



Programme for Government (PfG)

Draft Outcomes Framework

Response to consultation

22 March 2021

1. Introduction: About CDHN

Community Development and Health Network (CDHN) is a regional network with over 2,100 members from the community, voluntary, Local Government and public sector organisations and individuals across Northern Ireland. Our members range from large voluntary organisations to tiny volunteer-led community groups. We work in cross-sectoral partnerships to tackle health inequalities using community development approaches in four main ways:

- Policy and advocacy
- Training development and facilitation
- Networking and connecting our members
- Building evidence-based practice through innovative programme implementation.

Our Programmes include the HSCB funded Building Community-Pharmacy Partnership (BCPP), co-designed with communities and pharmacies, and Elevate Capacity Building programme, co-created with the PHA; it champions Community Development approaches to reduce health inequalities. Please see section 3 below:

CDHN is committed to excellent impact practice using outcomes frameworks to measure the impact of our programmes. Through Elevate, we train practitioners in using the Community Development Outcomes Framework (CDOF) to place impact at the heart of the community and voluntary sector. In 2020 CDHN took up the Northern Ireland lead partner role for Inspiring Impact to ensure that the lessons learned from this 10 year-programme would be shared with the sector and beyond.

2. Formulating the Response

CDHN organised two consultation events with The Executive Office (TEO) on the PfG. One was with our staff team and the other with our members. We developed our

response from our Members' feedback, looking at the Framework through the lens of equality, human rights and a community development perspective.

In 2016 we held member meetings in each Trust to consult with our members. Due to current restrictions, we were unable to do this. However, we are confident that we have a good insight into their response to the PFG. We include their comments in sections 4 and 5.

3. Health Inequalities and the Social Determinants of Health

Our knowledge and expertise further inform our response in using the established evidence base to address the social factors or underlying determinants, which lead to ill-health and inequities. The impact of COVID-19 has highlighted the impact of health inequalities on health outcomes; the collective response of the Government and the sector has demonstrated that we can respond swiftly and effectively. It is imperative to tackle the social and economic issues that have been exacerbated by the pandemic and develop efficient and good quality public services to address the equality-gap in Northern Ireland.

Health inequalities are unfair and avoidable differences in the health status of people in our society. They exist because of the conditions in which people are born, grow and live. This includes their income level and quality of employment; environmental exposures such as air pollution and inadequate housing; their experiences across the life cycle, particularly in later years; and individual characteristics such as gender and ethnicity. They are known to be the worst cause of poor health and inequalities. The Commission on the Social Determinants of Health called for action in three areas to reduce health inequalities:

1. Improve daily living conditions
2. Tackle the inequitable distribution of power, money and resources
3. Measure and understand the problem and assess the impact of the actions.

To meet PfG commitments to reduce health inequalities, CDHN recommends that the Government includes these three actions within key strategic priorities under each overarching theme. We further recommend the inclusion of specific preventative interventions, that can be delivered in a way that is proportionate to the needs of each population group.¹

Targeted and timely investment in evidence-based actions, to support equal access to services, can build people's resilience, and support them to lead their lives with autonomy and dignity.

¹ Marmot Principle of Proportionate Universalism

4. Overall Comments

CDHN appreciates the opportunity to respond to the Programme for Government (PfG) Draft Outcomes Framework consultation. We also welcome the focus on societal wellbeing and support the Embedding A Wellbeing Framework recommendations in Northern Ireland. We further acknowledge the Framework's alignment with the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

- We welcome that the PfG is a 'live' document and commitment to co-design and citizen engagement and the children and young people and easy-read versions of the Draft Outcomes Framework.
- It is still a high-level document. It may be difficult for people to understand how it is relevant to their local community organisation's work or how it can make a difference in their day-to-day lives.
- The 'live' document needs to make that connection for people and organisations. For example, giving real-life examples of how the work in a small community group can impact a high-level outcome and indicators or explanations of how Government funding has been awarded to community groups to meet the outcomes.
- We [recommend that the Government need to publish a plan for co-design and civic engagement](#). The strategy needs to set out the principles to ensure people are actively involved in shaping decisions and actions, not to become a tokenistic process. Gathering lived experiences should form part of the plan.
- We would like to remain involved throughout the entire process and opportunities for our members to be involved and lend support to the development of the Executive's action plans for co-design, citizenship and community engagement.
- While Covid-19 restricted established community engagement activities; virtual consultations enable some people to get involved. However, it is not the same quality of engagement as face to face, which is preferred. Some population groups may not have had the skills or resources to engage online. In future, there should be a mix of virtual and face to face engagement.

5. Outcomes approach

- CDHN welcomes the outcomes approach; we feel this shows leadership and commitment to creating positive change. Outcomes-Based Accountability (OBA) provides a valuable reference point and delivers a framework within which people fit their work.
- However, the 'live' document should connect OBA and other impact measurement approaches. Many Community and Voluntary Sector members use impact practice tools, such as the Theory of Change. Outcome frameworks can help generate a deeper understanding of

complex social, economic and cultural issues: what works, how well does it work, where it works and for whom does it work?

- CDHN understands that indicators are being selected which will allow the exploration of nuances. It needs to be further augmented by gathering qualitative data and lived experiences that go deeper than 'the story behind the baseline'. It will be crucial as there are significant data collection gaps at both local and regional governmental levels and specific population groups. Accurate data will support the performance measurement of the indicators.
- We call on the [Government to ensure that there is ongoing support and funding for the community and voluntary sector](#). It builds its impact measurement capacity and translates the PfG and OBA outcomes and indicators for their work.

