Victim Support Scotland

National Performance Framework – Scotland's Wellbeing

Scottish Government Consultation 2026

Victim Support Scotland is a national organisation dedicated to supporting victims and witnesses of crime. As Scotland's largest victims' organisation, people impacted by crime have access to our services right across the country. We are a listening ear when people need to talk to someone about the impact of crime, we provide practical support such as when people need a safety plan to feel secure in their home and we give access to critical crime-related emergency funds in their time of need.

We play a crucial role in delivering victim-centred support, and this in turn drives our forceful and successful lobbying and campaigning for change within the criminal justice system. As an organisation rooted in the experiences of victims and witnesses, we aim to ensure that their voices are central to the development of policy and practice.

Background to the consultation:

Letter from the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Gaelic to the Convener of 16 February 2026

We want Scotland to be a prosperous and fair country where people are doing well, regardless of their start in life, and live in sustainable, thriving communities with access to effective public services. This future cannot be achieved by anyone working alone but instead, requires different people and organisations from across the public, private, and voluntary sectors to work closely together.

Launched in 2007, the National Performance Framework (NPF) is Scotland's long term wellbeing framework to support the delivery of our national outcomes which are established in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. The NPF was substantially updated in 2018 and, in line with the Community Empowerment Act, the Scottish Government reviewed the national outcomes in 2022. As per the legislation, the Scottish Parliament then conducted a detailed inquiry into the Government's proposed changes to the national outcomes.

Both the Government's review and the Parliamentary inquiry included extensive consultation with a range of organisations, as well as calls for evidence, and this resulted in a substantial body of evidence on the NPF.

That evidence was clear that while the NPF remains an important vision for Scotland, we recognise that it can be improved and updated to make it more fit for purpose as we head towards the middle of the 21st century.

The Scottish Government has now developed a refreshed model and refocussed vision for the future of the National Performance Framework. These proposals have been built on the evidence from recent reviews, from international evidence, and from the advice of the NPF Reform Advisory Group.

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Section 1: Collective Wellbeing

NPF Concept - *Our vision is to improve the wellbeing of people living in Scotland now and in the future.*

The proposed National Performance Framework (NPF) has been designed as a compelling and aspirational vision of sustainable and long-term wellbeing for the people of Scotland. It encompasses our social, economic and environmental needs, and is intended to provide a clear vision for a future in which we all want to live.

The framework is for all of Scotland and anyone working for the public good should use the framework to support their decision making. In particular, the Scottish Government, Local Authorities, and public bodies should continue to have regard to the national outcomes through their daily activity.

The revised framework is built on a firm international evidence base and we have taken that learning and adapted it to fit our particular Scottish context. We have drawn upon the OECD5 Measurement of Wellbeing Framework6 which has gained international recognition and has been successfully implemented in other countries like Canada and New Zealand.

As the proposed model has a much greater focus on long-term wellbeing, the word 'performance' might no longer reflect the purpose and intent of the framework. As such we are considering whether to change the name of the NPF, to better reflect its purpose. Other countries that have developed similar long-term strategies and frameworks have a range of titles including:

- Wales - Well-being of Future Generations
- New Zealand - Living Standards Framework
- Austria – How's Austria?
- Germany – Wellbeing in Germany

Prompts for discussion:

- Will this proposed approach support better decision making that will improve wellbeing?
- Will this renewed focus help with long-term thinking?
- Will having a more focussed wellbeing framework at the apex of decision making, enable the reduction of inequalities in Scotland?
- We believe changing the name of the framework would better reflect its purpose while also making it more accessible to a wide range of audiences. Possible names could include:
    - Scotland's Wellbeing Framework
    - Scotland's Wellbeing Goals
    - Scotland's Wellbeing Vision
    - National Progress Framework
    - Scotland's Goals
    - How's Scotland?
    - Scotland's Future

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Answer:

Victim Support Scotland welcomes the approach outlined in this consultation. It is clear to us that updating and implementing the National Performance Framework will assist in reflecting the priorities and desired outcomes to make Scotland prosperous and fair for all. We emphasise that it is necessary to ensure the steps required to achieve these are sufficiently resourced and implemented.

