



Collette Stevenson MSP
Convener
Social Justice and Social Security
Committee
c/o Clerk to the Committee

Sarah Boyack MSP
27 October 2025

Dear Collette

Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill

I understand that the Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill, for which I am the Member in charge, has been referred to your Committee for stage 1 scrutiny.

The Non-Government Bills Unit (NGBU) has provided support to me in the preparation and drafting of the Bill. As part of that role, NGBU has carried out an Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) for the Bill in order to ensure that best practice has been followed and that the Bill's impact has been appropriately identified and considered. I have added my comments to the EQIA.

The EQIA is attached at the Annex for the Committee's information.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Boyack MSP

Equalities Impact Assessment

Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill	
(1) Aims of the Policy	
What is the purpose of the proposed policy?	The purpose of this Member's Bill (introduced by Sarah Boyack MSP) is to promote consideration by public bodies of sustainable development and the wellbeing of future generations. The overall aim of the Bill's provisions is to create policy coherence for sustainable development across Scotland's public sector and therefore foster a shift towards long-termism in public policymaking, in order to maximise the wellbeing of future generations. The Member believes that the concepts of wellbeing and sustainable development are linked, and that society now more than ever needs to adopt more sustainable ways of living and development in order to avoid further damage to the planet and climate, which would lead to problems for future generations. The Bill aims to build on the work already being carried out in Scotland to ensure that future policy decisions take into consideration impact on not only the environment but also the wellbeing of the population of Scotland, taking into account other intersecting societal issues such as climate change, inequality and poverty. To this end, the Bill proposes the establishment of a statutory duty on public bodies to have due regard to the need to promote wellbeing and sustainable development in the exercise of their functions. The Bill includes statutory definitions of the terms "wellbeing" and "sustainable development", which are intended to inform the fulfilment of the duty by public bodies. The Bill also establishes a Future Generations Commissioner for Scotland, whose role would be to promote the wellbeing of future generations and sustainable development in decision making by all public bodies.
What are the anticipated outcomes of the policy?	The outcome of the Bill will be that all public bodies will be required by law to have due regard to the need to promote wellbeing and sustainable development in the exercise of

	their functions. In doing so, they will be required to take account of any guidance issued by a newly established Future Generations Commissioner about fulfilling the public duty contained in the Bill. As well as issuing guidance, the Commissioner will be responsible for: promoting awareness and understanding among public bodies of wellbeing and sustainable development; reviewing law, policy and practice in this area; promoting best practice by public bodies; and research on matters relating to wellbeing and sustainable development. The Commissioner will also have the power to undertake investigations into matters that relate to the promotion of wellbeing and sustainable development, allowing them to examine any perceived non-compliance with the public duty contained in the Bill. It is envisaged that these measures will improve joined-up, long-term thinking within Scotland's public sector, and thereby improve wellbeing in the present without compromising the wellbeing of future generations, leading to greater inter- and intra-generational equality. In response to the Member's consultation on her proposal for this Bill, Wellbeing Economy Alliance (WEAll) made the following comment: "It is clear that achieving collective wellbeing and sustainable development [...] cannot be achieved without dismantling all forms of inequalities. The definitions, duties and commissioner proposed in this legislation would therefore put the tackling of inequalities at the heart of decision making in Scotland."¹
Who will be affected by the policy?	The Bill will most directly affect Scottish public bodies, which will be required to ensure that they are compliant with the public duty contained in the Bill. This will likely involve reviewing existing practices, taking account of any guidance issued by the Commissioner, and engaging with the Commissioner in the course of their investigations. The Bill will also affect future generations of people living in Scotland, who will benefit from a greater and more permanent focus on sustainable development and the wellbeing of future generations in the development of public policy, practice and legislation. This includes future generations of people with protected characteristics, and the

¹ [Proposed Wellbeing and Sustainable Development \(Scotland\) Bill: Summary of Responses](#), page 71.

	most vulnerable members of society. As the Bill aims to benefit the population of Scotland as a whole, regardless of protected characteristics, it is not anticipated that its provisions will have any disproportionate effect on any individual or group protected by the Equality Act 2010. Carnegie UK has observed in its <i>Life in the UK 2024 Scotland</i> report that “Wellbeing cannot flourish when there is inequality between people and communities. The differences in social wellbeing scores based on protected characteristics such as age and disability demonstrate that there is still a long way to go to make equality a reality in Scotland.”² By embedding the promotion of wellbeing in public sector decision-making through this Bill, the Member in charge considers that it will lead to greater equality and wellbeing outcomes for individuals and groups that typically experience lower wellbeing, not limited to protected characteristics but also including people experiencing poverty and deprivation.
(2) What is known about the diverse needs of those who will be affected by the policy	
Gender* (including transgender, maternity and pregnancy)	Carnegie UK and Ipsos’s <i>Life in the UK 2024 Scotland</i> report highlights that gender is not associated with any significant differences in social wellbeing in Scotland.³ According to the data, men have marginally higher wellbeing scores than women across collective (1 point), social (3 points) and economic wellbeing (5 points), but women have marginally higher scores in relation to environmental (1 point) and democratic (1 point) wellbeing.⁴ Given the broadly similar wellbeing scores of men and women, there are not considered to be any particular needs relevant to this characteristic.
Religion and Belief	There are not considered to be any particular needs relevant to this characteristic.
Age*	Children and young people in Scotland today are most likely to see the impact of the policy in their lifetimes, as long-termism and policy coherence for sustainable development

