Making housing matter
A Programme for Government consultation event

Tuesday 5th July 2016

Summary of Roundtable discussions

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1. **What do you think of the outcomes based approach and its use in the draft Programme for Government?**

Broad welcome for focus on outcomes

[Table 1] All broadly supportive of the approach .Liked wider perspective.
[Table 2] Outcomes based approach is/could be a better way forward, with caveats
[Table 3] Supportive of the broad ethos of the framework, but disappointed with the essential lack of housing. This is integral to several other outcomes, and as well as this, deserves an outcome of its own.
[Table 4] Aspiration to create a better society welcome
[Table 4] Generally welcomed move away from "departmental lines"
[Table 4] Opportunity to promote cross departmental and cross sectoral working.
[Table 5] Welcome emphasis on outcomes. Would predict that most people would agree that outcomes are all good things to aim for. It is good to get away from box ticking.

Risks identified

Too aspirational

[Table 2] How does this filter down? It's ambitious so how do you make sure the vision matches the delivery? It's a great idea but it needs to be more than a top level approach and there needs to be a whole system approach.

[Table 2] The framework is aspirational, but there has to be an element of deliverability in the outcomes and they might be just a little bit too top level.

[Table 2] A lot of the outcomes are aspirational and need to be hardened up.

Unclear

[Table 5] The indicators are not clear. For example, 'suitable' housing, 'preventable' deaths – how are these defined? Who decides what is suitable/preventable?

[Table 1] Is there a clear indicator for success or failure

Accountability

 [Table 3] It was felt that there was a danger of the focus of the framework, in practice, bypassing "outcomes" and "indicators" and going straight down to "measures" level. Ultimately the Senior Responsible Officers will be held to account by these measures, not higher-level indicators or outcomes.

[Table 5] Would like more information on the Senior Responsible Officers. Who are these people? Do they work outside of departments or will they still have responsibility to a department?

[Table 5] There is less to measure so concerned that there would be less accountability. Would like to see more specific actions and a plan to achieve this.

Choosing the right emphasis is critical

[Table 4] High stakes – critical outcomes chosen are right ones and not driven by personal or political agendas. Effective communication between decision makers & community (population) is essential

[Table 4] Over concentration on numeric targets can fail to capture complexities of people's lives – qualitative data also important.

[Table 4] Emphasised values need to underpin OBA otherwise could drive poor practice at implementation.

[Table 4] Danger that outcomes etc. driven by data which is available, there needs to be a recognition that the best data may not be available- identification of a data development agenda.

Practical issues

[Table 1] Consultation process not comprehensive enough

 [Table 2] The outcomes based approach works well if everyone understands what that means.

[Table 2] One threat is that there are no real targets, and will a 'turning the curve' approach suffice? If there is a small increase in performance, will this be taken to be success?

Cross Departmental working

[Table 2] It's very laudable in theory and the strong emphasis on collaboration is welcome. However cross departmental working within a department is difficult enough without looking across departments.

[Table 3] Given the emphasis on cross-Departmental working in the approach of the Framework, it is surprising that there is no specific outcome *on* joined-up government/cross-Departmental working specifically.

[Table 1] In practice can it do what it is set up to do? Are we measuring the right things in the right way.

[Table 5] "Are we jumping the gun?" Not convinced that the structures in government are capable of delivering this model. Not concerned regarding the will to collaborate but are there the resources available to work collaboratively? Will there be cross department funding?

Resources

[Table 4] Documents should include a fiscal philosophy.
[Table 2] Framework has to be taken in the context of a finite budget, how will outcomes be delivered if the budget for a relevant action is cut?

Impact of/on other developments

[Table 5] The PfG doesn't exist in isolation. How will existing and pending strategies be linked to this PfG? Will all future strategies be linked under the outcomes framework, how will they 'speak' to it and other strategies? For example, should the Housing Executive stop working on their Homelessness Strategy until the PfG is fixed?

[Table 5] With 'Brexit' do we need to revisit the entire process of developing a PFG?

Is government equipped to work this way successfully?

[Table 1] Last programme didn't deliver – will this?

[Table 4] Structures and culture of public services may not easily support this model in practice – would require significant change in working practices within government and between sectors.