6. Gaps in the Programme for Government Outcomes Framework?

We recognise the governmental shift in thinking away from the original 12 outcomes in the Government's previous programme to 9. We understand that this approach's rationale is to promote cross-departmental working to address overall outcomes across the system. However, it is not very reassuring to see that the right to housing and employment/access to income, as vital social determinants, have been removed from the Framework's overarching themes. These are the fundamental building blocks to any societal wellbeing agenda.

It is important not to lose sight of the commitment to a social and sustainable housing programme to meet current and future demand within the detail of the PfG. [Either reinstate the need and right to quality housing as a specific outcome in the Framework or alternatively add a strategic priority on housing under each overarching theme](#); to honour the commitments made under the New Decade New Approach agreement.

We also recommend that Equality promotion, tackling disadvantage and eliminating poverty across society is referenced in each key strategic priority under the Framework.

Finally, the Lifecycle approach is not always evident in how the key priorities are presented within themes. Pay attention to any unconscious bias in how certain population groups are being represented. For example, older people are only referenced under the health and caring themes in the Framework. Older people have a stake in all the themes.

The following points were raised at our consultation events

Our Children and Young People have the best start in Life.

- This a key area for prevention and early intervention to ensure the best possible start in life for all children and young people, regardless of their social class, ability or ethnicity.
- Cross-sectoral and interdepartmental approaches, as outlined, should continue to support families and communities to make this outcome a reality
- Need to continue to address the disparities in educational attainment between those not receiving free school meals and those who do. This gap will likely have increased due to school closures during this emergency.

We Live and Work Sustainably Protecting the Environment

- Housing, including the development of new housing and refurbishment and retention of existing stock, should stand alone as an additional PfG outcome.
- Access to employment, a decent standard of living and the ability to lead a healthy life is currently being undermined by the cost of housing, particularly in the private rented sector is unsustainable. Those paying high-rents relative to their overall income, with short term security of tenure, will be under significant pressure to live, work, contribute to their community and participate in society.
- Nothing mentioned in the draft about new and sustainable development to support self-employment and enable small businesses to grow.

We have an Equal and Inclusive Society Where Everyone is Valued and Treated with Respect

- The Framework will require effective data collection at local and regional population levels to capture all Section 75 groups. Without the correct data, disaggregated down to postcode level interventions could inadvertently widen inequality gaps. Many people we support are invisible to the organisations that are currently gathering data for these indicators.
- 30 years of tackling disadvantage policies (e.g., TSN) has not worked. The equality gap has gotten bigger.
- Marmot Review -Ten years on (2020). What works is tackling structural Inequality and the application of Proportionate Universalism. There is now practical evidence to show governments how to reduce health inequalities and the results are promising. The Framework needs to incorporate social and economic interventions, both targeted and universal, that work for everyone.

We all enjoy long, healthy, active lives

The pandemic has exacerbated Health Inequalities and services are under pressure.

- These significant inequality disparities are harmful to all of society and particularly life-threatening for those experiencing them the most. It can

lead to increased mental health issues and substance dependency issues, including alcohol and tobacco, which increase chronic disease and a lower life expectancy. These must be named within the priorities of the Framework

- Recognition of the partnership role of the community and voluntary in building sustainable communities and cities. They share the same principles and non-judgemental approach to working with individuals as Public Health and health promotion professionals. Their involvement in the development of this wellbeing frameworks is essential.
- Impact of the Pandemic on limiting young people's horizons and opportunities means that a focus on jobs and training programmes for young people will be essential to build their capacity to enjoy long and healthy lives.

Everyone Can Reach Their Potential

- The acknowledgement and support the Community development sector organisations and volunteers in creating the conditions for the most vulnerable and excluded to participate and reach their potential
- Adult learning –and progression routes to personal development and other community-based self-efficacy programmes that build confidence and resilience in communities. (FALNI report).
- Reference the role of Carers and volunteers – looking at the whole person across all aspects and stages of their lives.

Our Economy is globally competitive, regionally balanced and carbon neutral

- There is a big emphasis on economic growth on better jobs when we have a big part of the population who do not find employment accessible. It needs balanced with what is best for everyone – a job is not necessarily the only metric to consider people's contribution to society. Everyone has a right to contribute to their level of ability in the community. Their contribution is acknowledged. There should be a guaranteed basic income level for all, as demonstrated by the COVID payment when people could not work due to public health restrictions.
- Impact of EU exit and economic recovery post-Covid pandemic
- Relationships, both North-South and East-West. must be maintained and developed.

Everyone Feels Safe – we all respect the law and each other

- The Tackling Sectarianism, Building Respect and Identity priority should also refer to the need to tackle Racism in NI.
- As well as sectarianism, Racism needs to be referenced and addressed as a key strategic priority as the level of racially motivated hate crime is increasing in Northern Ireland.

- Sectarianism is still an issue in NI. Young People growing up now do not know what it was like to live during the Troubles. How can we help young people to make the best life choices if there is no education in schools about the Troubles and the Peace process?
- One way to include this issue in the Framework would be to link Theme one, giving children the best start in Life, through education with Themes 5 and 7 to ensure that children reach their full potential and feel safe and respected.
- Women and the prevention of violence, sexual harassment and assault should be included explicitly as a key priority to highlight the extent of the challenge and honour our commitment to the CEDAW Human rights convention.
- Poverty proof this theme and build indicators to show the relationship between poverty and being a victim of crime.

We have a Caring Society that supports people throughout their lives.

- The needs and role of carers and volunteers who contribute to our caring society should be addressed under this theme.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to be involved in the consultation. We want to stay engaged as the process continues and when the 'live' website is available.

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