions ask about the outcomes a policy is aiming to achieve, existing inequalities in that policy area, and how the budget for the policy could better address inequalities.

2.3.4 Ireland's Sectoral Approach to Improve the Lives of Children

Better Outcomes: Brighter Futures (BOBF), Ireland's national policy framework for children and young people, was published in 2014. It builds on the earlier National Children's Strategy, a ten year strategy from 2000 to 2010 which aimed to improve the quality of all children's lives. BOBF contains a vision for Ireland to be one of the best small countries in the world in which to grow up and raise a family, and five national outcomes to work towards to progress this.⁷ See Figure 6.

Figure 6: Vision and Outcomes for children in Better Outcomes: Brighter Futures



Source: (DCYA, 2014).

The vision and outcomes are to be used by all government departments and agencies, statutory services and voluntary and community organisations to work towards enhancing children's well-being. This will help to coordinate policy across Government in relation to the five national outcomes. An accompanying suite of 70 indicator areas has been developed to monitor progress under the five outcomes. The framework was developed following extensive public and stakeholder consultation, including with young people.

BOBF is not underpinned by legislation, nor is it directly linked to the Budget process. However, Government departments use the outcomes to plan funding increases for certain priorities, such as reducing child poverty. Annual priorities for action are also chosen.

To monitor progress, an annual report is published, and rolling action plans are assembled to direct priority issues. Implementation is overseen by a cross-Government Children and Young People's Consortium; and a mid-term review of implementation progress was published in 2018. The strategy was for 7 years and has now lapsed, and a successor strategy is being planned.

2.3.5 The Scottish and New Zealand Approaches to Address Child Poverty.

⁷ These are Active and healthy, Achieving in all areas of learning and development, Safe and protected from harm, Economic security and opportunity; and Connected, respected and contributing.

The Mid Term Review of BOBF identified tackling child poverty as a key priority to address going forward. It is therefore of interest to briefly consider the New Zealand and Scotland approaches to address child poverty. Unlike the current Irish policy, both the Scottish and New Zealand approaches are based in legislation, and the New Zealand approach is linked to a child and youth well-being strategy.

In New Zealand, the Government amended the Children's Act (2014) to require successive governments to develop and publish a strategy to improve the well-being of all children and young people, with a particular focus on child poverty and those with greater needs (New Zealand Government, 2018). As noted above, it has developed this strategy. The Child Poverty Reduction Act followed in 2018. It contains commitments to reduce child poverty and improve child well-being. The Act requires the New Zealand Government to set long-term (10-year) and intermediate (3-year) targets on a defined set of child poverty measures, and report annually on the set of child poverty measures. In addition, the Government must report each Budget day on how the Budget will reduce child poverty, and on progress towards the child poverty targets (*ibid.*).

In Scotland, the Government passed the Child Poverty Act in 2017, setting out targets to reduce the number of children experiencing the effects of poverty by 2030. The Act requires Scottish Ministers to publish child poverty delivery plans at regular intervals, with annual reports to measure progress. Local authorities and health boards are also required to jointly publish annual reports on their actions to reduce child poverty in the local area. In addition, the Act established a statutory Poverty and Inequality Commission in 2019 (Scottish Parliament, 2017). The Commission advises Scottish Ministers on any matter relating to poverty or inequality in Scotland, including how to reduce it, and monitors progress on reducing it.

2.3.6 Summary of Key Elements of the Well-being Frameworks Studied

Table 1 outlines the key elements of New Zealand, Wales and Scotland's national well-being frameworks.

Table 2 outlines the key elements of Ireland's sectoral strategy to improve the lives of children and young people, Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures.

2.4 The Impact of Adopting Well-being Approaches

It is a challenge to develop robust evidence linking social impacts and well-being with particular policy interventions such as a well-being approach, and to be able to demonstrate causal links and attribution. Many aspects of social impacts and well-being do not have ready market values and are difficult to measure, and policy actions taken now may play out over long periods of time. There are also many potential drivers of well-being outcomes, including for example external conditions, personal resources, and policy levers. Therefore it can be difficult to tease out the specific impact of policy interventions on well-being outcomes. It will take time to develop measures which can assess the specific impacts of adopting well-being approaches (Maxwell *et al.*, 2011).

Nonetheless, evaluations of well-being approaches already record benefits from adopting the approach. It is useful here to consider how evaluation studies categorise effects from their analysis. They note three types of effects – 1) symbolic, with evaluation results used to justify a pre-existing position; 2) conceptual, where results lead to a better understanding of the object of evaluation; and 3) instrumental, where results inform decision-making and lead to change (Ledermann, 2012). Applying this categorisation to assess the impacts of using a well-being approach, a number of conceptual and instrumental impacts can be seen. For example, the mid-term review of *Better Outcomes: Brighter Futures*, the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People in Ireland, which focused on improving well-being outcomes for children and young people, recorded several. These include the formal high-level structures for cross-collaboration and inter-departmental working, which have helped embed these practices in day-to-day work; greater shared understanding and agreement on key issues affecting children's well-being; joint policy documents to tackle e.g. childhood obesity; and changes to specific welfare payments for children, which aim to improve their well-being (DCYA, 2018). And in Wales, examination of economic, environmental and health consequences of extending the M4 Motorway led to the project being cancelled, as the long-term negative environmental and health consequences of the proposal were greater than its economic benefit (see Box 10 in Section 5.3).

Table 1: New Zealand, Wales and Scotland's national well-being frameworks

Country & Framework	Framework Elements	Legislation	Budget Process	Reporting Requirements
New Zealand The Living Standards Framework (LSF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 domains of well-being. Monitored by 103 indicators including both objective and subjective measures. 6 types of institutions and governance. 4 types of wealth that support well-being now and in the future. 5 well-being objectives identified in the Budget based on well-being analysis. He Ara Waiora- a framework that supports understanding of a Māori perspective on well-being plus sectoral frameworks. A focus on distribution across people, place and generations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Finance (Well-being) Amendment Act 2020: requires the Treasury to report periodically on the state of well-being in New Zealand, and the Government to report annually on its well-being objectives via the Budget. Public Service Act 2020: Aims for more joined-up, effective services and improved well-being outcomes for all New Zealanders. Child Poverty Act 2018: requires Government to have measures of child poverty and clear targets for improving them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Government has a statutory requirement to outline its well-being objectives in the Budget Policy Statement and explain how those well-being objectives have guided its Budget decisions in the Fiscal Strategy Report. The Government selects five well-being priorities for each year's Budget. The well-being targets and outcomes are then developed by Ministers and agencies. Ministers must show how their Budget bids would achieve the well-being priorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What has been achieved and what the Government intends to achieve under the Budget must form part of the Fiscal Strategy Report presented to Parliament on Budget Day. The New Zealand Government is also legally required to report on progress towards child poverty reduction targets at Budget time.
Scotland National Performance Framework (NPF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purpose and vision included in the NPF. 11 national outcomes. 81 national indicators. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015: Requires Ministers to consult on, develop and publish the NPF outcomes and to review them every five years. Also places responsibility on public authorities to take the framework into regard when carrying out functions, meaning services and expenditure need to reflect the priorities set out in the framework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Priority budgeting aims to allocate money to services that should contribute most to priority outcomes. The Scottish Government have produced a booklet to guide policy makers' budget decisions. Use of this guidance is optional. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NPF is formally reported to the Scottish Parliament as part of the Budget scrutiny process. The Community Empowerment Act requires that the NPF and its national outcomes are reviewed every five years, with consultation with the public. Parliament must receive a report outlining the consultation, proposals for revision of the NPF, and details on how the consultation links to these revisions.
Wales The Wales we Want	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7 national well-being goals 12 national well-being objectives. 5 ways of working which public bodies are to adopt to reach the well-being goals. 50 indicators. National milestones to be reached by 2050. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015: public bodies have a duty to set and publish objectives to illustrate how they will achieve the vision for Wales as set out in the well-being goals. They also have a duty to take action to ensure they meet the objectives they have set. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no statutory budgetary obligations for public bodies in the Act The Future Generations Well-being Commissioner monitors and assesses the draft budget each year and provides evidence to the National Assembly for Wales Finance Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Future Generations Commissioner must publish a report containing an assessment of the improvements public bodies should make to achieve the well-being goals, a year before an Assembly election. The Auditor General of Wales must examine each public body on how they are meeting well-being commitments at least once in a five-year period, and must present a report on the examinations to the National Assembly for Wales before each Assembly election.

Table 2: Key elements of Ireland's sectoral strategy to improve the lives of children and young people, Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures.

Country & Framework	Framework Elements	Legislation	Budget Process	Reporting Requirements
Ireland <i>Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020 (BOBF)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five national outcomes • 70 indicator areas • Annual cross-sectoral priorities, such as child poverty, prevention and early intervention, etc 	N/A	<p>BOBF contains a number of commitments on funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure resource allocation is based on current evidence of need and directed towards services and programmes that have evidence of effectiveness in improving outcomes • Use the intelligence from Children's and Young People's Services Committees in relation to local need and priorities to inform the allocation of national and local funding streams <p>There are no statutory requirements however.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual reports outlining progress on BOBF commitments are published each year • A Consortium of high-level representatives from across Government departments and agencies oversees implementation of BOBF • A mid-term review of BOBF was carried out

Chapter 3

Step 1: Build Shared Consensus and Understanding

3.1 Introduction

The first step in embedding a well-being approach is to build a shared consensus and understanding on the approach. This chapter examines the elements used in the countries studied to do this.

First, it outlines the context and initial impetus which has supported the introduction of national well-being approaches in Scotland, New Zealand, Wales; and in Ireland in relation to sectoral child well-being policy.

Second, it reviews the importance of leadership in this initial start-up phase.

Third, it outlines the importance of awareness and buy-in to well-being approaches across many groups including, for example, politicians, civil servants, businesses, NGOs and the public. Awareness of well-being frameworks is a necessary start, with buy-in leading to stronger work to embed such frameworks. A key element of this is consultation, which is the fourth element examined in this Chapter.

Finally, the chapter identifies a number of reflections for Ireland.

3.2 Initial Impetus for Adopting a Well-being Approach

A number of factors have led the countries studied to investigate well-being in public policy, including a desire to have less focus on GDP, a search to solve pre-existing problems, and/or to take a new approach to address them. Other reasons include meeting international commitments or local political pressures.

3.2.1 New Zealand

New Zealand's LSF was first published by the Treasury in 2011, as policymakers felt that the financial crash exposed shortcomings in key policy foci, and in economics, and wanted to find a more comprehensive way of ensuring that the diversity of factors that mattered to society were taken into account in a systematic way in public policy making. This was part of a general questioning of standard thinking in economics.⁸ The move to expand measures of wellbeing beyond income was given a significant push forward with the publication of the Stiglitz Sen-Fitoussi Commission report in 2010.

3.2.2 Scotland

Wallace (2019) suggests that a shift towards a well-being approach in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland was a function of the maturing of these governments, and their desire to work differently to the UK state from which they are devolved. They also capitalised on their small and agile Government to develop a whole-of-Government approach to policy making.

The report of the Christie Commission in 2011, which reviewed how public services were delivered, was also an important juncture in the introduction of the well-being approach in Scotland. The Commission found Scotland's public service landscape to be cluttered and fragmented. It called for 'a radical, new, collaborative culture throughout our public services' (Christie C., 2011). It stated that any reforms should be 'driven by how best services can achieve positive outcomes, based on a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis'.

⁸ See e.g. <https://www.rethinkeconomics.org/about/>, accessed 22 February 2022

3.2.3 Wales

In Wales, the adoption of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 furthered the sustainable development agenda which Wales had been focusing on since 1998, through legislation and three sustainable development strategies.⁹ The 2015 Act also links to sector reform, concepts of prevention, collaboration and long term thinking (Wallace 2019).

3.2.4 Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures in Ireland

In Ireland, BOBF was brought in to help address a lack of improvement in service delivery for children. A strong driver of the BOBF approach was that co-ordination of work at local level was not working well, and so a mechanism of co-ordinating this work needed to be developed (Little, 2007). The BOBF vision and outcomes, to be applied to the work of all sectors, aimed to provide co-ordination mechanisms.

A strong impetus for the development of the National Children's Strategy, the precursor to BOBF, was commitments under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. BOBF is also rooted in the State's commitments under this Convention.

3.3 Leadership

In order for well-being frameworks to be introduced and sustained through the policy cycle, they need to be supported by leadership. This comes from politicians and senior civil servants, as well as civil society and the private sector. The experience in New Zealand and Scotland suggest that both senior government and senior civil servants working together to provide leadership is key for the introduction and sustained use of this approach. In Scotland, the NPF was brought in when the SNP (Scottish National Party) first came into government. It was promoted by both John Swinney, the SNP Finance Minister, and Sir John Elvidge, Secretary to Government. Since then, the leadership of the Scottish First Minister has been important for the implementation of the NPF. For example, Nicola Sturgeon's Ted Talk on why Governments should prioritize well-being was considered an important intervention to engage civil servants.