[Table 4] Danger that outcomes etc. driven by data which is available, there needs to be a recognition that the best data may not be available- identification of a data development agenda

[Table 5] Government indicating that action plans will be developed which will be flexible – suggested that if the plan was not working, the Executive could change the plan to make it a better fit. This does not work in practice and is not our experience of how government work. You cannot change a plan midstream.

2. Should the Programme for Government have a housing outcome?

Need for housing outcome

[Table1] Yes there should be a housing outcome. The housing outcome needs to be clearly articulated with a statement of intent which is clear

[Table 2] Consensus, bar one, that housing should be an outcome – person who disagreed thought housing was more of an enabler than an outcome, including an economic driver, and there was a risk that housing as an outcome risks boxing it into a stand-alone role. While it's possible for housing to be an enabler as well as an outcome, not all outcomes are about specific outcomes and it can be argued some are enablers e.g. references to jobs and employment.

 [Table 3] There was broad agreement that there should be a specific outcome on "homes" (as distinct from "houses"), as this is a starting point for delivery of so many broader outcomes.

[Table 4] Yes
- Fundamental human need (shelter)
- Much more than an enabler - end not means.
- Decent housing comes first & also provides central platform to achieve many of other outcomes.

[Table 5] Unanimously, yes. Housing is a basic need. Shelter and Maslow's Hierarchy of social needs. People cannot move on to further aspirational needs without their basic needs being met. Identifying outcomes based on this hierarchy would be more successful approach.

[Table 2] One person felt that housing as an indicator almost felt like an afterthought. Another thought that housing as an outcome will help housing to not be treated as a political football. Housing, private rented, social housing and sustainability of existing stock are such vital areas that housing must be an outcome. Housing is a human right. Housing should be added to shared space and economic driver objectives.

[Table 3] The group felt that if there is no specific PFG housing outcome, there would be little scope or likelihood of any cross-Departmental working on the issue. Also suggestions that the relative absence of housing could have trickle-down impacts on funding levels for housing and the housing sector more generally.

[Table 4] Important role of housing as a contributor to other outcomes is also recognised – would not want to lose this.

[Table 3] It was highlighted that good housing has positive "multiplier effects", in both individual and broader senses.

What should a housing outcome look like?

[Table 4] Group like suggested wording " We have good quality affordable homes for everyone"

[Table 2] Housing outcome should be "we have good quality, affordable homes for everyone in sustainable communities"

[Table 5] Liked suggested wording of "We have good quality affordable homes for everyone". Cautioned affordable needs to be carefully defined – related to income. A housing outcome should also include the words:

- o Secure
- o Suitable
- o Sustainable

Additional thoughts on outcomes:

[Table 4] Why is "Quality of Public Services" an outcome - is this not a means to an end rather than a "desired state"?

[Table 4] What about an outcome "caring for people in crisis"?

3. What do you think of the proposed housing indicator /measure?

Inadequate & unsuitable

 [Table 3] The group strongly felt that the existing indicator and measure were not adequate.

[Table 4] Totally inadequate

[Table 5] Disappointed. Too narrow. Restrictive.

[Table 2] No one felt reducing housing stress was the best measure.

[Table 5] Sounds like they have developed this without talking to people working in the sector.

Needs to be improved

[Table 2] People felt the housing indicator either wasn't right or there was a need for additional housing indicators. 'Suitable' may be well meaning but the problems could be defined, still in simple terms.

 [Table 4] Suitable" – very subjective – would need additional clarification on how this is to be defined/measured (current measure appears only to relate to public housing)

[Table 3] There is plenty of other data available to supplement simply "housing stress" figures.

 [Table 3] The measure does not measure, in any sense, the supply of "suitable" housing referred to in the indicator.

[Table 1] Needs to be stronger and more challenging. Only building half of what we need.

Data concerns

[Table 3] Housing Selection Scheme itself is likely to change over the next Assembly mandate; within this, the definition of "housing stress" is therefore also likely to change.

[Table 3] Another member pointed out that "latent demand" – whereby households in housing stress do not formally apply for social housing, as they don't see any point as there is little/no supply in their area – is a major concern in this regard.

[Table 5] Danger that people will play the numbers game, intentionally or unintentionally, e.g. may be tempted/pressured to not accept clients in housing stress.

