

Appendix 3 – NILGA Comments on Outcomes and Indicators

A. Comments on Outcomes

Outcome 1: We prosper through a strong, competitive, regionally balanced economy

NILGA strongly supports the inclusion of this outcome, but would highlight the impact UK policy and legislation can have in this area.

For example, evidence from the Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership engagement with NI employers shows that UK immigration regulations vis-a-vis employment of non-EU nationals is undermining Northern Ireland's competitiveness. Tier 2 regulations inhibit Northern Ireland employers from attracting and retaining the workforce they need. Additionally, sector skills councils have highlighted the need for diverse staff with linguistic and cultural skills for successful expansion overseas.

Outcome 2: We live and work sustainably – protecting the environment

NILGA would wish to see this outcome strengthened by inserting the words 'and enhancing', i.e. "We live and work sustainably – protecting **and enhancing** the environment".

NILGA would be keen to see a further two bullet points under the 'Role of the Executive' heading, i.e.:

- Promoting a Circular Economy
- Ensuring compliance with statutory obligations

Outcome 3: We have a more equal society

NILGA strongly supports inclusion of this outcome but would highlight that Northern Ireland needs more than equality monitoring, as attention needs to be on identifying where positive action is needed at national level as well as within organisations.

Outcome 4: We enjoy long healthy lives

NILGA strongly supports this outcome, and notes in particular the identified role of the Executive in providing children with the best start in life, supporting parents in their role. NILGA members are keen to see some thought given as to how the end of life experience is to be improved e.g. through improved hospice provision.

We would highlight that the UK Immigration Act will have an impact on the ability of Northern Ireland to achieve this outcome, given the changes in support for children of refused asylum seekers.

Outcome 5: We are an innovative, creative society, where people can fulfil their potential

NILGA welcomes outcome 5 and notes the link between the creation of a confident and innovative workforce/community, and the development of a cultural and societal 'permission to make mistakes'. There is a role for the Executive, for government departments and for councils to encourage the community and the workforce to be bold, less risk averse, and to encourage the media to be supportive of the drive to try new things.

NILGA would be keen to see a further bullet point under the 'Role of the Executive' heading, i.e.: "Promoting innovative use of resources, ensuring that government as a whole is entrepreneurial in its approach, for example within the circular economy."

Outcome 6: We have more people working in better jobs

NILGA welcomes this Outcome, welcomes the reference to local government, and seeks that enterprise support agencies, large company private sector resources, small businesses and social economy bodies work with municipal entrepreneurs (councils) and government innovators, utilising existing (rather than creating new, resource sapping) bodies such as the NI Entrepreneurial Leadership Group (formative, suggest that it is chaired by the Economy Minister).

NILGA again notes that attracting the best international talent to Northern Ireland will be made more difficult with the UK Tier 2 immigration rules - Northern Ireland employers find it difficult to compete with those in regions which can offer higher salaries.

Outcome 7: We have a safe community where we respect the law, and each other

We ask that the PfG 2016-2012 Outcome 7 be modified by inserting the words 'and resilient', i.e. "We have a safe, **resilient** community where we respect the law, and each other.

NILGA is firmly of the view that community confidence happens at local level, and there is a fundamental role for councils and Policing and Community Safety Partnerships in contributing to achieving this outcome.

The NI crime survey can be used to track changes in confidence, but it would be helpful to incorporate the Racial Equality Strategy ethnic monitoring strand into the survey. The PCSP joint committee can provide guidance on how to monitor and assess progress in relation to migrant and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities.

Outcome 9: We are a shared society that respects diversity

NILGA would encourage the Executive to include 'nationality' in the list of aspects of identity in the supporting information for outcome 9, as this is not always included in information on ethnic group. We would also encourage the use of the same strong wording that is used for outcome 3, i.e. the Executive role should be "actively promoting" rather than "acknowledging" diversity.

Outcome 10: We are a confident, welcoming, outward-looking society

NILGA would again highlight for Outcome 10 and also for Outcome 12, the limitations posed on Northern Ireland by UK immigration legislation and policy, which we believe undermines these objectives, and makes it more difficult to build our place on the international stage. Serious consideration will need to be given by the NI Executive as to how it can respond to Westminster legislation on this and other areas. Some of the rules that are introduced in Westminster as primary legislation are relegated to secondary legislation in Northern Ireland, which limits the opportunity for robust devolved debate.

