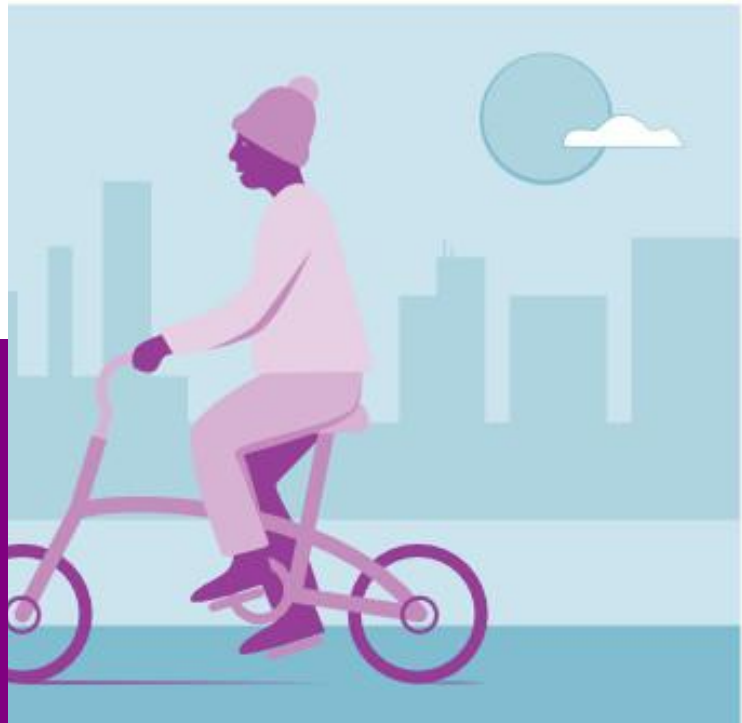




**The Health and
Social Care
Alliance
Scotland
(the ALLIANCE)**



**National Performance Framework
Review – Further Engagement
ALLIANCE response**

2 April 2026

Introduction

The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Scottish Government's engagement document on the National Performance Framework (NPF). We note that this consultation has been publicly communicated in the form of a letter from the Deputy First Minister to the Finance and Public Administration Committee.¹ Given prior engagement on the NPF review and how substantial the proposed changes are, we believe this consultation should also should have followed the standard public process.

The ALLIANCE engaged extensively with the earlier stages of the NPF review through:

- Membership of the “A Scotland that cares” campaign for a National Outcome on Care.²
- Responding to the Scottish Government's 2023 public consultation .³
- Submitting a written response to the Finance and Public Administration Committee's 2024 inquiry.⁴
- Subsequently providing in-person evidence to the committee.⁵

We previously welcomed several of the changes that had been proposed to the NPF, in particular the addition of a National Outcome on Care. Similarly, the shift in focus of the business and economy related outcomes to “Wellbeing Economy and Fair Work” was a positive step forward. We also felt the retention of a standalone Equality and Human Rights outcome made sense, whilst emphasising the need to embed human rights throughout the outcomes. However, we also recommended that more work was done to fully embed the NPF in the policy development process.

The ALLIANCE were surprised and disappointed by what amounted to a sudden scrapping of the review in early 2025. Both the Scottish Government and stakeholders had invested significant time and effort in the review. We now appear to be in a position where there is no active NPF in place, as the Scottish Government website states the current NPF has been archived.



It remains unclear from this further engagement document why this was felt to be necessary, or how the evidence from the review has informed these new proposals. We also noted through our previous engagement that clarity on indicators was essential and are therefore disappointed to see an additional round of engagement on reworked outcomes with no accompanying information on potential indicators.

The ALLIANCE are not inherently opposed to some of the proposals in this new document, including reducing the number of outcomes; the aim that human rights are a cross-cutting perspective throughout them; and changing the name of the NPF. We are however concerned by the lack of clarity around how and why these new proposals have been developed, the continued lack of information on indicators, and the extremely limited reference to human rights beyond the mention of being a cross-cutting perspective.

The Scottish Government must offer more information on their plans, including indicators, and undertake adequate consultation on them. In addition, more work must be done to embed the refreshed NPF into all aspects of government planning and budgeting, for example by ensuring the annual Programme for Government is framed around the national outcomes, and undertaking more comprehensive budget tagging in relation to them.