In New Zealand, the first well-being budget was brought in in 2019 after a new Labour government came into power. It was promoted by the Prime Minister, the Finance Minister, and the head of the Treasury. The Treasury had been developing the LSF since 2011, but it only began to be used in the national Budget when the new Government came into power.

Civil society can play an important role in driving the adoption of well-being approaches. For example, in Scotland and New Zealand, public disquiet about rising child poverty levels led to NGO campaigns which persuaded politicians to adopt stronger measures to address child poverty, as part of a focus on child well-being.

While strong central leadership is important for the adoption of a well-being approach, more dispersed leadership¹⁰ may help to embed it and deliver well-being outcomes over the longer-term. Scotland has involved leaders from sectors beyond the public sector in embedding the NPF, through the Senior Leaders Forum (SLF). The SLF is a collaborative forum of over 300 senior leaders (Chief Executive or equivalent) drawn from across public services, third sector organisations, equality groups, and organisations that are delivering public services. The Forum comes together to create and agree a programme of work, to drive system change, invite challenge, improve performance and make their ambition to achieve the NPF more likely.¹¹

⁹ The Government of Wales Act 1998 required schemes to set out 'how it proposes, in the exercise of its functions, to promote sustainable development'. The then national assembly for Wales had principles of sustainable development written into it. There have also been three sustainable development strategies, with the most recent covering the period 2009 to 2016.

¹⁰ Dispersed leadership is the distribution or sharing of leadership skills and responsibilities throughout an organization or a series of interconnected organisations.

¹¹ See <https://scottishleadersforum.org/about-us/>, accessed 22 February 2022

3.4 Awareness of and Buy-in to Well-being Approaches in the Countries Studied

When it comes to general public awareness of well-being approaches, both Welsh and Scottish interviewees suggested that it is not necessary for the general public to know the details of well-being frameworks, but that they should be aware of the vision which the framework aims for. Public awareness of the vision can be important to support the approach being embedded, as it can help engage a range of politicians in its implementation. Engaging with the public develops an awareness that the framework is designed for all citizens and that everyone has a role to play delivering it, and may lead to national ownership of the framework. Interviewees argued that the review of the Scottish NPF in 2018 helped to shift the balance away from the NPF being solely about the performance of Scotland, to look also at creating a vision for the type of Scotland people want to live in. This is seen as a positive step for public buy-in. Consultation is an important tool for ensuring buy-in, and this is discussed in Section 3.5.

It is important for the implementation of a well-being approach that policy makers and public servants are aware of it. In Wales, awareness of the Future Generations Act amongst the workforce of public bodies is 76 per cent (Senedd Wales, Public Accounts Committee, 2021). This is considered a good sign of progress. Those who have a legal duty to adhere to the Act are also increasingly referencing it in their key documents. This may be related to the work of the Future Generations Commissioner promoting the Act.

However, among Scottish civil servants, awareness of the approach varies, with some parts of the civil service very aware of the NPF and some parts not. Interviewees also noted this pattern in Ireland in relation to the children's strategy, BOBF.

Some supports which have helped raise awareness and subsequent buy-in of a well-being approach are a communications unit or dedicated directorate. These exist in Wales and Scotland (see Section 5.2). Supports and guidance for policymakers to apply the approach are also important, and these are discussed in Section 4.5.

Another support to help buy-in is listening to and discussing feedback, including criticism. For example, there has been ongoing dialogue and iterations of the New Zealand LSF, to incorporate new views, and this has helped to sustain it. The LSF has gone through three iterations, and the latest includes the role of institutions. This was included as a result of speaking to firms and business.

A number of interviewees noted that economists can be sceptical of the well-being approach, fearing that it can reduce focus on economic fundamentals such as national debt, balance of payments and current account. In New Zealand, the LSF has therefore been strongly rooted in economics, and this supports economists' buy-in to the framework. Due to this, the LSF emphasises the importance of GDP and debt, while incorporating a wider range of issues which impinge on living standards, such as environmental and equality issues. It also has a rigorous framework to ensure it is robust. The recent addition of the 'productivity' theme to sit alongside distribution, resilience and sustainability also helps with buy-in, as does the addition of the firms and markets sphere to the framework. Box 3 outlines a rationale, from an economic viewpoint, for introducing a well-being approach.

Buy-in is also increased when well-being approaches are enabling and able to solve problems. This was noted as a key factor supporting policymaker and public servant engagement with new approaches to child well-being in Ireland, as they were promoted as mechanisms of helping to solve problems, and engaged with existing policymaking (Little, 2007).

Box 3: Failure demand and rationale for introducing a well-being economy approach

Failure demand refers to avoidable damages incurred through economic choices. When pursuing economic growth, harm can potentially be caused to people and the planet, including widening economic inequalities; high levels of insecurity; and the prospect of catastrophic climate breakdown and biodiversity loss. It is then necessary for Governments to respond with expenditure (Chrysopoulou *et al.*, 2021).

Chrysopoulou *et al.*, (*ibid.*) suggest that the damages that necessitate deployment of a government's financial resources could in some cases be avoided under a Well-being Economy scenario. For example in many high GDP economies there has been an increase in low-paid precarious work in the service sector, which leads to increased in-work poverty and insecure work, in turn resulting in necessary remedial actions and increased Government spending. This illustrates the potential for a well-being approach to guide prudent Government spending and economically sustainable decision-making.

3.5 Consultation

Consultation is a key element of well-being approaches, and supports buy-in and shared understanding of the approaches adopted. Ideally consultation should take place at all stages of the policy cycle (Exton and Shinwell, 2018). For example there can be consultation on the elements of well-being which a country wants to promote, on the national well-being outcomes to adopt, and on which indicators should measure national well-being. Consultation is also a key part of reviewing well-being approaches. And consultation can be on-going to co-create services.

Various groups can be focused on in consultations, including the public, civil servants, service providers, service users, businesses, stakeholder groups, disadvantaged groups, etc.

The approaches taken in the countries studied are outlined below. For Ireland, as noted in Section 1.1, consultation has been completed on the national well-being framework to be adopted, to help test and refine the national outcomes and dashboard of indicators. See Box 4. However, in this chapter the consultation carried out for BOBF, the sectoral strategy to promote better outcomes for children in Ireland, is the key focus, as it and its predecessor the National Children's Strategy have a wider range of consultation mechanisms incorporated within them and have gone through more stages of development than the new national well-being initiative, thus helping to provide a greater extent of learning for this research.

3.5.1 Initial Consultation on National Visions and Outcomes

Countries vary in the extent to which they consult the public on the key elements of national well-being frameworks. The key elements are known by various names, e.g. national vision, national outcomes, national priorities, etc. Public consultation is important for creating a vision of well-being which is owned by the nation, and not just Government, helping sustain buy-in.

In Wales in 2014 a year-long National Conversation was held on 'The Wales we Want', with over 7,000 people taking part in person and more online, as well as 200 stakeholder groups. The findings were used to develop Wales' seven national well-being goals (Welsh Government, undated).

In New Zealand, targeted workshops on the development of the LSF were conducted with government, business, academia and community groups to get feedback on the proposed framework, the communication of the framework and what topics or themes were important. Approximately 200 participants took part in these consultations. An advisory group was also set up to consult on the framework, and the group included representatives both from

government and outside it (Durand, 2018). The existence of multiple frameworks in New Zealand is an important way to acknowledge the different ways in which wellbeing is experienced and understood by different population groups.

Box 4: Consultation on Ireland's national Well-being Framework

The Government's First Report on a Well-being Framework for Ireland (2021) set out an initial overarching vision, conceptual framework and dashboard of indicators on this issue. The Report drew on an initial stage of consultation conducted by the National Economic and Social Council (NESC). NESC gathered the views of stakeholder groups on the suitability of the proposed Well-Being Framework for Ireland, through the deliberations of a Stakeholder and Expert Group, interviews with other stakeholders, and a survey of 450 stakeholder organisations from a variety of sectors – economic, social and environmental.

The Government then developed a Well-being Portal, providing information on the well-being initiative; and the CSO developed the Well-being Information Hub, an interactive version of the static dashboard laid out in the first report.

The launch of these two tools in October 2021 coincided with the launch of a Public Conversation on Ireland's Well-being Framework, a second phase of consultation to build on that carried out by NESC. This second phase focussed on testing and building buy-in for the Framework. It was designed to be as inclusive and wide ranging as possible. It centred around:

- a comprehensive communications campaign;
- an online stakeholder event;
- an online survey;
- thematic workshops; and
- focused meetings and presentations to specific groups and audiences.

This Conversation ran from November 2021 to January 2022, and resulted in feedback from up to 1,000 individuals.

The results of the Public Conversation and the research have fed into a refinement of Ireland's well-being vision and conceptual framework, as outlined in the Government's second report on a well-being framework for Ireland (2022). The Framework now includes an increased emphasis on environmental, economic and social sustainability, as well as adjustments to some of the dimensions and aspects that make up the Framework. It also includes a specific Section highlighting cross-cutting issues.

3.5.2 Consultation on Development of Indicators

Consultation also takes place to help develop suites of national well-being indicators. For example, several rounds of online and offline consultation took place on this issue in New Zealand, as outlined in Box 5.

Box 5: Number of people responding to public consultation on indicators to measure well-being in New Zealand

- 900 people and organisations completed an on-line submission form
- 850 people took part in an online poll
- 64 email submissions and several social media submissions were made
- 715 free postcards with multiple choice questions were returned (an alternative to online responses)
- 61 community engagement sessions were held across the country, attended by 1,218 people and 85 community organisations
- 19 technical workshops were held, attended by over 200 individuals from central government, local government, business, academia, and community groups.
- Meetings were also held with a variety of government departments and agencies

Source: (New Zealand Government, 2019b).

In Ireland, a detailed consultation process was carried out to develop the sectoral BOBF indicator set. An Expert Panel was established to provide impartial guidance on its development. Consultation with children and young people on the development of BOBF and earlier policies was reviewed to identify areas which they stressed as important, and on which data would therefore be needed. Then a Delphi panel¹² of 55 stakeholders was set up to rank 138 proposed indicator areas in order of importance. By round 3 of the Delphi process, the number of indicator areas had been reduced to 64. Discussion were then held with statutory organisations working on relevant policies to select the most appropriate indicators (DCYA, 2014).

3.5.3 Consultation to Review and Revise National Frameworks

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act requires the outcomes under the NPF to be reviewed every five years, and Scottish Ministers must consult on the outcomes. In 2018, over 200 stakeholder organisations took part in consultation events, while the views of citizens were drawn from earlier consultations on a Fairer Scotland and a Healthier Scotland, which involved more than 16,000 participants at various events, and more engagement online.

Although it is not a legal requirement, New Zealand has revised the LSF a number of times, and carried out consultation to do so. These revisions were developed in response to the emerging international and New Zealand literature, research, and dialogue with people across New Zealand. The latest work to refresh the LSF has highlighted the diversity of views in relation to well-being across New Zealand, with a new focus on institutions, as well as the development of a new framework, He Ara Waiora, alongside the LSF. This framework supports the understanding of a Māori perspective on well-being.

¹² The Delphi method is based on a series of 'rounds', where a set of experts are asked their opinions on a particular issue. The answers to each round are shared anonymously with all participants, allowing them to reflect on the views of others and reposition their own opinions accordingly in subsequent rounds. This design allows a consensus view to be developed over the rounds.

3.5.4 Consultation for the Co-creation of Policy and Services

In Ireland, structures under BOBF and its predecessor, the National Children's Strategy, have allowed stakeholder and citizen consultation over an extended time period. These structures go back to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, with Article 12 stating that 'the child's views must be considered and taken into account in all matters affecting him or her'. In line with this, Goal 1 of the National Children's Strategy stated that: "children will have a voice in matters which affect them and their views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity." Youth participation structures were put in place under this strategy, including the first Dáil na nÓg event in 2001, and the establishment of Comhairle na nÓg in 2002 (DCEDIY, 2022). Comhairle na nÓg are permanent child and youth councils in the 31 local authorities, designed to enable young people to have an on-going voice on the services, policies and issues that affect them in their local area. Dáil na nÓg brings together delegates elected from the Comhairle na nÓg every two years, at national level. Interviewees for this research outlined how these structures allow them to immediately consult with young people on live policy issues affecting them, e.g. Brexit, public transport costs.¹³

BOBF also has structures to allow on-going engagement between a range of organisations. These structures include the following:

- For stakeholders, the Advisory Council representing non-statutory stakeholders;
- At cross-government level, the Children and Young People's Policy Consortium, with members from all government departments and key agencies; and
- The Children's Services Committee National Steering Group representing agency coordination at county level.

Stakeholders from the statutory and NGO sectors find these structures useful for allowing information to move from NGOs to civil servants, and for generating a shared understanding of key issues and how to address them.

In Scotland, the Community Empowerment [Scotland] Act (Scottish Government, 2017b) allows a community organisation or council to request a public service authority to permit it to participate in an outcome improvement process, and the public authority must agree to the request unless there are reasonable grounds for refusing it. And under the Child Poverty Act, Scotland requires consultation with stakeholder groups, and those affected by poverty, in the preparation of a delivery plan outlining the measures the Scottish government will take to reach child poverty targets, and to finance these measures.

