

Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for
Economy and Gaelic
Leas Phrìomh Mhinistear agus Rùnaire a' Chaibineit
airson Eaconamaidh agus Gàidhlig
Kate Forbes MSP
Ceit Fhoirbheis BPA



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
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Clare Haughey MSP

Convener
Health, Social Care and Sport Committee

By email: hscs.committee@parliament.scot

14th January 2025

Dear Clare,

**SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND SPORT
COMMITTEE REPORT ON THE NATIONAL PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK:
PROPOSED NATIONAL OUTCOMES**

Thank you to the Committee for your Report on the National Performance Framework:
Proposed National Outcomes.

I have carefully considered the points raised by the Committee and a detailed response is
set out in the annex to this letter.

May I take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of the Committee during the statutory
review of the National Outcomes which form part of the National Performance Framework
(NPF). As I said in the Chamber, during the debate on 8 January, I am encouraged by the
range of feedback and views, because this demonstrates the NPF's value as a means for all
of Scotland's actors and agencies to debate and to challenge the collective progress that we
are making as a nation.

I am pleased that the inquiry has concluded that "the NPF remains an important agreed
vision of the type of place Scotland should aspire to be" and I welcome the many
recommendations from Committees focused on action and improvement.

As I said in the Chamber, we now have a great opportunity to rethink and reform the National
Performance Framework. By taking the time to do this properly, I hope we can support the
development and implementation of a stronger, more strategic and impactful framework that
more accurately reflects Scotland's context and circumstances. The various Committee
reports, including your own, provide an extremely useful contribution to the evidence base
on which to build this change.

I agree with you that the Scottish Government must provide strong leadership for the NPF. However, we will not be able to deliver this change on our own. Therefore, an immediate priority will be to engage stakeholders and partners, including the NPF Expert Advisory Group, to provide advice on the scale and scope of reform.

I commit to keeping Parliament updated as we progress this work and I look forward to the committee's continued interest and input.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kate Forbes', written in a cursive style.

KATE FORBES

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND SPORT COMMITTEE REPORT ON THE NATIONAL PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK: PROPOSED NATIONAL OUTCOMES

| HSCSC recommendation | Scottish Government response |
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| Proposed new Care National Outcome | |
| While acknowledging generally widespread support for the proposed new National Outcome on Care, the Committee highlights stakeholder concerns around implementation and how progress will be defined and measured. | We have noted this concern from stakeholders and will consider it as part of our consultation plans for improved implementation, guidance and the development of National Indicators |
| The Committee calls on the Scottish Government to respond to these concerns by providing further clarification as to the precise scope of "care" covered by the National Outcome, by setting out what it will do to establish a baseline of need, including unmet need, against which progress can be measured. | We have noted this recommendation and will consider it within the definition and scope of the National Outcomes in our next steps as we take the time to develop an improved and more impactful NPF. Stakeholders have told us that what is measured matters. The National indicator set will be reviewed in line with the reform approach. |
| The Committee further calls on the Scottish Government to outline the steps it will take to ensure such progress is suitably monitored and to take further action in the event that progress is being made too slowly or is not being made at all. | We will consider this as part of our plans for improved implementation and guidance. We are committed to a collaborative and participative approach to implementation planning and consultation which will require collective action across local and national government, the third sector, and business. |
| Proposed updated Health National Outcome | |
| As with recent pre-budget scrutiny, the Committee has again heard extensive evidence of the significant challenges associated with prioritising preventative policy measures and spending in health and social care at a time when budgets are significantly constrained and there is ongoing pressure to reduce immediate backlogs in care. The Committee therefore calls on the Scottish Government, in responding to this report, to set out what actions it will take to ensure the revised indicators attached to the updated Health Outcome and to the new Care | We commit to developing the outcomes and indicators in a participatory way, with stakeholders and will consider indicator development within our approach to implementation planning and consultation as part of our commitment to develop a stronger and more impactful NPF. |