Concept

The ALLIANCE agrees that collective wellbeing should be at the heart of the NPF. It is essential that Scotland takes a holistic approach to wellbeing that recognises the range of contributing factors and does not restrict itself to traditional measures of economic growth. We are longstanding advocates of the principles behind the wellbeing economy and have reiterated our calls for the next Scottish Government to strengthen this approach in our manifesto for the 2026 Scottish Parliament Election.⁶

We also agree that it would make sense to change the name of the framework. “National Performance Framework” is a somewhat opaque name that does not truly explain the framework’s purpose. Of the proposed



alternatives, we feel “Scotland’s Wellbeing Framework” is clear, simple and communicates the central purpose of the framework well. For clarity, we nonetheless continue to use the shorthand NPF throughout this response.

However, as we did in our earlier engagement with the review, we recommend the Scottish Government take a more joined up approach to prioritisation and policy development in this context. For example, the current First Minister has made traditional economic growth one of his key priorities, moving away from the earlier emphasis on a wellbeing economy. If the government is not consistent in its overarching priorities, this may lead to disjointed and inefficient policymaking.

Outcomes

The reduction in the number of proposed outcomes from 13 following the earlier stage of the review to six now is a significant change, and one we would have expected more comprehensive consultation on. We are not opposed in principle to condensing the number of outcomes, but very little explanation has been given as to how these outcomes were developed or how they relate to those proposed after the earlier review.

In some cases, the logic for a reduction is clear, for example the previously separate outcomes on Climate Action and Environment easily fit within the new Sustainable outcome. Likewise, the earlier outcomes on Communities and Culture clearly sit within the new proposed Connected outcome.

In other cases, we are concerned that important aspects of the previous proposals may be lost or diluted. The loss of a specific outcome on human rights, combined with the almost complete lack of reference to rights, other than being mentioned as a “cross-cutting issue” in the document is deeply concerning. Whilst we agree that human rights are cross-cutting and applicable to every outcome, there is no information given about why a specific rights-related outcome has been removed and how this cross-cutting approach will work in practice.

The lack of explicit reference to care, after the seemingly successful A Scotland That Cares campaign, is especially disappointing. Beyond the



impacts of potentially failing to properly account for care, both paid and unpaid, in the national outcomes, we are concerned about the message it sends to stakeholders to initially agree to a campaign ask only to backtrack shortly afterwards. Whilst stakeholders understand and recognise that not every suggestion they make to government will or can be accepted, this kind of reversal risks undermining trust.

Understanding our progress

It is possible that clarity on how the outcomes will work in practice will be provided through the indicators used to measure performance against the outcomes. Yet just like in the earlier stage of the review, there is no information on these indicators. Whilst we recognise that outcomes must be agreed before indicators can be fully developed, failing to provide even a short list of suggested indicators for the proposed outcomes makes it difficult to offer a full and informed assessment of the outcomes.

We urge the Scottish Government to bring forward engagement on possible indicators as soon as possible. In addition, we believe these indicators should directly reflect human rights. This would be one way to ensure that rights as a "cross-cutting issue" is visible and explicit across the outcomes. Measurement should be aligned to Scotland's human rights obligations, for example in relation to the rights to housing, health and social security. A non-exhaustive list of connections between rights and proposed outcomes is as follows:

- Connected: Right to independent living and inclusion in the community (UNCRC), right to participate in cultural life (UDHR, ICESCR), right to take part in government (UDHR)
- Healthy: Right to health (ICESCR), right to food (UDHR, ICESCR)
- Prosperous: Right to social security (ICESCR), right to adequate standard of living (UDHR, ICESCR), right to work (UDHR, ICESCR)
- Secure: Right to equality before the law (UDHR), rights to non-discrimination (UDHR, ICESCR, UNCRC, UNCRD, CERD, CEDAW)
- Skilled: Right to education (UDHR, ICESCR, UNCRD)



- Sustainable: Right to a healthy environment (UN General Assembly⁷)

Key to human rights instruments referenced above:

- CEDAW: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women⁸
- CERD: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination⁹
- ICESCR: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights¹⁰
- UDHR: Universal Declaration of Human Rights¹¹
- UNCRC: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child¹²
- UNCRPD: United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People¹³

In addition to measuring the outcomes against explicitly worded rights-related indicators, it is important that robust, disaggregated equality and human rights data is gathered and analysed. We know that different groups of people are affected to different degrees by government policies and socioeconomic inequalities, yet the data necessary to understand and address these impacts is often lacking. How policies impact groups including disabled people, unpaid carers, children, older people, women, ethnic minorities, and LGBTI+ people must be understood in order to be sure that everyone's wellbeing is being improved and protected.

Ways of working

The ALLIANCE welcomes the recognition that the reformed NPF should be “at the apex of decision and budget making.” In our previous responses, we highlighted concerns that the NPF was not fully embedded across the Scottish Government, local government and public bodies.