Outcome 11: We have High Quality Public Services

NILGA suggests that the PfG 2016-2021 Outcome 11 be modified by inserting the words 'and resilient', i.e. "We have high quality **and resilient** public services". We would therefore also propose that the NI Executive requires preparation of adequately resourced Emergency Planning legislation appropriate to the Northern Ireland context, at an early stage within the 2016-2021 Assembly mandate.

Outcome 12: We have created a place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest

The explanatory text within the PfG should reference the importance of the role of the Executive in relation to:

- Reducing the risk of flooding; and coastal adaptation
- Providing increased water and wastewater capacity to allow new connections

Outcome 13: We connect people and opportunities through our infrastructure

NILGA would be keen to see reference to **waste infrastructure** widened in the supporting text for this outcome, to include specific reference to infrastructure for recovery of energy from waste.

NILGA is conscious that energy from waste is a sensitive issue, and we recognise that some technologies are less accepted by local communities than others. It is the case however, that Northern Ireland requires significant provision of infrastructure if we are to divert our waste from landfill, and particularly illegal landfill. The NI Executive and councils will need to work together to develop appropriate technology and sites to ensure Northern Ireland future-proofs our approach to the Circular Economy. NILGA reasserts its six main policy points in this regard:

1. Minimise municipal waste.
2. Achieve the 2020 target of recycling 50% of household waste and prepare to contribute to meet a 65% municipal waste recycling target by 2030.
3. Maximise recovery and use of energy from residual waste in Northern Ireland.
4. Ensure provision of sufficient landfill capacity in Northern Ireland.
5. Develop a new delivery model to manage Northern Ireland's municipal waste.

6. Create a new procurement strategy to deliver outcomes 1-4.

Under this outcome we would also suggest adding, as a further role for the Executive “Improve regional balance of economic prosperity in peripheral areas with low / limited GVA growth potential”.

Outcome 14: We give our children and young people the best start in life

NILGA would highlight that given the increasing percentage of our children who are from migrant and BME backgrounds, it is essential to ensure in the indicators for Outcome 14 that actions also meet their needs, particularly Indicator 12, which is a pressing issue for communities with a high number of migrants.

B. Indicators

B.1 There are some concerns within local government in relation to how the indicators identified in the Framework Document have been tested, and questions as to whether some are the right indicators, given the evidence already available to government through existing data collection systems. There is also concern in relation to the lack of ‘depth’ of indicators and the fact that use of secondary indicators has not been maximised. Again, we need to establish ‘what good looks like’, and there is some concern that there are no indicators related to issues on which Northern Ireland is currently performing well, leading to a less than rounded picture being painted.

Although the indicators are necessarily population wide, it is the view of local government that a (complementary) breakdown of these indicators by local government district will give a better picture of local priorities, emphasising the importance of alignment between council evidence bases, plans and performance management and that of the NI Executive. The breakdown of employment rate by council area given at indicator 34 is therefore welcomed. A more localised approach to the application of the policy direction established by the Framework Document should also ensure rural considerations are addressed, with councils and other sectors working in partnership with government departments, particularly DAERA. A two tier approach to driving local economies and the regional NI economy, as previously mentioned, would also contribute to a number of identified outcomes of the draft PFG.

B.2 Gaps identified in the list of indicators

NILGA is concerned that a number of issues have not been included in the list of indicators, although it acknowledges that the list of indicators shouldn’t become too unwieldy. Given the challenges faced by our society we would particularly like to see indicators strengthened / included relating to:

- Reduction of incidence of obesity
- Increased physical activity
- Adaptation to and mitigation of climate change
- Protection of built heritage and reduction in dereliction
- Continued Public Sector Reform and Private Sector / Social Economy Growth

Suggested additional Indicators

Under Outcome 3 & 9: We suggest that migrant population and migrant economic activity (labour market and SME) be measured.

Under Outcome 11: We suggest creating a new indicator relating to resilience, e.g. “% of central and local government organisations that have a resilience strategy and action plan”.

Under Outcome 12: We suggest creating two new indicators relating to:

- Flooding, such as number of properties assessed to be within the extent of land at risk of flooded from the sea or due to pluvial or fluvial flooding
- The wastewater capacity, area of NI served by wastewater treatment works which have limited or zero capacity to allow new connections.