Interviewees for this research noted that policy design with consultation/stakeholder input is typically 'messier' and slower than if the public service works on it without consulting or engaging with these groups, but that involving the public in conversations about well-being generates buy-in and political interest. Consultation with the public and stakeholders is also a useful mechanism to 'use our collective expertise to solve problems'.

¹³ This is another example of the impact of a well-being approach. The 50 per cent reduction in public transport fares for young people aged up to 23 was suggested by the national executive of Comhairle na nÓg, and subsequently included in Budget 2022 (see <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/ba6c1-comhairle-na-nog-members-welcome-the-announcement-of-the-youth-travel-card/#:~:text=The%20Executive's%20final%20proposal%20was,Ryan%20on%20th%20July%202021>, accessed 10.06.22)

3.5.5 Resourcing Consultation and Communication

A number of interviewees mentioned the importance of adequately resourcing communication about and consultation on a well-being approach, for a variety of reasons. First, this can improve awareness among the public, statutory organisations and politicians, which helps keep a well-being focus on the political agenda. Adequately resourced communication also helps to devise accessible language on well-being, so that various groups impacted by and involved in well-being approaches are clear about what it involves.

Good examples of resourced communication include the dedicated role of the Communications and Engagements Lead in the National Performance Framework Unit in the Scottish Government. The Unit is currently developing a communication and engagement plan on the NPF for Scotland.

3.6 Reflections for Ireland

As Ireland has already carried out consultation on the development of its well-being Framework, both in 2021 and 2022, the key implications for Ireland of the information outlined in this chapter are around the value of on-going consultation. The chapter highlights the value of ongoing-consultation with stakeholders and the public. Consultation with the latter helps to create a vision of national well-being which is owned by all. It can also help to keep national well-being approaches on the agenda of politicians. Meanwhile, on-going engagement and dialogue with stakeholders can help to address criticisms of well-being frameworks, and to develop them. This supports greater buy-in as well as longevity of the frameworks. Structures for on-going engagement also allow rapid live feedback on policy questions, which is useful.

As well as engaging with stakeholders and local communities, some interviewees suggested that in future iterations of a well-being approach, it would be useful to involve the private sector in the process of embedding this approach. This could help ensure that the private sector and businesses have well-being and sustainability at their core and are considering long term impacts.

Good consultation and dialogue is supported by a level of resourcing, e.g. the commitment to maintain on-going consultation structures; and to regularly review well-being visions and outcomes.

Chapter 4

Step 2: Design a Workable Well-being Framework

4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the elements of a well-being framework used to initially establish a well-being approach in policymaking in the countries studied. These are outcomes, indicator suites and an evidence base. The final Section then reflects on the guidance and support which can be offered to policymakers and other stakeholders to help them to use indicators and other evidence in well-being approaches.

As noted in Section 1.1, Ireland has agreed a national well-being framework, with 11 dimensions, and a suite of 35 macro-indicators. See Box 6. However, as this development has only recently been completed, in this chapter the outcomes, indicators and guidance under BOBF, the sectoral strategy to promote better outcomes for children in Ireland, is the key focus, as it and its predecessor the National Children's Strategy have been in place for a much longer period of time, and so can provide more evidence on how outcomes and indicators have been used to promote well-being of a group, in the Irish context.

Box 6: Development of the dimensions and indicators of Ireland's national well-being framework

Ireland has developed a [Well-being Framework](#) which includes eleven dimensions of well-being. The OECD *How's Life? Measuring Well-being* model was used as a basis for developing the dimensions. This was chosen based on the international preference for using the OECD framework of well-being as a base structure. Each of the eleven dimensions of the Framework include an overarching definition and several aspects that illustrate how the high-level definition relates to specific areas of people's lives. Together the dimensions of the Framework capture a holistic picture of the key elements that make up well-being for Ireland, across person, place and society.

An accompanying well-being dashboard has been designed to measure life and progress in Ireland through a cohesive set of 35 indicators. These indicators provide a high-level holistic indication of the progress toward well-being overall in the country. They were chosen in conjunction with the Central Statistics Office (CSO), and selected based on the following criteria: a balanced and holistic view; added value and policy relevance; aggregation and disaggregation (for inequalities); availability and quality; and international comparability.

The CSO then launched the [Well-being Information Hub](#) in October 2021, which is an interactive version of the static well-being dashboard. This tool allows users to explore the data and develop their own understanding of life and progress in Ireland. It is an interactive and evolving product which updates automatically as new data is published by the CSO. The development of the Hub included inputs from across the CSO, along with close cooperation with external bodies such as the EPA and the OECD. It resulted in the publication of 16 additional indicators into the CSO data system.

4.2 Outcomes

As outlined in Chapter 2, as part of a well-being approach, the countries studied have articulated over-arching outcomes that they aim to reach, or to improve upon. Progress towards these outcomes is fundamental to a well-being approach (see Box 7). Interviewees felt that the selection of national outcomes and priorities helps create long-term thinking, shared understanding, and collaboration, as it is recognised that in most cases an outcome cannot be delivered by a single organisation.

Box 7: Well-being and an outcomes approach, and an example in the Irish context

An outcomes approach means articulating outcomes, and measuring progress towards these. It is important to link an outcome to policy levers that can bring it about; and also to draw a line of sight between inputs, outputs, outcomes and indicators. This process creates intervention logic, which can be used to implement policy and evaluate its success. It goes beyond using indicators for situational analysis, to articulate the ultimate objectives of policy, and to measure progress towards goals. An outcomes approach is fundamental to a well-being approach.

An example of a comprehensive Irish measurement framework set up to link inputs, outputs and outcomes is the Health System Performance Assessment (HSPA) framework being established by the Department of Health. The HSPA will measure, monitor and report on achievements against the objectives of Sláintecare health policy, and broader policy and decision-making cycles.

It is developed in recognition that the current measurement system, which is based on activity- based indicators, needs to move towards a measurable and quantifiable outcome-based model strongly embedded in the policymaking cycle which will monitor effective working of the health sector including policies and reform measures. This will allow for better evidence-informed health policy decisions.

The development of the framework has drawn on the experience and views of several groups – those working in the Department of Health, a wider set of internal and external stakeholders in Ireland, a group of international advisors, and members of the Irish population.

Domains and sub-domains of the HSPA Framework were first identified, based on consultation. In parallel, an assessment of the health information system in Ireland was conducted to identify and explore data sources. In some instances, a specific indicator or suitable data source will require further development in the future. The framework was then populated with indicators – a total of 260. The data in the framework is organised into five clusters – outcomes, outputs, processes, structures and cross-cutting issues.

Phase 2 of the project is now being planned, which involves implementation across the health system.

Interviewees suggested that it is better to have fewer outcomes (sometimes referred to as national priorities or goals) rather than a wide variety. For example, New Zealand's 2021 Well-being objectives were:

- **Just Transition** – Supporting the transition to a climate-resilient, sustainable and low-emissions economy while building back from COVID-19.
- **Future of Work** – Enabling all New Zealanders and New Zealand businesses to benefit from new technologies and lift productivity and wages through innovation, and support into employment those most affected by COVID-19, including women and young people.
- **Physical and Mental Wellbeing** – Supporting improved health outcomes for all New Zealanders and keeping COVID-19 out of our communities.
- **Māori and Pacific** – Lifting Māori and Pacific incomes, skills and opportunities, and combatting the impacts of COVID-19.
- **Child Wellbeing** – Reducing child poverty and improving child wellbeing

In Scotland, the NPF sets out eleven long term outcomes for Scotland (Audit Scotland, 2019). These are; children and young people, communities, culture, economy, education, environment, fair work and business, health, human rights, international and poverty. As noted earlier, there is a statutory basis to the process of developing outcomes, as the Community Empowerment Act requires Ministers to consult on, and develop, the national outcomes and regularly report on progress towards them. The outcomes also must be reviewed every five years.

The Wales We Want national conversation identified seven foundations to nurture for a good future for Wales. These include the best start for children, a strong sense of place, working within environmental limits, an emphasis on the local economy, supporting equality and diversity, a stronger democracy, and valuing our heritage and culture (Welsh Government, undated). These well-being goals are legally binding (Welsh Government, 2021a).

4.3 Indicator Suites

Progress towards outcomes identified for well-being is measured through the use of indicators. Typically, two types of indicator suites are used in a well-being approach – macro-level indicators which outline a nation's state of well-being and provide a direction of travel; and more micro-level indicators which are used in Budget and measurement processes. The use of indicators draws a line of sight between inputs, outputs and outcomes, and helps create an intervention logic, which can be used both to implement policy and to evaluate its success.

4.3.1 Macro-level Indicator Suites

Interviewees for this research stated that the macro-level indicator suites that accompany national well-being approaches should be high-level, and focused on the desired national outcomes. These indicator suites provide a quick measure of the state of economic, social and environmental issues at a national, macro, level in a country. Such high level indicators are useful for providing direction, identifying macro trends, delivering messages, getting conversations going and making arguments. They make the concept of well-being more concrete and provide a rigorous basis to it. They also help to generate a focus on structures rather than individuals.

The number of indicators in national indicator suites varies, but interviewees were of the view that fewer headline indicators is better than a large suite, which is too big to easily take into account for policy development. The indicators chosen should be broad enough to gain buy-in and acceptance among a range of stakeholders, to help ensure that their use is sustained over time.

There are mixed views on whether indicator suites should be decided when a framework is being agreed, or if they should follow a framework. In practice they are decided after the framework is agreed. In New Zealand, the LSF framework predates the national well-being indicator set, and in Wales the national indicators set was agreed a number of years after the well-being goals (Welsh Government, 2020). In Ireland, BOBF also predates the BOBF indicator suite. In Zealand indicators are not considered fixed and eternal – they have been selected mostly on pragmatic grounds and are likely to evolve over time as data improves.

Interviewees noted that developing indicators is time-consuming (see also Hanafin and Brooks, 2009), and that a collaborative process is the best method to identify them. They found that it was important to consult data-users, and not just data-producers, on the most suitable indicators, as the former use the data to plan and monitor policy. Consultation practices vary however, with broad public consultation on New Zealand's suite of national well-being indicators, and broad stakeholder consultation on the BOBF indicator suite, as outlined in Section 3.5.2.

Interviewees recommended the use of 'place holders' to mark policy areas where suitable indicators do not exist and will be developed. This practice was adopted in Scotland's National Indicators, in New Zealand's Indicators Aotearoa,¹⁴ and in the indicator suite for BOBF. Indicators that will be developed in New Zealand include indicators on access to

¹⁴ Indicators Aotearoa is a suite of national social, cultural, environmental, and economic indicators to provide a high level independent and transparent picture of well-being in New Zealand.

natural spaces, engagement in cultural activities, biodiversity and efficiency in land use, for example.¹⁵ Many countries lack existing data on environmental impacts and cultural issues, among others, and adopting a well-being approach can help spur their development.

Interviewees were also of the view that where multiple sets of well-being indicators exist for a policy area (or a range of policy areas), they should be merged. In practice it seems that multiple indicator sets are more likely to be aligned than merged, perhaps as the indicator sets have different functions. For example, in New Zealand, the LSF dashboard draws around 60 per cent of its indicators from Indicators Aotearoa, but differences remain owing to the different purposes of the datasets. For example, while Indicators Aotearoa uses place holders where there are data gaps, the LSF dashboard uses the best data currently available, to provide an input to policy decisions (The Treasury, 2019).

Although national indicator suites are informed by the national outcomes sought, they rarely have targets. However, the Welsh Future Generations Act requires milestones to be set to show what the indicators should be at certain points in the future. Wales has set seven milestones for 2050, relating to greenhouse gas emissions, use of natural resources, health, education, the Welsh language, employment and income (Welsh Government, 2022).

4.3.2 Micro-level Indicators

Although the high-level national indicator suites have advantages, they are not good for explaining why a trend is a trend, or for linking policy and expenditure. Indicator suites also typically provide data at a national level, and so tend not depict the position of disadvantaged groups, or of local areas, well. So in addition to high level national indicator suites, there needs to be more disaggregated indicators at a micro level to help policy makers design policy, and monitor how it contributes to outcomes for particular groups and in particular areas.¹⁶ The OECD, for example, recommends that indicators measure vertical inequality (the gap between the top and bottom of the distribution) as well as horizontal inequality (the difference between groups by gender, age and education). Information from evaluations and spending reviews also helps provide a more detailed picture of the position of different groups.

To address this range of needs for indicators, New Zealand has a number of layers of well-being indicator suites with different functions, as follows:

- Indicators Aotearoa New Zealand, which is a suite of national social, cultural, environmental, and economic indicators to provide a high level independent and transparent picture of well-being in New Zealand, signalling blind spots and highlighting areas of progress.

- The LSF dashboard is a Treasury tool to support the analysis of cross-government policy priorities when developing policy advice to improve well-being. The indicators are more detailed than those in Indicators Aotearoa, and breakdowns are provided by age, sex, ethnic group, family type and income, where available. They are used in Budget processes.

