

## Local Government and Communities Committee

### Consultation of the Scottish Parliament on the Scottish Government's Revised National Outcomes

#### Submission from Falkirk Council

#### 1. What do you think about the changes to the National Outcomes?

We welcome the new outcomes on human rights, fair work, poverty & culture and the increased influence of the child's voice and perspective within the revised children's outcome. This consultation only includes 3 national outcomes so it would have been helpful to have been consulted on all outcomes.

There appears to be duplication between themes and more thought needs to be given to the interdependencies between outcomes.

Councils and Community Planning Partnerships are focused on the delivery of local priorities and outcomes set out in Local Outcomes Improvement Plans. Although some degree of commonality exists across Scotland each CPP area has its own way of defining and measuring the attainment of local priorities and outcomes. This means that diversity exists between national and local regimes.

It is also important to note as is increasingly becoming evident within Community Planning that some outcomes aren't easy to measure and more thought and development needs to happen to achieve a better balance between quantitative and qualitative data and information, as well as people's lived experiences.

The following forms a number of more detailed:

The heading for the second column in Annex 8 that lists the Proposed National Outcomes is headed 'Draft National Indicators', but this is misleading as this column does not list actual indicators, but merely subject areas for indicators. This means there is very little to comment on. But it is not clear that *national* indicators are actually required, as currently a combination of local and national indicators are used in Community Planning Partnerships to evidence progress with the National Outcomes. Even if there was agreement that these general subject areas listed are appropriate subject areas for national indicators, the most crucial issue is whether there are performance indicators currently available, or that could be collected in future that would provide measurable evidence of performance in these subject areas.

For example, however desirable the National Outcome 'We grow up loved, safe and respected, so that we can fulfil our full potential' is, it is not actually possible to evidence the extent to which people in communities are loved, or to reach agreement on how to define and measure either the extent or the quality of 'being loved', or of the concepts of 'potential' or 'full potential'. In this case it would not be

possible to develop indicators that were SMART – i.e. specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timescaled. While it might be possible to come up with proxy indicators for such areas it would be unlikely that these could be developed in a consistent way nationally. Even if local operational service areas could develop specific local ‘proxy’ indicators, this would not deliver a consistent national evidence base. So it really matters that actual national Indicators are proposed to enable their conceptual value, plausibility and collectability to be assessed. Merely listing subject areas for indicators is not meaningful or pragmatic. Similar issues arise with ‘respect’ in this National Outcome.

For the reasons noted above, it is very difficult to comment on the proposed subject areas listed in the ‘Draft national Indicators’, given that the lists provided for each Proposed National Outcome’ are not actually indicators but merely subject areas for which indicators would have to be proposed or developed. Of course, if partnerships can use a combination of local and national indicators to evidence progress there isn’t a problem so only brief observations can be made about the draft listing provided in Annex 8 in the time available.

***‘We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe’***

This seems like an aspiration that would not be easy to evidence, as it is difficult to measure a social issue such as ‘empowerment’, or ‘feeling empowered’, or ‘resilience’ or ‘feeling resilient’ without carrying out social surveys which are time consuming, costly and highly subjective in the responses that might be captured. Some local proxy indicators are available relating to ‘safety’ and ‘feeling safe’, but ‘safety’ is a very broad area that has many different elements and aspects. So there are different meanings and challenges around its assessment and management and the evidence for this and its associated concept of ‘risk’. So a range of very different indicators could be available or developed locally but this would not provide a national indicator providing consistent comparable national data if that is what is being proposed in this consultation. Other sources of data / information could also assist in assessing the progress of this outcome, including tool such as the Place Standard and indicators from Realigning Children’s Services.

***‘We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally’***

As above, it is difficult to define ‘opportunities’ which may be individual person based or relate to groups or whole communities. How would we evidence ‘opportunity’ nationally without defining opportunities in specific areas of service, or at different levels in communities? And how would ‘power’ be defined? Again, there are many different elements and levels of power. The meaning and definition of ‘more equally’ is similarly problematic. These concepts of ‘opportunities’ and ‘power’ are a matter of philosophical debate and their meanings are often contested. So again, proposed national indicators or proxies would require careful definition in order to be assessed and evaluated in terms of the conceptual value, plausibility and collectability of the indicator, as noted above. If *national* indicators are to be instituted, then listing a subject area is no substitute for listing specific indicators that can be assessed and commented upon by stakeholders. We wonder whether children’s and human rights should be referenced within this outcome. Additional data / information which

measures derived from Shanarri and the cost of the school day could also assist in assessing the progress of this outcome.

### **We grow up loved, safe and respected, so that we realise our full potential**

Wellbeing for children and young people is defined within the Children and Young People (Scotland) and is influenced by Shanarri methodology. Is the same definition of wellbeing used within this outcome? There is also a need to reference positive attachments and support. Happiness is very subjective by its very nature. Will the outcome use SDQ scores as per new health and wellbeing census and any other measures re wellbeing? The only PoPP referenced is that involving a healthy start. Other PoPP activity on brain and emotional development, parenting, the health visiting pathway, breastfeeding and speech and language should also be considered.

The consultative report does suggest that those who were asked said that they wanted the language of the National outcomes to be simpler and more accessible. However there appears to be little change in the language or terminology used i.e. the continued use of words such as inclusive, empowered and resilient. The outcomes can therefore still remain slightly ambiguous. When considering links to the national indicators this could become a bit confusing and not in line with what was recommended from those consulted with. Some of the national indicators do not seem obviously measurable such as resilience of children and young people.

### **2. What do you think of any new Outcomes?**

Some of the outcomes present challenges around the definitions and availability of evidence that would demonstrate whether or not progress was being made on the outcome by any of the stakeholders involved. Some local 'proxy' evidence might be collated but this would not provide a consistent or comparable national evidence base. This challenge is compounded if only national indicators are being proposed, since no examples of such indicators have been proposed in the consultation, as noted above. Without this it is not really possible to assess how effective the National Outcomes are without knowing whether there is reliable evidence to demonstrate progress with the outcomes. Some of the outcomes would be difficult to develop an evidence base of measurable data by which progress on the outcome could be assessed. This would be even more difficult if local evidence or data sources could not be used, if only as proxies.

As regards Housing related outcomes it is helpful to see the clear alignments with the recently published priorities set out by the Scottish Housing Regulator in its discussion on the future regulation of Social Housing in Scotland. The regulatory priorities put up for discussion by the Housing Regulator included a focus on Tenant and Resident Safety and Homelessness. These can clearly be linked and measured against the national outcomes detailed above.

### **3. What do you think about the Scottish Government's consultation on these changes?**

There is clear evidence that the consultative methodologies used have looked to be as inclusive as possible. It is difficult to see the linkage between the views of those consulted with and the wording used within outcomes and indicators.

The lack of clarity about the status of the proposed 'National Indicators' is not helpful. Community Planning partnerships are currently using a range of local and national indicators to evidence progress on the existing national outcomes. It would not be helpful or pragmatic to propose only a set of national indicators. But the absence of specific national indicators in Annex 8 of the consultation document means that no real assessment can be made of either the National Outcomes or the 'Draft National Indicators'. The utility of the national outcomes is partly dependent on the ability to provide evidence of whether progress is being made with the outcome. This can only be done if a list of indicators is provided that can be assessed in terms of their ability to evidence progress. If progress cannot be evidenced, then the outcomes are merely aspirations and the success of the national outcomes could not be effectively evaluated.