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| <p>Outcome are suitably calibrated to capture the full contribution of preventative policy action and spending in driving progress towards meeting those Outcomes.</p> | |
| <p>Indicators and measuring success</p> | |
| <p>The Committee has heard evidence that the effectiveness of the National Performance Framework as a strategic policy planning tool hinges on the extent to which the National Indicators are suitably formulated to give a clear and accurate view of progress towards meeting the National Outcomes. In relation to the existing National Indicators for health and care, there is significant doubt as to whether this is the case.</p> | <p>We commit to developing the outcomes and indicators in a participatory way, with stakeholders and will consider indicator development within our approach to implementation planning and consultation as part of our commitment to develop a stronger and more impactful NPF.</p> |
| <p>The Committee therefore concludes that the current methodology for measuring performance against the National Outcome on health using the nine health-related National Indicators needs to be overhauled. The Committee agrees with stakeholders that there should be demonstrable impact of what is working and what is not in relation to achieving the National Outcomes. The Committee calls on the Scottish Government to link the impact of Scottish Government policies to performance as measured in the NPF. The Committee also recommends that Government policies should set out how they will contribute to the delivery of specific NPF outcomes and their intended impact on NPF outcomes.</p> | <p>We commit to developing and achieving greater alignment of the outcomes and indicators in a participatory way, with stakeholders and will consider this within our plans for improved implementation planning and consultation as part of our commitment to develop a stronger and more impactful NPF.</p> |
| <p>By extension, to support effective scrutiny, the Committee further believes that publicly accountable organisations should be required to demonstrate how their activities contribute to achieving the National Outcomes.</p> | <p>We note this aim and will consider this as part of our plans for improved implementation and guidance. We are committed to a collaborative and participative approach to implementation planning and consultation which will require collective action across local and national government, the third sector, and business.</p> <p>We note that the Finance and Public Administration Committee have made a similar recommendation regarding greater and wider accountability in their report on the review of National Outcomes. The NPF is a framework for all of Scotland, and, whilst Government must lead, we all have a role to play in helping achieve the National Outcomes.</p> |

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| Cross-cutting policy | |
| Throughout Session 6 , the Committee has repeatedly heard evidence of the high level of interdependence between health and social care and many other areas of Government policy and the cross-cutting nature of the most impactful actions to address issues in health and social care, many of which lie outside the health and social care portfolio. | We have noted this evidence and agree that the most impactful actions to address health and social care issues often have a cross-cutting nature. |
| The Committee shares stakeholder concerns around the siloed nature of the NPF and the need for a more holistic approach towards the National Outcomes that establishes clearer links between different portfolios to deliver suitably multi-faceted solutions to the cross-cutting policy issues we currently face. | We have noted this recommendation and will consider it as part of our whole system approach to looking again at the NPF and developing an improved and more impactful framework. |
| The Committee therefore calls on the Scottish Government to set out how it will deliver improved coordination of policy action across the proposed National Outcomes to enable the NPF to become a suitable framework for the multi-faceted, holistic solutions that the health and social care sector needs. | We have noted this recommendation and will consider it as part of our whole system approach to looking again at the NPF and developing an improved and more impactful framework. |
| Accountability | |
| The Committee agrees with stakeholders that clear accountability and strong strategic leadership are prerequisites for driving forward progress in delivering the National Outcomes. In this context, the Committee is concerned that, as currently formulated, the NPF and National Outcomes fail to provide the strategic direction, linked to actionable and well-resourced policies, necessary for achieving the Scottish Government's stated policy ambitions. It is equally concerned that, as a framework for policy development, the NPF and National Outcomes are not suitably recognised or prioritised by all | We have noted these recommendations and will consider them within our approach to implementation planning and consultation as part of our commitment to develop a stronger and more impactful NPF. We acknowledge that Government has a visible leadership role to play in ensuring the NPF is adopted across Scotland and should ensure this is properly reflected in strategy and policy. |