- Further detailed indicator sets are held by government departments and agencies – as the Treasury outlines, ‘the [LSF] Dashboard does not provide the depth of quantitative and qualitative well-being evidence needed for agency policy analysis, such as the detailed distributional information needed for policy targeting. The Treasury expects agencies, local government and relevant interest groups to develop their own well-being datasets, with a much deeper range of well-being data and evidence to analyse the performance of their sectors and policies.’ (The Treasury, 2019).

¹⁵ See <https://www.stats.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Indicators-Aotearoa-New-Zealand-Nga-Tutohu-Aotearoa/Downloads/suite-of-indicators-aotearoa-new-zealand-nga-tutohu-aotearoa-indicators-for-june-2019-release.xlsx>, accessed 3 February 2022.

¹⁶ Micro-level indicators are already used for budgeting processes.

4.3.3 Use of Indicators

Once indicators are developed, it is then important to use them. One area where they are used is in making Budget decisions. In New Zealand, the Treasury seeks micro-level indicators as part of the Budget process, and a similar process occurs with Ireland's performance budgeting work. However, interviewees reported that agencies find it difficult to quantify and monetise well-being impacts. It can be difficult to assess the contribution of a policy to an outcome, particularly when it is one (such as educational attainment) which can be affected by the actions of many individuals and groups. See Box 8.

It is also important to have the buy-in of civil servants to ensure that indicators are used. Corlet-Walker *et al.*, (2020) found that if the civil-servants or end users were critical of the producers or the conceptual framework underpinning well-being indicators, then it was unlikely that the indicators would influence policy or become embedded in the system.

If indicators are to be used more effectively, their data also needs to be accessible from one point, and resourced to be online. Otherwise policy makers need to go to multiple data gathering organisations to access this information. Countries are at different stages in providing such centralised online resources. For example, New Zealand provides online links to the data sources which are used for the Indicators Aotearoa and LSF dashboards. In Ireland, while the macro-level indicators for the Well-being Framework are available on the CSO well-being hub, there is not yet one single online database of the BOBF indicators which policy makers can access, although such online data resources are currently being developed; and online links are available for the data used in the State of the Nation's Children report.

Box 8: Alternative mechanisms to measure how outcomes are achieved

As there can be a number of different bodies involved in the delivery of an outcome, there is a need to measure how each contributes. In Wales, it has been suggested that the use of the 'five ways of working'³³ principles allows public bodies take a multi-dimensional approach to outcome measurement. The process of organisations looking at how they have incorporated these five ways of working – collaboration, integration, involvement, long-term thinking and prevention – into their work can help measure contributions to outcomes. For example a housing association delivers on housing outcomes but an assessment could be made on whether the work of the association stretches to account for outcomes beyond housing, such as social cohesion. The five ways of working facilitate outcome and contribution measurement at local level, as local bodies can evaluate the extent to which they are stretching themselves in these ways.

The interviews also suggested that indicators developed by one Government department tend to be used most by the family of organisations which produced them. This may reflect siloed structures. It also means that policy makers may not be aware of relevant information. Public and stakeholder consultation can help to increase awareness of databanks, as does a communications budget for their dissemination.

Finally, a number of interviewees noted that some approaches to well-being began with a focus on indicators, but did not move beyond this focus on measurement of well-being. To embed a well-being approach in policy making, it is important to move beyond data gathering to mechanisms to make changes supporting well-being in a variety of policy. The requirement for public bodies to apply the 'five ways of working' in Wales may be one approach to help embed an outcomes-focused well-being approach more effectively into local policy making.

4.4 Evidence Base

Well-being approaches by their nature seek evidence to support policy decisions. Detailed indicators are one aspect of such evidence; and evaluations, spending reviews, consultation and other forms of information all contribute to the evidence base. The experience in different countries suggests that adoption of well-being frameworks leads to creation of more evidence, both academic and from lived experience, on well-being. Given the different timescales at which well-being approaches are being adopted and embedded, the extent of information available, and its use, therefore varies by country and indeed policy area.

In Ireland, the predecessor to BOBF, the National Children's Strategy (published in 2000) committed to establishing a national longitudinal survey of children in Ireland, *Growing Up in Ireland* (GUI). Data collection for GUI began in 2006, and has continued since. The principal objectives of GUI are to describe the lives of Irish children, to establish what is typical and normal (and atypical and problematic), and to provide evidence for the creation of effective and responsive policies and services for children and families (Greene *et al.*, 2010). This type of over-arching holistic study of the issues impacting children's well-being is a key support for devising and implementing policies under a well-being approach. However, interviewees argued that GUI is used particularly by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, and that awareness of it was not high in some other Departments. Interviewees in Scotland reported similar use of research and evidence within a particular policy sector only, and this pattern has also been noted internationally (Punton, 2016).

In New Zealand, the Living Standards Framework provides evidence-based advice to Ministers to help identify outcomes where New Zealand could and should be doing better. It is an input into the policy making process. It serves as a guide for the quantitative assessment of the trade-offs between alternative policy options and outcomes (Au and Karacaoglu, 2015).

The experience in a number of countries suggests that evidence on environmental issues is lacking, which inhibits its use in policy development. As outlined above, indicators on e.g. biodiversity need to be developed in several countries. In New Zealand, the Parliamentary Commissioner on the Environment (Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, 2021) has argued that the environmental information available is not able to provide decision-makers with the necessary evidence-base to make informed decisions about which environmental objectives are in need of substantial additional investment.

Resources to help develop evidence are important, as well as resources to draw attention to the existence of databanks, particularly when that evidence and data is not used much outside the Department and/or agencies which developed it.

One issue that arose in interviews was the balance between quantitative and qualitative evidence and the value given to information of each type. There is value in using both, and also in using both objective and subjective indicators – see Box 9. Many interviewees considered that quantitative economic evidence was more valued by civil servants than qualitative evidence. On the other hand, politicians were argued to pay attention to qualitative evidence, such as that received from constituency clinics. Qualitative evidence adds richness and lived experience to evidence, and is a useful part of evaluations and case studies. The Scottish Child Poverty Act requires that ministers consult with people who have experience of living in poverty when writing the delivery plan on how to reach child poverty targets, and this is an example of qualitative evidence of lived experience contributing to policymaking. The consultative structures set up in Ireland under BOBF and its predecessors, such as the National Advisory Council and Comhairle na nÓg and Dail na nÓg, also help to provide policymakers with evidence from stakeholder groups and children and young people on policy issues which affect them directly.

Box 9: Subjective Indicators

Subjective well-being refers to ‘good mental states, including all of the various evaluations, positive and negative, that people make of their lives and the affective reactions of people to their experiences’ (OECD, 2013).

Subjective indicators are considered an important element of the well-being approach. For example, the OECD (2013) considers being able to measure people’s quality of life as fundamental to assessing the progress of societies. Researchers on happiness point to the fact that policymakers need to take subjective indicators into account, at least in addition to objective indicators. Subjective indicators can be used to both assess policy success and to select policy goals (Veenhoven, 2002).

When data for objective indicators are collected, the data are not overtly filtered by perceptions and are generally independent of personal evaluations. On the other hand, the collection of data for subjective indicators explicitly involves the expression of subjective states, such as perceptions, assessments and preferences. It is important to note that objective measures also involve a degree of variability and value judgements, particularly when deciding what to measure and how to measure it. For example the definitions of homeless vary internationally, some countries measure the number of people without shelter, others only measure those in specialised emergency accommodation, and others have a much broader view and include people who are living with friends and families because they have no alternative (Focus Ireland, 2021).

Collecting subjective evidence relies on social research methodology, often surveys. ‘Quality of life surveys’ were the first of their kind to measure subjective well-being. More recently subjective social indicators are used by official statistical institutes (Noll, 2013). The OECD measures subjective well-being as part of the How’s Life report, which is part of the OECD Better Life Initiative. Measures used in the report are Life satisfaction and Negative affect balance (OECD, 2020).

While some express doubts about the validity and reliability of subjective indicators, an OECD (2013) study argues that there is sufficient evidence that subjective indicators generally reach levels of reliability and validity, which make them “fit for purpose”, including their potential usage in policy making. If correlations between objective and subjective indicators are weak, concerns can be raised about the usefulness of the subjective indicators. It is argued that if correlations are weak, subjective information is of little indicator value, since it does not allow reliable, direct inference to reality. This, however, ignores the fact that people’s perceptions and assessments bear important value. For example, perceptions of a high degree of insecurity in the neighbourhood will most likely have an impact on the behaviour of persons, independent from their victimization risk in objective terms. Subjective indicators are therefore not necessarily supposed to be strongly correlated with objective indicators, nor replace them. They are designed to be considered as alternative measures adding value by providing complementary information, not captured by objective measures (Noll, 2013).

The need to use a combination of subjective and objective indicators also addresses reservations in relation to the ‘soft’ nature of the indicators. Social policy and well-being approaches are not only concerned with objective matters such as ‘income’, but also with subjective issues such as ‘trust’, ‘perceived safety’ and ‘satisfaction with services’ in neighbourhoods. Such issues are typically intertwined, and in the policy mix there is always a combination of material and mental matters. The majority of Quality of Life researchers are of the opinion that a combination of subjective and objective indicators is optimal (Noll, 2013).

Some interviewees felt that evidence gathered under well-being approaches was not always used to make funding decisions. There are a range of reasons why this might be the case. One is that, as found by New Zealand's Parliamentary Commissioner on the Environment (Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, 2021), the communication of new evidence, e.g. on environmental issues, is not as strong as it could be, and that less of the evidence gathered appears to feed up to higher levels of decision-making in the budget process. Another reason is that finance ministers are faced with 'virtually limitless' claims for funding and only finite resources to meet them, and so there must always be a political choice on how to target funding, reflecting value judgements. New Zealand's Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment has argued that there are many methods and tools that can help decision makers untangle different policy objectives and their associated trade-offs. However, he found that the advice received by decision makers in New Zealand is insufficient to make informed tradeoffs between investing in well-being now and investing in well-being for the future, as nearly all advice they receive is on current well-being. He argues that better data on biodiversity and ecosystems may allow a more informed assessment of land use decisions along with the costs and benefits of potential trade-offs (*ibid.*).

There are also examples of evidence being used in Budget processes. For example, New Zealand selects five priorities based on evidence for the Well-being Budget each year, which are then agreed by Cabinet. Data from the Treasury's LSF Dashboard is combined with advice from sector experts and Government Science Advisors to identify the priorities which New Zealand could and should be doing better on (Mintrom, 2019).

4.5 Capacity and Guidance

Interviewees from all sectors and countries felt that there is capability among civil servants to do the additional analysis and cross-cutting work required by well-being approaches, but that they are already over-stretched and so lack the time needed to carry out this type of analysis. Government timetables are tight, e.g. those around the annual Budget, and do not always allow time for the type of over-arching analysis required (see Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, 2021).

Analytical and cross-cutting work also needs to be resourced, including communication of the results of analysis. Scotland and New Zealand have established dedicated units and staff to analyse and communicate information on cross-cutting policy areas. For example, New Zealand has established a Just Transition Unit, to help share and coordinate the work of transitioning New Zealand to a low emissions economy (New Zealand Government, undated-b). The work of the Unit is judged to have helped good analysis and communication of environmental issues in Budget documents (Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, 2021). New Zealand also has a Child Poverty Unit to support work on reducing child poverty. The Unit support agencies to implement legislation on this, and works with other organisations to identify actions and policies for reducing child poverty. Its work is complemented by that of the Child Well-being Unit, which is leading the cross-agency development and implementation of New Zealand's first Well-being Strategy for children and young people.¹⁷

Mainstream staff also need time to cultivate the relationships underpinning cross-government work, and to do this work. Scotland has a national co-ordinator for local authority Child Poverty Action Reports, a peer support network for those leading on child poverty in health and local authority settings, and an online network to allow for discussion and good practice sharing.¹⁸ In Ireland, the Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSCs)¹⁹ have a national co-ordinator, and there is also a CYPSC Co-ordinators' National steering group (although it has not met for a while). A recent report considering how to build on BOBF noted a need for co-ordination work to be properly resourced (DCEDIY, 2022).

¹⁷ See <https://www.childyouthwellbeing.govt.nz/resources/child-and-youth-wellbeing-strategy>, accessed 03.02.22.

¹⁸ See <https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/products-and-services/consultancy-and-support/local-child-poverty-action-reports>, accessed 05.02.22

¹⁹ Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSCs) are county-level committees that bring together the main statutory, community and voluntary providers of services to children and young people. They provide a forum for joint planning and co-ordination of activity to ensure that children, young people and their families receive improved and accessible services. See <https://www.cypsc.ie/>

However, many interviewees felt that the time and resources to support collaborative work were not usually available and there was too much reliance on the commitment of individuals. It was also noted in a number of countries that staff transfers makes it difficult to maintain momentum and the necessary analytical skills. There are concerns in several countries that a pipeline of staff skilled in this type of work is not being continuously developed.