With specific regard to the renaming of the National Performance Framework, we are supportive of the suggestions provided. We would support any of the suggested titles outlined in the consultation document as they better communicate the purpose of the framework, are warmer, and are more people focused. This better aligns with the intention of the framework.

Section 2: Outcomes

Key components of the NPF are the national outcomes, which are required by the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. These are the specific, high-level goals we are working towards to make Scotland the type of country we want it to be.

The evidence suggests that population-level, long-term outcomes should be simple and easy to understand, while also capturing the broad range of things that affect our wellbeing.

Drawing on that evidence and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, we have developed six new national outcomes:

- Connected – We participate freely in the civic, cultural and social life of our communities.
- Healthy – We live longer, healthier and more fulfilling lives.
- Prosperous – We have a successful economy which supports a good standard of living for everyone, with fair work and the opportunity to thrive.
- Secure – We live safe lives, free from violence and injustice.
- Skilled – We have the knowledge and skills we need throughout our lives to realise our full potential.
- Sustainable – We live in a healthy environment, enjoy the natural environment and protect it for future generations.

None of the national outcomes should be viewed in isolation, nor are any of the outcomes the responsibility of any one person or organisation. Therefore, having fewer outcomes can encourage greater collaboration and more effective systems thinking, whereby we recognise that problems in society are rarely due to only one cause.

Cross-cutting perspectives
In addition to these six outcomes, there are a range of cross-cutting perspectives, or lenses, through which they can be viewed.

Cross-cutting issues should be applied across all six outcomes as the outcomes apply to all population groups. This approach encourages thinking about the cross cutting issues across

all policy areas, and how public policies work together to achieve outcomes (this is sometimes called 'policy coherence'). Two examples of these perspectives are 'fairness, equality and human rights', as well as 'Scotland's place in the world'.

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act makes it clear that the national outcomes must have regard to the reduction of inequalities of outcome resulting from socio-economic disadvantage. However, fairness, equality and human rights extend beyond income which, along with opportunities to build wealth over time, matters for people's wellbeing and both are heavily determined by socio-economic status. There is growing evidence that inequality is harmful to everyone in society. A better understanding of the effects of individual policies on specific social groups allows policy makers to identify trade-offs and shared benefits.

We are also part of a global society and a global market, and what we do in these spheres matters to people in Scotland and affects the rest of the world. In a world of intersecting challenges, crises and opportunities, the decisions that impact our own wellbeing here and now also have wider effects internationally and in the future. Scotland was one of the first countries in the world to adopt the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the NPF continues to be the localisation of those goals.

Prompts for Discussion:

- This proposal has a smaller number of higher-level outcomes. Can you see how and where your work would contribute towards these outcomes? Is there something missing that isn't captured by any of the above outcomes?
- This proposal discusses a range of cross-cutting perspectives (or lenses) that are critical to the success of national wellbeing goals. How should we best represent these in the final model?

Answer:

As one of Scotland's leading victim support organisations supporting victims of all ages and backgrounds, across all crime types throughout Scotland, we welcome the introduction of secure as one of the new National Outcomes for Scotland, signalling a commitment to ensuring safe lives, free from violence and injustice.

VSS has contributed to consultations, fora, and legislation focusing on the criminal justice system, and its impact on victims, witnesses, loved ones and the community. This has recently included emergency early release of prisoners, changes to automatic release points for short term prisoners, and sentencing and penal policy commission reforms. We seek clarity on how a balance can be achieved for people in the criminal justice system, and children in the youth justice system, whilst protecting and serving the rights of victims and witnesses of crime.