B.3 Suggested adaptations of existing indicators

NILGA asserts that, subsequent to 2nd December 2016, and during the formal consultations regarding the Economic, Social and Investment Strategies, councils and bodies including NILGA and the Partnership Panel are utilised to enable local government to further clarify, adapt and respond to indicator through their programmes of work, particularly where there is commonality (e.g. Education Indicators 11,12,13). It does however make the following suggestions at this stage.

Indicator 1: Reduce Crime

NILGA is of the view that the content of Indicator 1 is problematic, in that prevalence rate – measuring the number of victims of any crime, is subject to high levels of variability. It is possible for one crime to affect thousands of people, which in our view would skew the overall picture. We would suggest that a better indicator would be numbers of crimes occurring.

Indicators 12-17

NILGA asserts that these inter-dependent indicators need to explicitly reference the need for redesigning our Economic and Skills Development interventions, producing an Enterprise Menu which is less confusing, less grant aided, and less “inter agency competitive”, and include the provision of teaching entrepreneurial skills (using entrepreneurs themselves) linked to the curriculum as early as Primary School through to Third level College / University years.

NILGA is also of the view that performance measures for schools should be broader than just academic results and would urge the inclusion of wellbeing indicators for schools which promote the importance of pastoral care alongside academic results. It is widely evidenced that those children from social deprived backgrounds, that against the odds do well at school, a common thread identified in such cases is that someone cared about them and where this is absent within the home setting should be picked up on through an effective pastoral care approach.

Indicator 18: Increase the proportion of people working in good jobs

The suggested Better Jobs Index – noting the name change from Good Jobs - is problematic unless it is an independently (ex NI) verified Index with clear agreed, qualitative and quantifiable elements put in place, particularly in regard to affirming the need to proportionately increase private sector and social economy jobs in NI, dispersed throughout the 11 council areas, with “better” meaning more than salaries and high end jobs, since in many parts of NI a “better” job is one which enables work life balance, social and community cohesion, reduced travel to work, locality based, etcetera.

Indicator 20: Private Sector NICEI (Northern Ireland Composite Economic Index)

The lead measure is problematic unless there is an independently verified (ex NI) formula with clear agreed, qualitative and quantifiable measures put in place, particularly in regard to affirming the need to proportionately increase private sector and social economy jobs in NI, dispersed equitably throughout the 11 council areas as far as reasonably possible, and to set ambitious targets for enabling social economy, third sector and private sector bodies to deliver public sector contracts and services.

Indicator 24: Proportion of premises with access to broadband services at speeds at or above 30 Mbps

It is noted that the lead measure under this indicator relates to ‘premises’ which would seem to limit consideration of this indicator to business premises. Given the increase in the home working culture, and the desirability of growing the digital economy in Northern Ireland, which is particularly free from the need for physical premises, NILGA would advocate that the next step for the Executive in supporting the Next Generation Broadband project would be expanding on the “**Fibre to the Cabinet**” by implementing the “**Fibre to the Home**” model. NILGA acknowledges that provision of fibre to the home is more expensive, but the Association is of the view that this is a means of future proofing the necessary infrastructure in Northern Ireland, and will vastly improve future take-up of government and private sector digital service delivery. It will also aid decentralisation – crucial to the sustainability of many non metropolitan areas of NI.

We note that Fibre to the Home (FTTH) has been championed in Europe as the preferred option capable of delivering Superfast Broadband (a minimum of 30Mbps). Fibre to the Cabinet (FTTC) model is not promoted as an answer to rural broadband issues as it was not seen as a solution to future proofing.

Indicator 31: % who think leisure centres, parks, libraries and shopping centres in their areas are "shared and open" to both Protestants and Catholics

NILGA firmly recommends that the measure is reworded and includes S75 groups and does not specifically list ‘Protestant and Catholics’.

Indicator 32: Employment rate of 16-64 year olds by deprivation quintile

It is noted that the measure under this indicator identifies deprived communities by place only. Although some S75 groups are the subject of discrete indicators, this is not the case for BME groups.

Indicator 36: Increase Household Recycling

NILGA supports our member councils in the drive to increased household recycling levels; however we are of the view that this indicator and the measures supporting it require more attention. It will be vital, particularly on the basis of recent information made available by Strategic Investment Board that in addition to consideration of recycling, the NI Executive fully considers the impact of waste crime in Northern Ireland, and also the potential benefits to our society of the circular economy. NILGA would therefore strongly suggest that consideration be given to measures relating to a wider consideration of the waste hierarchy and the circular economy.

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