Practical guidance for staff on how to do the analytical work called for under well-being approaches is also very useful. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act specifies that ministers must issue guidance to public bodies on how to exercise the functions of the Act in their work. As a result, the Welsh Government has produced a suite of statutory guidance for public bodies specified in the Act. Public bodies must take the guidance into account when fulfilling their legal duties under the Act (Corbyn, 2018). For example, the Core Guidance outlines that public bodies must set and publish well-being objectives that maximise the organisation's contribution to achieving the well-being goals in the Act and must take all reasonable steps to meet the objectives. It specifies that changes are to be seen in corporate, workforce and financial planning; and in procurement, use of assets, risk management and performance management. More specific guidance is also provided for public bodies, public service boards, and community councils (Welsh Government, 2019).

Further guidance has also been developed on how to incorporate the five ways of working specified in the Futures Generations Act into the design of projects (Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, undated). In addition, the Welsh Future Generations Commissioner's office can provide specific advice and assistance in relation to the preparation of Local Well-being Plans. The Welsh Auditor General report found that tailored advice was particularly sought by agencies charged with applying the requirements of the Future Generations Act. The Commissioner's office have trialled some innovative approaches to help build capacity across the public sector, including establishing a Future Generations' Leadership Academy. Future leaders under 30 from the public sector are identified and provided with training in the provision of the legislation.

However, despite the provision of guidance within the Welsh system, interviewees felt that the Future Generations legislation should be accompanied by a training and capacity building budget. Although the Commissioner has a team of 30, they provide support to 44 organisations, and so they are quite stretched.

Meanwhile New Zealand's Treasury cost-benefit analysis tool, 'CBAX' helps evaluate budget proposals and monetise impacts (The Treasury, 2021b). The tool encourages a consistent approach to cost-benefit-analysis and a longer-term and broader view of societal impacts, costs and benefits (Treasury, 2021b). As with conventional economic appraisal methods, CBAX values are always measured in monetary terms (New Zealand \$) so that all impacts are comparable. However, there are challenges implementing CBAX. Civil servants found that agencies asked to use it outsourced the process to external consultants, rather than developing the capacity to use it in-house. Treasury have now changed procedures to encourage agencies to use it more pro-actively. Another issue is that the CBAX values are derived from a range of sources and so the monetary valuations given to different experiences can vary considerably (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2021).

CBAX was updated in September 2021 to, amongst other changes, include further climate change values (Treasury, 2021b).

4.6 Reflections for Ireland

The experience in the countries studied suggests a number of useful reflections for further development of Ireland's national well-being approach.

First, while the CSO Well-being Hub has been developed with a range of macro-indicators on well-being in Ireland, the experience in the countries studied shows the importance of continuing to develop relevant indicators on well-being, e.g. on the environment, and on other areas where adequately informative indicators do not yet exist. For example, the Government's first report on a well-being framework for Ireland (Government of Ireland, 2021) noted a need for more data on environmental indicators, housing costs, civic engagement and cultural activity. Equally, NESC (2021) notes the need for better data on equality of access to services, amenities and opportunities. It is helpful that the CSO has committed to prioritising the collection of more well-being data over time (Government of Ireland, 2021).

Related to this, the value of different types of evidence and indicators can usefully be promoted. Rigorous types of qualitative data can be developed and are a useful input to policy development, particularly when a policy (such as a well-being focused policy) aims to reflect the lived experience of the population. The various types of evidence and indicators can be used to provide accountability and measure the extent to which outcomes are being achieved. In Wales, Ministers must set milestones to show expectations of what the indicators should show at certain points in the future. The Future Generations Act enables Ministers to review and amend the national indicators and milestones so that they stay up to date and relevant. At the start of each financial year Ministers must publish an annual progress report setting out the progress made over the last year.

Secondly, it is important to communicate the fact that data and evidence are available, particularly communicating this outside the organisational sector which produced that data. Macro-indicators are available through the CSO's online well-being hub. Allied to this is a need to make micro-indicators easy to access, e.g. by providing them in one location on-line. Data on the position of different groups should also be easily accessible, e.g. the position of high income and low income groups, the position of those in different local authority areas. Some of these breakdowns are available on the CSO well-being hub, but not all. The CSO commitment to incorporating official data not currently held by the CSO, for future iterations of the dashboard, is welcome.

Data needs to be used in decision-making once gathered. The experience in New Zealand suggests that it is important to ensure that key data is communicated right through the various stages of Budget decision-making, so that it is available to influence decision-making on trade-offs. Interviewees in New Zealand suggested that indicator data is more useful for setting priorities than evaluating initiatives – the data in the dashboard does provide the necessary evidence to measure the impact of policies.

Practical tailored guidance can help civil servants and others to carry out the analytical work required. A number of guidance resources are currently provided by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in Ireland. Interviewees also stressed the importance of time to allow analysis of information and to create relationships to support cross-organisation work. A pipeline of staff skilled in this type of work is also needed to replace those who move on. Consideration of how these resources (time, guidance, collaborative working relationships) can continue to be developed may be useful for the Irish well-being approach.

The experience internationally highlights the importance of embedding an outcomes approach to policy making. This is aided by developing evidence-based national outcomes and developing strong indicators to measure progress. Use of indicators to measure outcomes also throws up the issue of which policy has contributed to the outcomes, a factor which is difficult to measure, particularly in policy areas (e.g. education) where multiple factors influence the outcome. However, there is learning from approaches used in other countries, e.g. the five ways of working in Wales. Evaluation and other analysis can play an important role in assessing the contribution of policy to the advancement of outcomes. Evaluations should be outcome focussed and when necessary use mixed methods, including qualitative and social analysis.

Wales has developed targets for outcomes, and New Zealand has well-being objectives to promote action in terms of Budget policy priorities. Both of these approaches move beyond well-being measurement to a more active focus on well-being in policy. These could be considered in Ireland as the national well-being approach becomes more embedded.

Chapter 5

Step 3: Implant, Monitor and Review

5.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the tools used in the countries studied to embed their frameworks into standard ways of working in policymaking, and the processes of monitoring and accountability used. The tools include structures (independent and within existing structures), the work of politicians and parliament, legislation, budgetary processes, and accountability and monitoring systems, including reviews. These tools are used in different ways, and to a different extent, by different countries. The variations are linked to how the well-being approach was initiated, the emphasis a country has decided to place on the well-being approach, and the tools typically used in that country to operationalise new approaches to policymaking.

5.2 Structures

A number of the countries studied have introduced structures as part of a well-being approach. There are different types of structures covering different functions, which are holding Government to account; raising awareness; internal supports for the public service; and reaching out to other stakeholders and bringing their views back in to policymaking. Some structures have a range of functions.

To hold Government to account, the Welsh Well-being for Future Generations Act established the first statutory Commissioner for Future Generations in 2016, as outlined earlier. The Commissioner's work helps to support buy-in to the Act, and the implementation of a well-being framework and approach. The office of the Commissioner also conducts reviews and publishes reports on how public bodies should make changes to achieve well-being goals, and so supports monitoring and accountability. And as noted in Section 4.5, the Commissioner's office also provides guidance to those implementing the Act on how to change how they work in order to meet the requirements under the Act.

Scottish stakeholders see the appointment of a commissioner as a possible next step in implementing the NPF and well-being approach.

The Welsh Government has also established a Futures and Integrated Policymaking division under the Act. The purpose of this division is to support Welsh Government officials and bodies embedding the Act, and strengthen policymaking capability more generally (Auditor General for Wales, 2019). The Division has an establishment of 8 staff, and has developed a high level work programme, including a Welsh Government-wide 'Route Map' for implementing the Act. It also led on preparing the Welsh Government's self-reflection on progress towards its well-being objectives, for the Future Generations Commissioner (*ibid.*).

As noted earlier, in Ireland under BOBF, structures were set up to facilitate consultation and collaborative work among stakeholders, such as the Advisory Council, Children and Young People's Policy Consortium, and Children's Services Committee National Steering Group.

Interviewees for this research outlined a range of positive impacts from the variety of structures. Structures such as the Welsh Future Generations Commissioner help to increase awareness and buy-in, as well as developing capacity. Consultative structures such as those developed in Ireland under BOBF help to formalise informal links, provide a rationale for collaboration, develop a shared understanding among those engaged, and convey information up and down.

However, structures can be weakened by lack of funding and/or personnel. Collaborative structures with representatives who do not have the power to make decisions are weaker. Structures which effectively hold Government to account need to be statutory, independent and take a long-term view. Some interviewees felt that there were too many structures and there was not a clear fit for all issues. It is important to consider the value and remit of each structure in order to have streamlined and effective structures (see DCEDIY, 2022).

5.3 Politicians and Parliament

Internationally, parliamentary involvement in embedding well-being approaches takes several forms.

First, many countries require reporting on the progress of well-being approaches to Parliament. This ranges from more passive to more active reporting. Passive reporting includes that in France, Italy and Sweden, where well-being indicators are reported to Parliament at the start of the budget process. In New Zealand, a more active reporting approach is taken. Under the Public Finance (Well-being) Amendment Act 2020, well-being priority areas must be set out in the Budget Policy Statement, and what has been achieved and what the Government intends to achieve under the Budget must form part of the Fiscal Strategy Report presented to Parliament on Budget Day (New Zealand Government, 2019a). The New Zealand Government is also legally required to report on progress towards child poverty reduction targets at Budget time.

Wales has a different type of active reporting, timed to co-incide with aspects of the electoral cycle. The Future Generations Commissioner must publish a report containing her assessment of the improvements public bodies should make to achieve the well-being goals, a year before an Assembly election. The Auditor General of Wales also must examine each public body on how they are meeting well-being commitments at least once in a five-year period, and must present a report on the examinations to the National Assembly for Wales before each Assembly election (Corbyn, 2018).

As noted earlier, in Scotland, the NPF must be reviewed every five years, in consultation with the public. Parliament must receive a report outlining the consultation, proposals for revision of the NPF, and details on how the consultation links to these revisions (via (Scottish Government, 2017b). The Finance Committee of the Scottish Parliament has also played an important role in budget scrutiny, for example pointing out that the work of different departments was not co-ordinated and not integrated around common objectives. Working in this way is important as part of an outcomes-focused well-being approach (Wallace, 2019).

This leads to the second way in which Parliaments are involved in well-being approaches – in consultation on devising plans to meet well-being objectives. In Scotland, Parliament must be consulted on the five-year review of the NPF. It must also be consulted on the preparation of a delivery plan on how to reach child poverty targets (Scottish Government, 2017a).

As noted earlier, individual politicians also play a key role in providing leadership to embed well-being processes. In Ireland, political negotiation led to the inclusion of a commitment on developing national well-being indicators in the Programme for Government. In Wales, the stance of the First Minister has led to a significant change in transport policy, linked to the provisions of Future Generations Act. This provides an example of how political leadership helps to make difficult trade-off decisions under a well-being approach. See Box 10.

Politicians also engage with well-being frameworks in their day-to-day work. For example, in the Scottish Parliament, between January 2007 and March 2018 there were 61 substantial discussions of the NPF. The use of the NPF in these debates suggests it is used as a mechanism to hold the Government to account, and that parliamentarians are interested in it (Wallace, 2019). In Wales, in 2018, the First Minister and the Permanent Secretary made several statements emphasising the importance of the Future Generations Act and its five ways of working (Auditor General for Wales, 2019). Stakeholders also suggested that there is strong cross-party support for the Well-being of Future Generations Act. All four of the main political parties draw upon the framework and Act in the Senedd. This support is considered very important for ensuring a well-being approach is maintained even with a change in Government.

Box 10: Trading-off road development and environmental protection

In 2019, it was decided not to extend the M4 Motorway in South Wales. The First Minister opposed the motorway extension, despite objections by business groups and some political parties. He stated that examination of the environmental and health consequences of the proposal showed that its economic benefits did not outweigh these. The First Minister used the Future Generations Act to explain the trade-offs and the ultimate decision.

In 2020 the Climate Change Minister announced the end of new road construction in Wales. Road construction that has already started is being completed, but there is a moratorium on new road building, until the case is made that public transport and active travel is not a better alternative. The sustainable transport hierarchy in Wales has active travel at the top, followed by public transport, with private motor vehicles at the bottom.

5.4 Legislation

Another way in which Parliaments are involved is passing legislation to introduce or strengthen well-being approaches. Introducing legislation is a mechanism that has been used in different countries to alter budget processes; require 'due regard' to certain issues, and require reporting, regular review, consultation, and sustainability of focus on an issue. It has also been used to alter accountability structures, an issue considered in Section 5.6.2.

To alter budget processes, New Zealand has introduced the Public Finance (Well-being) Amendment Act 2020 to help embed well-being objectives into the budgeting process. Under this Act, a number of processes outlined earlier in the report are required, such as the Budget Policy Statement stating the well-being objectives that guide the Government's Budget decisions; the Fiscal Strategy Report explaining how well-being objectives have guided the Government's Budget decisions; and an assessment of the extent to which the fiscal performance of the Government has been consistent with its strategy (New Zealand Government, 2019a).