VSS provides support to everyone, no matter their socio-economic status. As such, we know how vital it is that everyone in society is accounted for and supported. Different groups within society may require different levels or types of support and so it is

essential that any organisation or service is responsive to the needs of the people who use it. We therefore seek assurances that each of the main indicators has responses built in for each cross-cutting perspective.

Section 3: Understanding our Progress

What we measure matters. Progress towards improving wellbeing in Scotland will be measured by a set of outcome indicators, presented on the Scottish Government website, which consider a range of factors that are important to people's lives, such as mental health, sense of belonging, social connection, access to nature, personal safety, and more.

Understanding progress is essential in public policymaking and having disaggregated data helps to understand inequalities across population groups, socio economic groups and geographies.

The NPF alone will not track short-term or organisational-level progress or contributions to national outcomes. We recognise that our current system of accountability does not enable the ways of working we want to see and we must fundamentally rethink how we hold organisations and leaders to account. To fully realise and embed the intent of the NPF, the Public Services Reform Strategy committed to re-design our approach to accountability across Scotland's public sector. It will, of course, be important for our approaches to accountability to measure organisational contributions to pursuit of the national outcomes, bridging the gap between outcomes measures and operational delivery.

The reformed NPF is being designed to be high-level and concise to ensure that it is accessible and meaningful to as many people as possible. It will complement existing frameworks by providing an overarching national view of how our country and society is doing. The streamlined NPF indicator set will be a subset of priority indicators reported in existing reporting frameworks and mechanisms, providing coherence across the reporting system.

Work is ongoing to develop the initial indicator set prior to further engagement. The indicator set will be finalised in earnest when the outcomes are agreed. Any changes to the outcomes and proposals via this feedback will be considered when developing the national indicator set.

To be included, indicators need to meet a set of requirements. These are relevance, coherence, balance, technical quality and international alignment. Developing good wellbeing indicators is difficult. Countries often face similar challenges, such as the definition of the dimensions of the wellbeing framework, the selection of indicators, availability of data, different approaches to measuring inequalities, the use of people's own views and experiences (subjective indicators) as well as deciding on the use of composite scores or indexes.

Development of the indicator set for the reformed NPF will be informed by technical workshops. The NPF Technical Advisory Group, whose membership is senior analysts within Scottish Government, will provide a peer review role. Once peer reviewed, the Chief Statistician will make a recommendation as to the final set of indicators, maintaining the statistical independence of the national indicators.

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Prompts for discussion:

- While we are not inviting technical feedback on the national indicator set at this stage, we would welcome views on how we use them to better tell the story and to influence change in policy.

Answer:

Victim Support Scotland works directly with victims and survivors across all crime types throughout Scotland and we constantly see how invaluable their experiences are in shaping national conversation and policy change. We wish to emphasise the value of listening to the people who government policies and legislation directly impact. At VSS, we regularly use their feedback and input to inform our responses to consultations and viewpoints on policy changes.

- We would ask that any policies arising from features of a secure Scotland are made with the consideration of the lived experiences of victims, witnesses and families who are directly impacted by criminal justice policies and legislation.

Section 4: Ways of Working

The National Performance Framework (NPF) is intended to set out the kind of Scotland we all want to see, bringing together our shared aspirations for collective wellbeing. To really make a difference, the NPF should influence decision making, policy design, and budgeting. If decision making is viewed through the NPF, we can take strong, coordinated steps towards delivering that future.

Recent Parliamentary inquiries have suggested the NPF has had an 'implementation gap' which has limited its full potential. Accountability and compliance with legislation is essential, however, it is also important to promote a culture across the public sector which is focussed on delivering effective outcomes that make a real difference to peoples' lives.

Learning from international good practice, the Scottish Government will lead on ensuring we are all working towards a consistent set of ways of working and embed this within the new framework.

A Framework for All of Scotland

An overarching principle for the NPF is that it represents Scotland's vision and a set of shared outcomes. We want to gather as much feedback as possible to establish relevant, coherent and accessible ways of working. We can then develop overarching guidance to support the embedding of the national outcomes in all organisations' local contexts.