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| <p>organisations responsible for delivering health and social care.</p> | |
| <p>The Committee therefore calls on the Scottish Government to set out the actions Scottish Ministers will take to ensure officials and organisations responsible for delivering health and social care (and indeed all public services) recognise the strategic importance of the NPF and are consistently held to account for their contribution towards delivering progress on the National Outcomes.</p> | <p>We have noted these recommendations and will consider them within our approach to implementation planning and consultation as part of our commitment to develop a stronger and more impactful NPF. We acknowledge that Government has a visible leadership role to play in ensuring the NPF is adopted across Scotland and should ensure this is properly reflected in strategy and policy.</p> |
| <p>Funding and budgets</p> | |
| <p>The Committee is of the view that there needs to be a much clearer and more transparent link between specific budget decisions and their contribution towards meeting National Outcomes within the NPF. It therefore calls on the Scottish Government to make a commitment that this will be set out in future budget documentation to enable effective scrutiny.</p> | <p>The NPF supports decision-making by bringing together data and reporting systematically and objectively across a range of economic, social and environmental indicators. We noted Carnegie UK's oral evidence to FPAC on 17 September that "... aligning budgets with national outcomes is not straightforward, and lots of countries that are trying to do that are wrestling with it." We agree that there is scope to achieve better alignment of budget decisions with the NPF and this will be considered within the scope of our development of a stronger and more impactful framework.</p> |
| <p>The Committee is aware that the Finance and Public Administration Committee has previously recommended, as part of its previous pre-budget and budget scrutiny and previous scrutiny of the NPF, that the Scottish Government should consider ways of linking the NPF more closely to budget planning. The Committee supports this view and asks the Scottish Government to set out what actions it is taking to ensure budget planning is taking proper account of the National Outcomes set out in the NPF.</p> | <p>The NPF supports decision-making by bringing together data and reporting systematically and objectively across a range of economic, social and environmental indicators. We noted Carnegie UK's oral evidence to FPAC on 17 September that "... aligning budgets with national outcomes is not straightforward, and lots of countries that are trying to do that are wrestling with it." We agree that there is scope to achieve better alignment of budget decisions with the NPF and this will be considered within the scope of our development of a stronger and more impactful framework.</p> |
| <p>The Committee further calls on the Scottish Government to set out what steps it will take to repackage and re-present existing data in a way that demonstrates, clearly and transparently,</p> | <p>We note the theme of how the National Outcomes link to budget setting was raised across the enquiry, and in particular note support for spending decisions to be justified on the basis of National Outcomes. We are considering this feedback carefully and it will help inform a more impactful NPF.</p> |

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| <p>how its spending plans align with the National Outcomes.</p> | |
| <p>The Committee also requests that, at any point when the Scottish Government is required to make adjustments to existing spending plans, it provides an accompanying assessment of the potential impact of such decisions on the National Outcomes.</p> | <p>We have noted this recommendation and will consider this within the scope of our development of a stronger and more impactful framework.</p> |
| <p>Public engagement</p> | |
| <p>While acknowledging the public engagement that has informed the current review of the National Outcomes, the Committee has heard evidence that further work may be required to ensure that the National Outcomes are properly aligned with the values and priorities of the public, including those who may be harder to reach. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government considers further participative and deliberative approaches that will further widen the pool of participants, improve understanding and expectations of the process and outcomes and ensure people are properly supported to be able to engage.</p> | <p>We note this feedback on public engagement and confirm we are committed to a collaborative and participative approach in developing an improved and more impactful NPF. We will consider how we can improve our participative and deliberative approaches, including advice from the NPF Expert Advisory Group.</p> |
| <p>Conclusion</p> | |
| <p>Overall, evidence submitted to the Committee indicates there is a general consensus that the proposed additions and revisions to the National Outcomes, in particular the new proposed Care Outcome and the revised Health Outcome, are welcome and represent a policy ambition that is beyond question.</p> | <p>We welcome this view of the Committee.</p> |
| <p>However, the Committee has heard significant concerns about how the policy ambition expressed by the National Outcomes is translated into policy action, how progress is measured and monitored, and the overall framework for accountability.</p> | <p>We have noted these concerns and are committed to taking this opportunity to rethink and reform the National Performance Framework, to support the development and implementation of a stronger, more strategic and impactful framework for Scotland and to better 'match ambition with action'.</p> |

The Committee is of the view that, for the NPF and National Outcomes to be valuable and effective, there needs to be:

- Clear and transparent alignment with all Scottish Government policy and budget decisions;
- Improved recognition of the intersectionality of individual National Outcomes across different policy portfolios, and the need to ensure an integrated whole-system approach towards making progress;
- Improved mechanisms for holding policy-makers properly accountable for their contribution towards meeting the National Outcomes;
- Improved monitoring and measurement of performance against the National Outcomes in a way that allows progress or the lack thereof to be clearly and immediately understood;
- Improved mechanisms for public engagement to help inform the ongoing development and improvement of the NPF and the National Outcomes.

We have noted these recommendations and will consider these fully, with our partners, as we take the time to develop a stronger and more impactful National Performance Framework, of which the National Outcomes are part.