[Table 5] Using such narrow, qualitative data is risky. Numbers can be manipulated.

[Table 5] There is a need for accompanying qualitative data.

Other concerns

[Table 5] Measure proposed has no relevance to some of the outcomes it is listed under i.e. how will the number of people in housing stress show us anything about government progress under outcome re long healthy lives. In this example, a measure relating to fitness would be much more appropriate.

[Table 3] The group noted that this indicator & measure is completely ignorant of the ongoing TBUC strategy and its aspirations.

[Table 3] The group noted that this indicator & measure doesn't align with the pre-Election manifestos of the relevant parties.

[Table 4] Need to have cross tenure indicators – the programme should not just be about social housing e.g. fitness standards

[Table 2] A better, new measure should be used that covers more types and tenures of homes – reference to reliance on existing data.
[Table 5] Why are those in the private rented sector not represented when it represents such a large proportion of people's housing situations in Northern Ireland?

[Table 1] Need a basket of measures – affordability, quality.

[Table 5] Then work that organisations represented already do, demonstrates outcomes. Propose that housing organisations could provide more helpful data that moves away from a restrictive numbers game and reflects the current climate more accurately.
Propose that there should be short, medium and long term measures to prevent the recycling of clients.

[Table 1] Housing is only one of 42 indicators – given the complexity and diversity of the issues, should be at least 3 indicators.

[Table 4] Services for people in crisis not covered

[Table 1] Supporting People – connects out of the SILOS

[Table 4] Focus only on quantity & "supply" – "quality" of homes also has to be captured.- must include basic issues of safety/security

[Table 4] Inclusion of additional indicators would also permit additional housing related measures to be devised

[Table 5] We are an aging population. This is not addressed in the PfG. Meeting older people's housing needs is vitally important. There should be a push for 'Homes for Life'.

[Table 1] Adapting houses to the changing needs as population get older

4. **What other indicators/measures would be suitable for housing?**

Homelessness

[Table 3] The group expressed concern at the absence of anything referring to the reduction and/or prevention of homelessness. This should be captured in any proposed indicator/ measure.

[Table 3] Eradication of homelessness
[Table 4] Rates of Homelessness

[Table 2] Something around homelessness should be an indicator – reduction of FDAs should be the measure

[Table 1] Homelessness isn't mentioned or supported housing. Reducing Homelessness – statistical basis already exists

[Table 5] Homelessness is our society's "social cancer". We should be looking for a cure, not merely to reduce the need. Emphasis should therefore be on ending homelessness, not merely reducing it.

[Table 4] Tenancy sustainment

Fitness

[Table 3] Something regarding the fitness and sustainability of homes

[Table 4] Fitness standards?

[Table 5] Housing fitness standards – currently being changed and one option is to link housing and health in the measurement of fitness – could work well for PFG.

[Table 1] Quality of housing measure – across all tenures

[Table 1]Percentage of housing – new fitness standard.

Increasing supply

[Table 3] Supply targets (for social, PRS *and* private housing)

[Table 4] Number of new homes (across all sectors)

[Table 4] Reduction in empty homes

[Table 2] Meeting the 'housing growth' indicators could be a good one for supply.

[Table 1] Improve suitable housing – focus on greatest need

Affordability

[Table 4] Affordability ratios (income/housing costs)

[Table 5] Affordability – Welfare Reform is going to have a huge impact, where is it in all this?

[Table 1] Affordability – private, co-ownership, social

Other comments

[Table 3] Security of tenure (however this is to be defined)

[Table 3] Shared housing targets

[Table 2] Tenant and community element should be an indicator – 'better involved, well informed, engaged communities' or similar could be the measure. Point that measures can be softer, less tangible things that still lead to societal outcomes.

[Table 2] Other potential indicators could cover sustainability and affordability, with a caveat that they could be too narrow e.g. tenancy sustainment may be too narrow, but something about access and support, and quality that crosses all tenures could be covered, as could security for those who want it. Something around "safe, secure, sustainable housing solutions." 'Solutions' is embedded in community and finding the best option for the individual.

[Table 4] What about considering a "Housing Index"???

[Table 5] Some of the other measures have not yet been developed, is the decision to choose measures based upon what is readily available or what is appropriate?