The Government of New Zealand passed further pieces of legislation to support the well-being of children and young people, including the Child Poverty Act 2018. This requires the Government to have measures of child poverty and clear targets for improving them. The accompanying amendments to the Public Finance Act 1989 also require the Government to report on progress towards these targets at Budget time.

Scotland has legal requirements for well-being approaches to be taken into account in the work of public bodies. Provisions under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act require public authorities to take the NPF framework into account when carrying out functions (Scottish Government: Local Government and Communities Directorate, 2017).

In Wales, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires public bodies to set and publish objectives to illustrate how they will achieve the vision for Wales as set out in the well-being goals. They also have a duty to take action to ensure they meet the objectives they have set (Corbyn, 2018)(National Assembly of Wales 2018).

Interviewees noted that legislation is one tool of many, and there are mixed views about the extent to which it is needed. Its introduction and success depend on the context in which it is introduced. Some countries (e.g. New Zealand) have less complicated systems for passing legislation, and so find it relatively easy to introduce.

Interviewees suggested that a key reason for the introduction of legislation is to embed the well-being approach beyond government cycles. It is also used to change existing legal requirements. However, legislation can be repealed. It is also difficult to cover all elements of a well-being approach in legislation, e.g. Scottish legislation on the NPF has more requirements for local authorities than Government Departments; while Irish legislation requires Tusla to promote

cross-agency work but there is no legislation to require the agencies to engage with Tusla. Therefore legislation works best alongside broader system and culture change.

5.5 Budgets

The well-being approach influences broader Budget discussion, as well as actual Budget allocations. On the former, Governments which have adopted the well-being approach have made efforts to broaden budgetary decisions beyond GDP, by monitoring the suites of well-being indicators and using this data to inform and frame Budget discussions, and to complement standard economic and fiscal reporting (Durand and Exton, 2019). For example, in New Zealand, the LSF was used, combined with detailed business cases, to provide advice on capital expenditure projects in the 2013 budget. Proposed projects were evaluated to see how they would impact each dimension of the LSF (Au & Karacaoglu, 2015).

As noted earlier, the Fiscal Strategy Report in New Zealand must explain how well-being objectives have guided Budget decisions. Ministers need to show how budget bids contribute to the achievement of the national well-being objectives. New Zealand's Public Service Act 2020 puts a duty on all Government agencies all to complete a four year well-being report and identify sustainable well-being priorities and risks. In Ireland, some interviewees pointed to how the Department of Social Protection includes BOBF aims on child poverty in its Budget plans. And in Scotland, long-term resource spending reviews link to the NPF.

There is a benefit to considering a wider set of well-being inputs when making Budget policy decisions. Trade-offs are not eliminated, and political decision-making is still required on these, but the range of information drawn on is argued to help improve decision making, particularly longer-term.

On more micro budget allocations, it seems that it is difficult to get well-being and other outcomes-focused frameworks to alter Budget allocations, particularly existing ones. The Budget is still focused strongly on financial inputs and outputs in many countries. There is a risk that well-being approaches become a process not well connected to the Budgetary Framework. Legislation has been used in New Zealand to change this, e.g. to require Ministers to address child poverty as part of the Budget process; and to report on what the budget does for child poverty. New Zealand has also developed a range of tools and processes to help include well-being aims in specific budget allocations. An example of a tool to this end is CBAX, which allocates a financial value to a number of well-being issues, to help make cases for specific Budget allocations to promote well-being. Ministers need to show how budget bids contribute to the achievement of the national well-being objectives.

In terms of processes, in New Zealand the Treasury asks agencies to identify well-being impacts, and then quantify and monetise them. Initiatives seeking funding must outline value for money in terms of value to well-being, alignment with other priorities and delivery possibilities. This means that an initiative with low well-being value but higher delivery possibility could be prioritised over an initiative with high well-being value but low delivery potential. To support collaboration, agencies are requested to submit possible bids for funding to Treasury, these are then assessed and agencies suggesting bids targeting similar issues are requested to make full joint bids. New Zealand has a collaborative budget decision process, with communication and debate between Government departments as the Budget is developed. This makes it easier to develop joint funding proposals that allow a number of Government departments to work together to produce specific outcomes. Meanwhile, in Ireland the SWITCH model of the tax and transfer system was developed to help model the impact of proposed Budget (and other policy) changes across the income distribution and on different family types and socio-economic groups. The outcomes of this modelling feed into Budget decisions. And in Scotland, participatory budgeting is being developed at community level (Scottish Government, 2021). There is a commitment that at least 1 per cent of local Government budgets will be subject to participatory budgeting, which aims to give local communities more influence on how funding is spent in their locality (Wallace, 2019).

5.6 Monitoring and Accountability

Interviewees indicated that monitoring of well-being implementation can be weak, often focused on relatively small areas of spending, and at times monitored by line Government departments or by statistical bodies. However, it is difficult for line Government departments and statistical agencies to hold others to account, as they are less powerful. Strong central Government departments and agencies (e.g. Departments of Finance or Prime Minister, and agencies linked with these) can do so more effectively. Therefore some countries have involved more independent and powerful structures in monitoring and accountability. Some involve Government directly in this work, and some have made changes to accountability structures to assist the implementation of well-being approaches.

5.6.1 Independent Structures which Monitor and Hold Government to Account

Both Scotland and Wales have involved the Auditor General in monitoring the extent to which a well-being approach is embedded. Audit Scotland for example interacts with the NPF to ensure public bodies measure outcomes from policies, such as the 2021 report on progress on improving outcomes for young people through school education (Audit Scotland, 2021). The Chief Statistician in Scotland also has a role in preparing a report linking indicators to outcomes, and his office promotes the use of the NPF across Government.

In Wales, Audit Wales is required to assess the extent to which 44 public bodies have acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when setting their well-being objectives; and when taking steps to meet them. The Auditor General must present a report on his examinations to the National Assembly for Wales at least a year before each Assembly election. The report is debated by Parliamentary committees in the Senedd, and Government provides responses to the recommendations.

Clearly, the independent Future Generations Commissioner in Wales is a strong independent structure challenging and scrutinising Government policy. The Well-being for Future Generations Act also places requirements on public authorities to prepare well-being plans and assessments. Therefore legislation, and an independent Commissioner are important aspects of accountability and monitoring in Wales.

New Zealand does not have such structures, instead relying on legislative requirements, particularly those connected to Budgetary requirements, to ensure accountability. The strong link to Budget processes can be linked to the origins of their well-being framework in the Treasury.

5.6.2 Monitoring by Government

Governments are also involved in monitoring and accountability for well-being approaches. The Welsh Government, for example, has a statutory obligation to show contribution to well-being goals. It is required to report annually on collective progress towards achieving the seven national well-being goals (Auditor General for Wales, 2019). In Scotland, a new role now assigned to the Deputy First Minister is to oversee and coordinate the implementation of priorities set out in the NPF, which has helped increase accountability.

5.6.3 New Forms of Accountability

Over-arching outcomes approaches can be difficult to align with conventional systems of accountability, which are often focused on particular organisations and individuals. Therefore, some countries have changed accountability structures so that public servants can work more easily towards shared outcomes.

In New Zealand, the Government repealed and replaced the State Sector Act 1988 with the new Public Service Act 2020 (New Zealand Government, 2019a). Reforms included establishing inter-departmental executive boards, which align and co-ordinate strategic policy, planning, and budgeting activities for two or more departments which have responsibilities in a policy area. The Act also set up interdepartmental ventures, which can be established to deliver services or carry out regulatory functions relating to the responsibilities of two or more relevant departments (New Zealand Government, 2020). Under amendments to the State Services Act and Public Finance Act, public sector agencies are also supported to focus on collective outcomes rather than individual agency outcomes. For example, future joint ventures or boards can now administer their own appropriations and manage assets on behalf of the Crown. This enables multiple agencies to more effectively collaborate and be collectively responsible to Parliament for outcomes and the resources used to achieve them. And the Act outlined joint operational agreements, under which two or more chief executives or boards of public service agencies may enter into a joint operational agreement for their agencies to work together to achieve stated goals.

In Scotland, to support collective responsibility for performance and outcomes across the Scottish Government and public sector, the civil service was restructured in 2007 to have fewer Director Generals. This mirrored a smaller Cabinet. The Director Generals were given responsibility for a number of Directorates with coherent themes. For example, the Director-General for Education, Communities and Justice is responsible for the Learning Directorate and the Housing and Social Justice Directorate (among others). The areas of responsibility were broadened compared to the traditional civil service. There is a responsibility to make connections across portfolios held by other Director-Generals (Wallace, 2019). However, some interviewees suggested that the re-structuring has not gone far enough to encourage collaboration, as accountability still lies with individual directorates.

The Scottish Government also has a deliberate policy to hire open and collaborative leaders who will not just focus on their immediate area of responsibility but will work to a wider set of outcomes, thus supporting the well-being approach (Wallace 2019).

5.7 Reviewing Well-being Frameworks

A final aspect of embedding a well-being approach is review of the approach adopted. New Zealand, Scotland and Wales all review progress on the implementation of their national well-being frameworks after a number of years. Scotland and Wales both have legislative requirements on this, and require reports on the review to be made to their Parliaments. As outlined earlier, in Scotland, the outcomes under the NPF must be reviewed every five years, with extensive consultation, and reported on to Parliament (Scottish Government, 2019b). In Wales, the Future Generations Commissioner must publish a report containing an assessment of the improvements public bodies should make to achieve the well-being goals, a year before an Assembly election. The Auditor General of Wales must also examine each public body at least once in a five year period and present a report on the examinations to the National Assembly for Wales before each Assembly election.

Although it is not a legal requirement to do so, New Zealand has revised its LSF a number of times, and carried out consultation to do so. These revisions were developed in response to the emerging international and New Zealand literature, research, and dialogue with people across New Zealand. The latest work to refresh the LSF has highlighted the diversity of views in relation to well-being across New Zealand, with a new focus on institutions, and has established the He Ara Waiora framework alongside the LSF.

These reviews help identify issues which need to be improved in the well-being frameworks, as well as engaging a range of stakeholders in their re-design and implementation.

5.8 Reflections for Ireland

Consideration of the tools used to promote well-being approaches in New Zealand, Scotland and Wales, and for BOBF in Ireland, provides some reflections for the development of Ireland's national well-being approach.

An over-arching finding is that the approach taken to implement, monitor and review varies by country, and there is no 'one size fits all' approach taken. Instead the approaches are context dependent, with Budgeting processes key in New Zealand, and a legislative approach in Wales. Therefore Ireland will need to use processes adapted to the Irish context to embed a well-being approach into policymaking.

When it comes to annual monitoring and reporting of progress on well-being approaches, several countries use pre-existing or independent structures to do this. Some are newly established structures while others are pre-existing structures which expand their role. Given the role of Auditor Generals in monitoring implementation of well-being approaches in Scotland and Wales, there could be a value in investigating if this would be a useful approach in the Irish context also. One interviewee also noted that there is little monitoring of the extent and quality of collaborative work, but it may be useful to do so to highlight what is [and is not] happening.

A number of countries involve Parliament in monitoring and accountability for a well-being approach. This ranges from reporting to a Parliamentary committee, to debate on well-being progress by Parliament. Again this is a role which Ireland could consider as its well-being journey progresses.

Some countries have made changes to Budget processes to embed well-being, and NESC welcomes the changes outlined in the second Government Report on Well-being (Government of Ireland, 2022). Going forward, the approaches taken in e.g. New Zealand provide interesting examples that could be examined in the Irish context.

The three countries studied also review their well-being approaches after a number of years, indicating the value of reflecting on progress to date in a structured way, and building on feedback from stakeholders in order to refine the approach used. This allows well-being frameworks to be living, dynamic processes. In a circular fashion, the findings of the review can create and develop a new shared understanding and consensus, further refine goals/indicators/guidance; and strengthen processes for operationalising/review/monitoring and processes for integrating well-being approaches into existing work.

Some countries have legislative requirements for such a review, while in New Zealand it is a voluntary process. There would be value in considering a similar review process in the Irish context, and reflecting on the most appropriate mechanism to generate such a review.

Chapter 6

Step 4: Integrate and Deepen

6.1 Introduction

The fourth step of embedding a well-being approach is work which seeks to integrate and deepen the use of the well-being framework. This chapter will look at ways in which the countries studied have aimed to align well-being approaches with existing policies and structures; and mechanisms used to integrate national well-being objectives with work at local level. It will also outline how well-being approaches have aimed to address the position of some disadvantaged groups.

6.2 Silos, Layers and Fragmentation

Interviewees noted that while well-being approaches often aim to provide an overarching structure to counter siloes, fragmentation and multiple policies, if they are not truly whole-of-government, they risk becoming another siloed structure and policy, and layered on to the pre-existing siloed structures and policies. For example, it has been suggested that this is the case with Scotland's NPF and Ireland's BOBF. The recent annual report on BOBF recommends the minimisation of 'policy proliferation', with a focus on specific, strategic and sustainable policy actions, reducing fragmentation and burden for policymakers, providers and practitioners (DCEDIY, 2022).