We think the following should be considered for inclusion in some way:

- **Long-term and strategic**: positioning the reformed NPF at the apex of decision and budget making to help us focus on, and be accountable for, improving people's lives and public services now and in the future.
- **Collaborative:** viewing the national outcomes as a set or a whole, we will wish to encourage collaboration within and across organisations where there is potential to work together to achieve shared goals.

- **Inclusive:** we monitor and evaluate how our approaches to delivering the national outcomes are achieving positive outcomes for all the people of Scotland.

Putting the ways of working into practice will require us all to plan and improve implementation in our respective organisations. This could include, where relevant and appropriate, the following themes:

- **Strategy:** ensuring the NPF is embedded in whatever process/methodology the organisation is using to set its strategy. Working with partner organisations to ensure consistency in areas of joint strategy.
- **Operational/procedural:** internal policies, processes and procedures such as templates should, provide clear guidance on the national outcomes and ensure they have a proper role in decision criteria.
- **Governance:** our governance structures all the way up to board level could be transparently guided by the national outcomes
- **Leadership and ownership:** leadership at all levels should embody, including within job/role descriptions, the national outcomes and build effective teams around them.

We would welcome ideas and suggestions for what our ways of working for the reformed NPF should look like, how they could be put into practice/implemented and accountability for this. The following two examples, highlighted during phase two of the project, are provided as prompts to guide thinking and discussion.

Resources and guidance

The previous version of the NPF included downloadable resources such as tailorable presentations12 and the guide to outcomes focused policy. We will populate the NPF website with updated resources. There is an opportunity through collaboration to develop these in innovative and engaging ways, using the knowledge and expertise across our partners to ensure we produce materials that are accessible, relevant and useful.

Current guidance such as that for public bodies and the informal budgeting for outcomes guide exists. However, we have learned that this is not easily accessible to all and improving the website to bring the relevant links together in one place would be a major improvement.

Responders to this document will have views, from experience, on what overarching guidance from the Scottish Government should cover. The recent parliamentary inquiry, for example, considered better guidance was needed to help organisations navigate the interlinkages and co-dependences between the national outcomes, particularly for those considering the potential trade-offs when using them to shape policy and spending decisions.

What could improved implementation look like for the Scottish Government?

The Scottish Government should be a role model for how to use the NPF as a tool to drive better decision making.

The following table sets out at a high-level, current thinking within the Scottish Government on where we will be seeking to maintain, improve and/or introduce new practice to embed the national outcomes in all that we do17. This is set out on the parliamentary timescale to show this working through the short to medium-term.

We are encouraging organisations to think about how they might similarly plan in their local contexts and to feedback on any innovations, opportunities and challenges.

Prompts for discussion:

- Is this level of ambition enough or could we go further?
- What would you want to see included in ways of working?
- What opportunities do you see for improved implementation within your organisation and what might be important barriers?
- Thinking about the Public Services Reform strategy, how could the reformed NPF help strengthen accountability and transparency and guide culture and behaviours?
- Should Scotland introduce something similar to the Welsh Government's five ways of working? If so, this would be linked to the Public Services Reform Strategy so as not to duplicate work and over-burden public bodies.
- What would you like to see included in overarching guidance, materials and resources? Is there scope for collaboration to develop these?

Answer:

Victim Support Scotland welcomes the ambitions set out in this consultation so long as they are adequately resourced, implemented and measured. Ensuring resource, implementation and measurement will help build on these ambitions and future proof them as our world changes and develops in new ways. Without this support and investment in resilience and recovery for victims, the drive to sustain a prosperous Scotland is limited.

Regarding ways of working, we ask that collaborative working across all sectors becomes the norm. Collaborative working is invaluable as each organisation and sector brings different experience and perspectives to ways of working and the needs and wants of the people directly affected by their work. This in turn helps to build a more well-rounded and secure sector, which in turn will contribute to a well-rounded and secure Scotland.