Per our evidence to the Scottish Parliament, the Programme for Government should be framed explicitly in relation to the NPF, which has not recently been the case. If the annual Programme for Government is not rooted in the NPF, this raises serious questions around how committed the government is to the ambitions and aspirations underpinning it.



It is also positive that the “indicative and high-level Scottish Government approach” table explicitly recognises the need for a clear connection between government priorities and the NPF, as well as the need to relate strands of work such as Public Service Reform Strategy. Given that strategy, and other important plans such as the Population Health Framework, will pre-date the renewed NPF, it is important that actions under such strategies are reviewed against the NPF as soon as possible after it is finalised.

Similarly, we welcome the suggestion to continue budget tagging against the national outcomes, though we believe this process can be improved. The current NPF has been consistently referenced in budget documents, but only at the highest level, indicating what outcomes (described as “primary” and “secondary”) are covered by each portfolio’s spending plans. Going forward, it would be useful to tag not just portfolio areas but specific budget lines and policies in relation to outcomes.

At the same time we note the suggestion that “any recipient of Government funding... must demonstrate alignment with the National Outcomes.” We agree in principle that this should be the case, but this must be approached with appropriate care. There must be clear guidance on how to demonstrate alignment with the NPF, without unduly adding to an already substantial funding reporting and application burden, particularly for already under-resourced third sector organisations which receive government funding or procurement contracts,

Whilst further work will have to await the result of May’s election, the ALLIANCE, our members and partners are clear that a Human Rights Bill must be an early priority for the new session of the Scottish Parliament. We urge the government to take the most ambitious approach possible to incorporating human rights in Scotland, and to ensure the ambition on rights covers all areas of activity, including the revised NPF.

About the ALLIANCE

The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE) is the national third sector membership organisation for the health and social care



sector. We bring together over 3,500 people and organisations dedicated to achieving our vision of a Scotland where everyone has a strong voice and enjoys the right to live well, with dignity and respect. Our members are essential in creating a society in which we all can thrive, and we believe that by working together, our voice is stronger.

We work to improve the wellbeing of people and communities across Scotland by supporting change in health, social care and other public services so they better meet the needs of everyone in Scotland. We do this by bringing together the expertise of people with lived experience, the third sector, and organisations across health and social care to shape better services and support positive change.

The ALLIANCE has three core aims.

We seek to:

- **Empower people with lived experience:** we ensure disabled people, people with long term conditions, and unpaid carers are heard and that their needs remain at the heart of the services and communities.
- **Support positive change:** we work within communities to promote co-production, self management, human rights, and independent living.
- **Champion the third sector:** we work with, support and encourage co-operation between the third sector and health and social care organisations.

The ALLIANCE is committed to upholding human rights. We embed lived experience in our work and aim to ensure people are meaningfully involved at every level of decision-making.

Working together creates positive, long-lasting impact. We work in partnership with the Scottish Government, NHS Boards, universities, and other key organisations within health, social care, housing, and digital technology to manage funding and develop successful projects. Together, our voice is stronger, and we can create meaningful change.



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¹ Scottish Parliament, Letter from Deputy First Minister Kate Forbes to the Finance and Public Administration Committee (February 2026), available at: <https://www.parliament.scot/-/media/files/committees/rural-affairs-and-islands-committee/correspondence/2026/national-performance-framework-update.pdf>

² A Scotland that Cares, available at: <https://ascotlandthatcares.org/>

³ The ALLIANCE, 'ALLIANCE responds to National Outcomes review 2023' (June 2023), available at: <https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/blog/news/alliance-respond-to-national-outcomes-review-2023/>

⁴ The ALLIANCE, 'ALLIANCE responds to committee call for views on the National Outcomes review' (June 2024), available at: <https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/blog/news/alliance-responds-to-committee-call-for-views-on-the-national-outcomes-review/>

⁵ Scottish Parliament, Official Report of the Finance and Public Administration Committee meeting (October 2024), available at: <https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/official-report/search-what-was-said-in-parliament/FPA-01-10-2024?meeting=16034&iob=136931>

⁶ The ALLIANCE, 'Our Collective Voice: 2026 Scottish Parliament Election Manifesto' (February 2026), available at: <https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/policy-and-research/campaigns/2026-scottish-election-manifesto/>

⁷ Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland, 'What is the human right to a healthy environment?', available at: <https://www.ercs.scot/our-work/human-right-healthy-environment/>

⁸ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 'Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women', available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women>

⁹ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 'International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination', available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-elimination-all-forms-racial>

¹⁰ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 'International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights', available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights>



¹¹ United Nations, 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights', available at: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

¹² United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 'Convention on the Rights of the Child', available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>

¹³United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 'Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities', available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities>