Well-being initiatives from one Department can be that Department's attempt to improve co-ordination. Several overarching collaborative structures and policies were referred to by interviewees as being owned only by one Department. The data and evidence used also tends to be that produced by that organisation's 'family', rather than from further afield (a pattern also found internationally – see Punton, 2016). The risk of a siloed over-arching well-being approach is countered in New Zealand and Scotland by the fact that their well-being frameworks have been initiated by central government departments with the potential to reach out towards, and involve, all departments. The LSF in New Zealand was developed by the Treasury, and it is applied in the national Budget process, which reaches all departments. In Scotland the NPF has been strongly supported by the First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Finance, and national outcomes are decided across Government. In New Zealand, the child poverty and well-being units sit in the Prime Minister's Department. An advantage of Ireland's well-being framework is the fact it is also being led by a central department, the Department of an Taoiseach, and this can play a role in reducing the risk of siloes.

Funding and policy still often come from siloes however, which provides perverse incentives for over-arching structures and policies to realign with siloes. This reduces their impact and is particularly problematic for 'wicked problems'. However, as noted in Section 5.6.2, there are some attempts to go beyond this, such as the interdepartmental ventures and joint operational agreements in New Zealand. On the latter, although the agreement cannot alter the responsibilities of the agencies' chief executives for funding, assets, or liabilities, the chief executives of the organisations involved must take reasonable steps to provide sufficient resources to achieve the stated goals of the joint operational agreement (Public Service Commission, 2020).

Interviewees were of the view that the value of over-arching approaches/structures is not well understood. Ideally, using an outcomes approach means working backwards from common goals instead of forward from Departmental siloes. This is not easy to do, but the experience of setting national goals and requiring Departments to support their implementation (e.g. in New Zealand) helps to move the work of statutory bodies towards this aim.

6.3 National-local Links

A number of the countries studied require co-ordinated action on well-being, with government departments and local agencies both required to plan for how they will meet national well-being outcomes. This is the case in Wales, where public bodies at national and local level, including the Welsh Government, national environment and culture agencies, local authorities and local health boards, etc, must set and publish objectives to show how they will achieve the national well-being goals set for Wales. In addition, Public Service Boards (PSB) have been set up in each Welsh local authority area to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of that area. The membership of each PSB must include the local authority; the Local Health Board, the Welsh Fire and Rescue Authority and Natural Resources Wales. The Welsh Ministers, policing bodies, at least one body representing voluntary organisations, and any other body which carries out a public function may also be asked to join. Each PSB must assess the state of well-being in their area,

and prepare a Local Well-being Plan setting out objectives to maximise the PSB's contribution to achieving the well-being goals within its area, and the steps it will take to meet those objectives. All the organisations involved must look at how they meet the same national well-being goals, and must apply the five 'ways of working', so as well as common personnel working on national and local plans, there is a common set of objectives and processes to link their work.

CYPSCs in Ireland have similarities to the Welsh PSBs, as CYPSCs are county-level committees that bring together the main statutory, community and voluntary providers of services to children and young people. Their role is to enhance interagency co-operation and to realise the national outcomes set out in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. Interviewees were of the view that the CYPSCs work well and have potential to go further. However, they only apply to children's well-being, and there is currently no overarching national well-being structures for them or other public bodies to link through. Some consider that their work tends to be peripheral to mainstream budgets and so they are limited in their ability to lead to transformational change, and instead can end up addressing deficits in mainstream systems.

In Scotland, the Community Empowerment Act requires community planners to develop local outcome improvement plans for each local authority area, as well as locality improvement plans for smaller areas within the local authority. These plans develop actions to improve local outcomes, with the locality improvement plans focusing particularly on areas that are experiencing the poorest outcomes (Wallace, 2019). The legislation requires the local outcomes to be consistent with the national outcomes (those in the NPF), which provides a mechanism to link national and local outcomes. In addition, Scottish local child poverty action reports, which are jointly prepared on an annual basis by each local authority and their relevant Health Board, link to the national objectives and indicators on reducing child poverty (Scottish Government, undated).

Another model is that in New Zealand's Just Transition Unit, which shares and coordinates the work of transitioning New Zealand to a low emissions economy (New Zealand Government, undated-b). It has a Just Transition Partnership team to support regional partners.

A difficulty in Ireland is that multiple agencies work at local level, but often without having aligned geographic boundaries. The Government has noted, for example, that there are currently nine Community Health Organisations (CHOs), six Hospital Groups (HGs), and Children's Health Ireland, which do not align geographically nor overlap in terms of geographies, management, clinical oversight, or budgets for defined populations. This is argued to significantly hinder the delivery of integrated care (Government of Ireland, 2022a). Aligned geographic boundaries do not guarantee co-ordination, and may not fit with where service-users want to access services (Exworthy and Peckham, 1998). However, they can support co-ordination and reduce fragmentation, for example where the boundaries of social care authorities are aligned with those of the police, or of health authorities.

6.4 Disadvantaged Groups

The consultation held with Irish stakeholder groups on a well-being framework stressed the importance of equity, and how a well-being framework could support this (see NESC, 2021). It is important to measure the distribution of well-being, in addition to average measures of well-being, as reporting on the average only can obscure the contrast between the positions of those at either end of the spectrum. Furthermore, well-being frameworks and metrics that reflect diversity in society are more likely to garner public support (Weijers and Morrison, 2018).

A number of the countries looked at, have put mechanisms in place to support a focus on equity, some of which were described earlier. One mechanism is providing breakdowns of national macro-level indicators by e.g. gender, age, income, family type and ethnic background, as is the case in New Zealand and Scotland. A number of these breakdowns are also provided in the CSO's Well-being Information Hub for Ireland. This shows the extent to which the well-being of such groups differs from the average.

Another mechanism used is legislation which sets targets to reduce child poverty, and requires national and/or local bodies to outline their plans to reach these targets. New Zealand requires that the Budget Statement includes information on how the Budget will reduce child poverty, putting a political and media spotlight on actions in this regard. The Scottish legislation requires action in relation to some specific groups particularly affected by child poverty,

such as children in lone parent households, children in a household where a parent has a vulnerability, and children living in persistent poverty. The Scottish legislation is broad ranging and looks for action not just on direct income for households where children live in poverty, but also on education, housing, childcare, and physical and mental health. Similarly the New Zealand action plan to reduce child poverty has led to the Families Package, with a wide range of measures in it to tackle child poverty. These include the Best Start tax credit of \$60 per week for the year following the birth of every child, increased paid parental leave, a Working for Families tax credit, and increased Accommodation Supplement payments and Winter Energy payments (Bennett, 2018). Another mechanism used to protect the income of poor families is that, from 2020, schools which draw their pupils from lower income areas are able to choose to receive a \$150 payment per student, per year, if they agree not to ask parents and caregivers for voluntary donations (New Zealand Government, undated-a). Almost 90 per cent of eligible schools opted in to the scheme (Cooke, 2019).

To address the issue of an over-representation of Māori in the New Zealand criminal justice system, a new culturally sensitive co-designed initiative was established, in which policymakers and system administrators collaborate with community and tribal representatives to ensure a Māori and family centred approach to criminal justice. In the long run, this type of preventative approach is likely to be cost-effective (Mintrom, 2019).

Meanwhile, the Scottish Child Poverty Act requires consultation with individuals affected by poverty as well as their representative groups, as part of putting together a delivery plan for meeting child poverty targets.

These actions suggest that the use disaggregated data under well-being approaches can highlight the position of groups impacted by inequalities, and the broad consultation typical of well-being approaches can help to identify issues which need to be tackled to reduce inequalities. Similarly, the wide ranging and collaborative scope of policy actions suggested by well-being approaches can lead to changes in a range of policy areas that contribute to inequalities. However, both Scotland and New Zealand have used traditional tools – legislation, along with targets, and specific supports – to ensure that there is a long-term focus on improving the conditions of groups affected by inequalities.

6.5 Reflections for Ireland

A number of countries which are more advanced in their well-being journey than Ireland have been grappling with how this approach can co-ordinate a range of national work, and how it can co-ordinate national work with local. Some have also developed mechanisms to focus on the well-being of disadvantaged groups.

To co-ordinate policy work at national level, and between national and local levels, it seems best to have a small range of key national goals which all agencies can work towards. Ideally work on reaching these goals would be supported by a strong central department (or similar structure) which has the reach and authority to draw in the work of other statutory organisations. It may also be worth investigating how ways to jointly fund policy can be supported in the Irish context, including joint accountability for the use of such funding.

It may also be useful to investigate the extent to which it would be useful and possible to align geographical boundaries of statutory organisations, and if this would assist joint working between organisations.

For disadvantaged groups, the experience of the countries studied suggests that methods of measuring the position of these groups, engaging with them, and targeting supports to them are useful. This could be borne in mind as Irish policymakers develop well-being approaches further. Equity and sustainability are two cross-cutting themes of Ireland's well-being framework, and the possibilities which a well-being framework offers to address inequalities will also be the subject of future NESC research.

Chapter 7

Summary and conclusions

7.1 Summary

The research in this paper has shown that although the approaches to embed a well-being framework into policy vary, four common steps were identified when studying New Zealand, Scotland and Wales, and the approach to the well-being of children in Ireland. These four steps are summarised in Figure 7.

Step One: Build Shared Consensus and Understanding

In the three countries studied, and in Ireland, the first step of building shared consensus and understanding, led by strong leaders, began the process of adopting a well-being approach in policymaking. The impetus came from different factors, including meeting international commitments on e.g. sustainability and child development; and domestic factors such as a desire to approach policymaking differently, and to tackle inequalities and environmental degradation.

Step Two: Design a Workable Framework

Supported by dialogue and consultation to build awareness, the next step in adopting a well-being approach is designing a workable framework for this. The frameworks adopted include agreed national outcomes or objectives, a suite of indicators to measure progress towards these, and development of new evidence and data sources to provide more information relevant to policy decisions on the range of national objectives. The countries studied also develop support and guidance for policy makers and other stakeholders to adopt a well-being approach.

Step Three: Implant, Monitor and Review

Once this framework is in place, the next step is implanting, monitoring and reviewing it. Different processes are used to implant a well-being approach in day-to-day policymaking, and there is no 'one size fits all'. Some countries studied use legislation, while some use Budget processes. The variations can be linked to the starting point of the well-being approach, and the methods usually used in that country to embed a new policy approach. Some countries studied use structures, either existing or new, to increase awareness, provide guidance, and monitor progress on implementing the well-being approach. Some involve Parliament in monitoring. The three countries studied all review their well-being frameworks after a number of years. In some there is a legislative requirement to review the framework, and in others it is voluntary. The review processes are typically used to identify strengths and barriers in current approaches, and address the latter.

Step Four: Integrate and Deepen

As the countries studied seek to integrate the use of the well-being framework with existing policy, and to adopt an integrated approach towards well-being in both national and local level policymaking, a process of integrating and deepening the approach occurs. Some countries work towards an integrated approach by requiring both local and national bodies to work towards meeting national well-being objectives. Some have passed new legislation to enable organisations to work together towards shared well-being objectives. A number have adopted targeted approaches to address the well-being of particular groups, and consultation and dialogue with these groups is key.

