

Draft Outcomes Framework for the Programme for Government (Northern Ireland)

Introduction

The Church and Society Commission (CASC) of the Church of Ireland has responded to the consultation on the draft Outcomes Framework for the Northern Ireland Executive's Programme for Government.

The Commission's response to the consultation, which was provided in an online format, is presented below. The Commission was supportive of including each of the nine proposed Outcomes – listed in each section below along with their related Key Priority Areas (KPAs) – in the Programme for Government Framework.

The Commission is an advisory group, serving the Standing Committee of the General Synod, and engages with legislatures and governments on a variety of issues, including legislation. The mission of CASC is to provide oversight and direction for the Church of Ireland's work, in respect to social theology in action. CASC's views only become representative of the Church of Ireland after being approved by its General Synod.

The consultation was held from 25 January 2021 to 22 March 2021, and the consultation document is available at www.northernireland.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-programme-government-draft-outcomes-framework

Our children and young people have the best start in life

Key Priority Areas

- *Access to Education*
- *Capability and Resilience*
- *Care*
- *Early Years*
- *Skills and Attainment*

In relation to the following aspiration: 'We want to ensure all our children and young people have access to the high quality education they all deserve and are equipped with the skills to help them make the best life choices.'

Whilst the use of an adjective 'quality' is to be welcomed, it needs clarification around what this means in the contexts cited.

The outcome-driven approach needs accurately defining – required actions in a 'SMART' fashion that ensures these actions move us as a society towards the desired outcomes. The key areas mentioned have a broad scope; what is needed is specific and strategic action.

There is mention of resilience and the study could benefit from a wider consideration of early intervention addressing mental ill-health.

We live and work sustainably – protecting the environment

Key Priority Areas

- *Natural Environment*
- *Green Economy*
- *Built Environment*
- *Housing*
- *Active and Sustainable Transport*
- *Waste Management*
- *Water and Wastewater Management*

Across this outcome, some emphasis should be given to building societal confidence in the local Government's ability to manage any implementation of financially incentivised schemes.

These key areas involve both proactive and reactive elements; both approaches will be important in any successful actions that lead to us attaining the desired outcomes. In the last number of years, the Church of Ireland has observed a greater commitment to addressing climate change and stewardship of the environment across local churches.

We have an equal and inclusive society where everyone is valued and treated with respect

Key Priority Areas:

- *Inclusion and Tackling Disadvantage*
- *Rights and Equality*
- *Legacy*
- *Tackling Sectarianism, Building Respect and Identity*

Faith-based communities have a long and respected tradition of engaging in this challenging area. The need for a strategic and coordinated response addressing the vast scope of this outcome should not be underestimated.

It would be worth considering separating the third and fourth KPAs in this outcome to adequately address what are both diverse and challenging in nature.

We all enjoy long, healthy, active lives

Key Priority Areas:

- *Access to Health*
- *Inclusion and Tackling Disadvantage*
- *Mental Health and Wellbeing*
- *Older People*
- *Physical Health and Wellbeing*

As this outcome involves actions needed to sustain health as well as address ill-health it needs both clear communication around prevent and cure as well as a realistic, yet strategic, approach to what actions will be needed to achieve the outcome.

There is some merit to addressing the context of the rural and urban across Northern Ireland; access to open spaces has been much in the minds of our community as we have been physically isolating during the pandemic, there is an inequality in accessibility and this has many root causes such as a lack of capacity regarding financial, physical, and infrastructure.

Everyone can reach their potential

Key Priority Areas:

- *Capability and Resilience*
- *Better Jobs*
- *Skills and Attainment*
- *Sport, Arts and Culture*

Faith-based communities have a long and respected tradition of engaging to help individuals realise and achieve their potential and this broad outcome is to be welcomed.

The faith-based sector sees this outcome as one it has been supporting for many years. Faith-based youth and community work as well as previous partnerships with both Governmental and non-governmental bodies have sought to support and achieve this outcome.

Our economy is globally competitive, regionally balanced and carbon-neutral

Key Priority Areas:

- *Competing Globally*
- *Green Economy*
- *Growth*
- *Food, Farming and Fishing*
- *Infrastructure*
- *Innovation*

We agree that the significance of this outcome should not be under-estimated in the current challenging environment. There is a need for careful assessment of the challenges and opportunities of this environment as well as a need for a strategy-led infrastructure to nurture growth and indeed initiate it.

Everyone feels safe – we all respect the law and each other

Key Priority Areas:

- *Access to Justice*
- *Address Harm and Vulnerability*
- *Early Intervention and Rehabilitation*
- *Tackling Sectarianism, Building Respect and Identity*

Mutual respect is an important background to the specific actions recommended as elements needed to fulfil the desired outcomes.

There is a need for detail on the commitment to building strong institutional infrastructure to support this outcome and ensure that they continue to be 'fit-for-purpose'. We also need to give

adequate attention to addressing societal coercion and control, human trafficking, exploitation, abuse and domestic violence to name but a few.

We have a caring society that supports people throughout their lives

Key Priority Areas:

- *Disability*
- *Housing*
- *Inclusion and Tackling Disadvantage*
- *Mental Health and Wellbeing*
- *Older People*

The faith-based sector has long been active in engaging charitably across these KPAs.

There is an importance to listening to individuals who find themselves affected by these areas so we may address the areas appropriately and not from a foundation of perception. One of the KPAs – Disability – needs special sensitivity in both listening to and being guided by individuals living with disabilities so they may participate in decisions that affect them.

People want to live, work and visit here

Key Priority Areas:

- *Competing Globally*
- *Better Jobs*
- *Growth*
- *Housing*
- *Tackling Sectarianism, Building Respect and Identity*
- *Sports, Arts and Culture*
- *Planning*

There are some recurrent themes appearing across a number of the desired outcomes and some strategic decisions should perhaps be considered to identify these and specifically target them as being KPAs that have a wider significance e.g. ‘Tackling Sectarianism, Building Respect and Identity’.

Elements that are in harmony with this outcome could also be: ageing population and the changing face of care provision in their own homes and within the community; post-COVID economy; digital access, broadband speed etc.

*Church and Society Commission of the Church of Ireland
Response to Draft Outcomes Framework for the Programme for Government (Northern Ireland)*

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