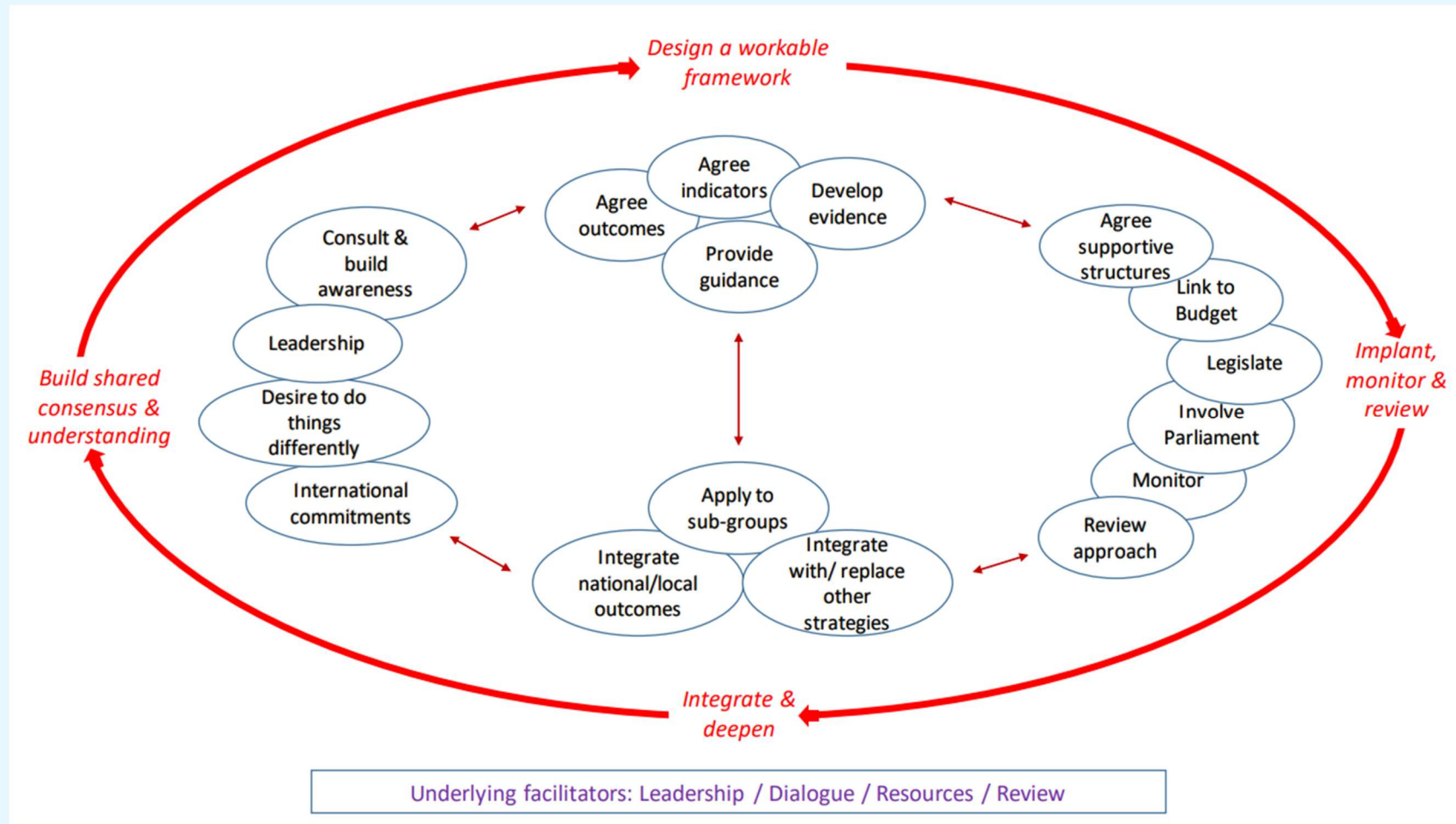
A core message is that there is no 'one size fits all'. In each of the examples, there is a clear sense that the framework is developed to suit a particular context, that an initial working framework is put in place, and that there is active monitoring and review, which includes experience within specific sectors, and that this learning is used to re-shape and develop the well-being framework over time.

A second core message is that the process of embedding a well-being approach takes time and involves learning from each step. For example, New Zealand first adopted the LSF in 2011, while Scotland's NPF dates back to 2007. While the introduction of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 in Wales expedited the embedding of a well-being approach, the origins of the approach date back to 1998 and the original legislation on devolution.

There is a cycle of learning in which the outcomes of review and reflection on progress to date helps develop a renewed shared understanding of and consensus on a well-being approach. In turn this leads to further refinement of the outcomes sought, the indicators to measure progress, and the supports needed for stakeholders to do this work. This then leads to strengthening of processes for implanting, monitoring and accountability, thus further embedding well-being approaches in policymaking.

In each of the four steps, leadership, dialogue with all stakeholders including the public, availability of resources to support adoption of the well-being framework, and processes of review and reflection were evident.

Figure 7: Embedding a Wellbeing Approach



7.2 Summary of Reflections for Ireland

With leadership from Government, Ireland began work on a well-being framework in 2020, and since then has progressed Building shared consensus and understanding, and Designing a workable well-being framework, with national outcomes and indicators. The Government's recent report (Government of Ireland, 2022) outlines a number of useful commitments to embed a well-being approach in policymaking in the immediate and medium-term. Therefore the reflections outlined in the following Sections of this NESC report are most relevant for the stages of Implanting, Monitoring and Review, and Integrating and Deepening; and for ensuring the underlying facilitators to embed a well-being approach continue in place. The reflections are aimed at longer-term discussions and decisions on embedding well-being in Ireland. They are not intended to be directive, but rather to provide a suite of options to embed the approach in Ireland.

7.2.1 Consultation and Dialogue

When considering the underlying facilitators to embed a well-being approach, on-going consultation and dialogue are key elements. As noted earlier, they are not only relevant to the initial phases of establishing a well-being framework (and Ireland has already utilised consultation during this phase). Commitment and resources to support ongoing consultation and dialogue would be useful, for example, a commitment to maintain on-going consultation structures with stakeholders including local communities and those using services, and to regularly review well-being visions and outcomes with stakeholders and the public.

As well as engaging with stakeholders and local communities, some interviewees also suggested that in future iterations of a well-being approach, it would be useful to involve the private sector in the process of embedding this approach. This could help ensure that the private sector and businesses have well-being and sustainability at their core and are considering long term impacts.

7.2.2 Further Development and Communication of Evidence

As the well-being framework begins to be used in Irish policymaking, the value of having data and evidence on the 11 dimensions of the framework will increase. While a range of useful indicators has already been assembled in the CSO's Well-being Hub, the international experience points to the value for Ireland of continuing to develop relevant macro-indicators on well-being for areas where adequately informative indicators do not yet exist. Some data gaps which were highlighted in the first Government report on well-being include environmental indicators, housing costs, and information on civic engagement and cultural activity. NESC (2021) also noted that data was needed on equality of access to services, amenities & opportunities. It is helpful that the CSO has committed to prioritising the collection of more well-being data over time (Government of Ireland, 2021).

It would also be useful to promote the value of different types of evidence and data in the Irish context, e.g. those based on qualitative data, which are a particularly useful input when a policy (such as a well-being focused policy) aims to reflect the lived experience of the population. It is also important to ensure that indicators are linked to national outcomes in order to measure progress.

Communication of data is important as well, as the experience in the countries studied showed that those outside the organisational sector which produced the data often are not aware of it, which limits its use. Data (both macro- and micro-indicators) needs to be easy to access, e.g. in one location on-line. Standard breakdowns of that data, e.g. the position of high income and low income groups, the position of those in different local authority areas, are also important to help it be used. While some such breakdowns are already available in the CSO's well-being hub, not all are easily accessible. The CSO commitment to incorporating official data not currently held by the CSO, for future iterations of the dashboard, is welcome in this regard. Key data also needs to be communicated right through the various stages of Budget decision-making, so that it is available to influence decision-making on trade-offs at a high level.

It would be useful to continue to develop methods to assess how policies have contributed to outcomes,²⁰ particularly in policy areas (e.g. education) where multiple factors influence the outcome. There may be learning from approaches used in other countries, e.g. the five ways of working in Wales. Evaluation and other analysis can play an important role in assessing the contribution of policy to the advancement of outcomes, they also move beyond trend measurement and answer important questions as to why trend might move in a certain direction, and if disadvantaged groups are sufficiently targeted. Evaluations should be outcome focussed and when necessary use mixed methods, including qualitative and social analysis.

Finally, Wales has developed targets for outcomes, and New Zealand has well-being objectives to promote action in terms of Budget policy priorities. Both of these approaches move beyond well-being measurement to a more active focus on well-being in policy. These could be considered in Ireland as the national well-being approach becomes more embedded.

7.2.3 Tools used to Embed a Well-being Framework into Policymaking & Implementation

As noted above, there is no ‘one size fits all’ when it comes to embedding a well-being approach, and context is important. Nonetheless, there are some useful reflections from the approaches used in other countries for the longer-term development of Ireland’s well-being initiative.

First, given the role of Auditor Generals in monitoring implementation of well-being approaches in Scotland and Wales, in future there could be a value in investigating if this would be a useful approach in the Irish context. It could also be useful to look at whether or not an integrated structure might help to provide a range of supports – e.g. communication, guidance and monitoring.

Some countries have made changes to Budget processes to embed well-being, and NESC welcomes the changes outlined in the second Government Report on a Well-being Framework [Government of Ireland, 2022]. Going forward, the approaches taken in e.g. New Zealand provide interesting examples that could be examined in the Irish context.

In the longer-term, as Ireland’s well-being initiative beds down, there may be a value in assessing whether legislative support would aid the embedding of a well-being approach in the Irish context.

A number of countries involve Parliament in monitoring and accountability for a well-being approach. This ranges from reporting to a Parliamentary committee, to debate on well-being progress by Parliament. Again this is a role which Ireland could consider as its well-being journey progresses.

The three countries studied also review their well-being approaches after a number of years, indicating the value of reflecting on progress to date in a structured way, and building on the feedback from stakeholders in order to refine the approach used. In some countries the review is triggered by legislation, while in others it is voluntary. There would be value in considering a review process in the Irish context, and reflecting on the most appropriate mechanism to generate such a review.

Interviewees also stressed the importance of time and resources to allow analysis of well-being information, and to create relationships to support cross-organisation work. Practical tailored guidance can help civil servants and others to carry out this type of work. A number of guidance resources are currently provided by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. Consideration of how these resources (time, guidance, collaborative working relationships) can continue to be developed may be useful for the Irish well-being approach. There may also be a role for the Irish Government Economic Evaluation Service (IGEES) in providing analytical capacity to embed the approach, as noted in the Government’s First Report on a Well-being Framework. Finally, it is important to ensure that there is a pipeline of staff skilled in this type of work to replace those who move on.

²⁰ There are already a range of methods in use for this in Ireland, e.g. performance budgeting.

7.2.4 Aligning Work Across Geographical Boundaries, and Addressing the Needs of Disadvantaged Groups

A number of countries which are more advanced in their well-being journey than Ireland have been grappling with how this approach can co-ordinate a range of national work, and how it can co-ordinate national work with local. The approach often adopted is having a small range of key national goals which all agencies work towards. Mechanisms to support joint accountability for the use of funding have also been developed, and it may be worth investigating how this can be supported in the Irish context.

It may also be helpful to investigate the extent to which it would be useful and possible to align geographical boundaries of statutory organisations in Ireland (as is currently being done with Regional Health Areas under Sláintecare), and to assess if this would assist joint working between organisations.

For disadvantaged groups, the experience of the countries studied suggests that methods of measuring the position of these groups, engaging with them, and targeting supports to them are useful. This could be borne in mind as Irish policymakers develop well-being approaches further. Equity and sustainability are two cross-cutting themes of Ireland's well-being framework, and the possibilities which a well-being framework offers to address inequalities will also be the subject of future NESC research.

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Publications

Council Reports					
No.	Title	Year	No.	Title	Year
1	Report on the Economy in 1973 and the Prospects for 1974	1974	14.	Population Projects 1971-86: The Implications for Social Planning—Dwelling Needs	1976
2	Comments on Capital Taxation Proposals	1974	15.	The Taxation of Farming Profits	1976
3	The Economy in 1974 and Outlook for 1975	1974	16.	Some Aspects of Finance for Owner-Occupied Housing	1976
4	Regional Policy in Ireland: A Review	1975	17.	Statistics for Social Policy	1976
5	Population and Employment Projections: 1971-86	1975	18.	Population Projections 1973-86: The Implications for Education	1976
6	Comments on the OECD Report on Manpower Policy in Ireland	1975	19.	Rural Areas: Social Planning Problems	1976
7.	Jobs and Living Standards: Projects and Implications	1975	20.	The Future of Public Expenditure	1976
8.	An Approach to Social Policy	1975	21.	Report on Public Expenditure	1976
9.	Report on Inflation	1975	22.	Institutional Arrangements for Regional Economic Development	1976
10.	Causes and Effects of Inflation in Ireland	1975	23.	Report on Housing Subsidies	1976
11.	Income Distribution: A Preliminary Report	1975	24.	A Comparative Study of Output, Value-Added and Growth in Irish and Dutch Agriculture	1976
12.	Education Expenditure in Ireland	1976	25.	Towards a Social Report	1977
13.	Economy in 1975 and Prospects for 1976	1975	26	Prelude to Planning	1976

27	New Farms Operators, 1973 to 1975	1977	42	Report on Policies for Agricultural and Rural Development	1978
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29	Some Major Issues in Health Policy	1977	44	Comments on Development: Full Employment	1978
30	Personal Incomes by County in 1973	1977	45	Urbanisation and Regional Development in Ireland	1979
31	The Potential for Growth in Irish Tax Revenues	1977	46	Irish Forestry Policy	1979
32	The Work of the NESC 1974 - 1976	1977	47	Alternative Strategies for Family Support Income	1980
33	Comments on Economic and Social Development; 1976 - 1980	1977	48	Transport Policy	1980
34	Alternative Growth Rates in Irish Agriculture	1977	49	Enterprises in the Public Sector	1980
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37	Integrated Approaches to Personal Income Taxes and Transfers	1978	52	Tourism Policy	1980
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70	Economic and Social Policy 1982: Aims and Recommendations	1983	85	Redistribution Through State Social Expenditure in the Republic of Ireland, 1973 - 1980	1988
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2	Understanding PISA and What it Tells us About Educational Standards in Ireland	2012	16	Multistakeholder Agreements in Climate Governance and Energy Transition: The Dutch Energy Agreement	2018
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7	Greening the Economy: Challenges and Possibilities for Integrating Sustainability into Core Government Policy	2013	21	Shared Island Consultation: Climate and Biodiversity Challenges and Opportunities	2021
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An Chomhairle Náisiúnta Eacnamaíoch agus Shóisialta
National Economic & Social Council

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Parnell Square +353.1.814.6300
Dublin 1 info@nesc.ie
D01 E7C1 nesc.ie