² [Life in the UK 2024 Scotland - Carnegie UK](#)

³ [Life in the UK 2024 Scotland - Carnegie UK](#), page 9

⁴ [Life in the UK 2024 Scotland - Carnegie UK](#), Appendix 1

	become increasingly embedded. It is considered that a lack of these factors in the past may have contributed to the number of children and young people experiencing poverty and deprivation. It is also considered that children and young people will experience more of the worsening effects of climate change throughout their lifetimes than older generations. Carnegie UK and Ipsos's <i>Life in the UK 2024 Scotland</i> report highlights the existing wellbeing gap between generations of people living in Scotland today, specifically finding that "People aged over 55 have a collective wellbeing score of 66. This is seven points higher than the collective wellbeing score of 16 to 34 year-olds (59)".⁵ The report points to several factors that influence wellbeing outcomes, most notably income inequality and poverty. It goes on to highlight that older people (aged 55 or over) have higher wellbeing scores than younger people in every individual wellbeing measure cited in the report: social wellbeing, economic wellbeing, environmental wellbeing and democratic wellbeing. In addition, results from Scotland's Census show that there was a large increase in the number of younger people reporting mental health conditions, rising from 2.5% in 2011 to 15.4% in 2022. According to the Director of Census Statistics: "There were also increases in older age groups but the biggest increases were seen in younger groups and it is now more common for younger people to report a mental health condition [... which] is the reverse of what we saw in 2011."⁶
Disability*	Carnegie UK and Ipsos have found that disabled people generally experience lower levels of wellbeing than non-disabled people. Notably, their report found that "Disabled people have an average collective wellbeing score of 55, which is ten points lower than for people without a disability (65)".⁷ This is reflected in the findings that disabled people have lower social, economic, environmental and democratic wellbeing scores than non-disabled people.⁸ Results of Scotland's Census found that there had been a

⁵ [Life in the UK 2024 Scotland - Carnegie UK](#), page 7

⁶ [Scotland's Census – Health, disability and unpaid care | Scotland's Census](#)

⁷ [Life in the UK 2024 Scotland - Carnegie UK](#), page 7

⁸ [Life in the UK 2024 Scotland - Carnegie UK](#), Appendix 1

	small increase in the number of people with a long-term illness, disease or condition, including conditions such as arthritis, diabetes, cancer and epilepsy, from 18.7% in 2011 to 21.4% in 2022. However, over the same period, there was a 15.7% increase in the number of people with a health problem or disability that limited their day-to-day activities a lot, and a 35.7% increase in the number whose day-to-day activities were limited a little. The results suggest that this has been driven by Scotland's ageing population, as well as an increase in younger age groups experiencing health problems that limited their day-to-day activities.⁹
Ethnicity and Race	Similarly to gender, above, Carnegie UK and Ipsos highlight that ethnicity is not associated with any significant differences in social wellbeing in Scotland.¹⁰ Specific data related to ethnicity and race is not set out in the report. However, the report does highlight that wellbeing scores across the board were lower for people living in the most deprived areas, with scores being markedly lower in most categories compared with people living in the least deprived areas. Analysis by the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER) has found that black and minority ethnic people are 60% more likely to live in the most deprived parts of Scotland than their white Scottish/British counterparts.¹¹ In light of the above, it may be the case that people from ethnic minority backgrounds are more likely to experience lower wellbeing. Findings by Public Health Scotland also suggest that minority ethnic populations in Scotland can experience health inequalities.¹²
Sexual Orientation	There are not considered to be any particular needs relevant to this characteristic.
Marriage and Civil Partnership	There are not considered to be any particular needs relevant to this characteristic.
(3) Is there enough information to help understand the needs and/or experiences of those affected by the policy	

⁹ [Scotland's Census – Health, disability and unpaid care | Scotland's Census](#)

¹⁰ [Life in the UK 2024 Scotland - Carnegie UK](#), page 9

¹¹ [Ethnicity and Socio-economic Deprivation in Scotland — CRER](#)

¹² [Monitoring racialised health inequalities in Scotland](#)

Gender* (including transgender, maternity and pregnancy)	It is considered that enough information is available to understand that there are not any particular needs relevant to this characteristic.
Religion and Belief	There are not considered to be any particular needs relevant to this characteristic.
Age*	The impact on children and young people is considered to be greater than that on older people given the long-term nature of the policy and the issues that it seeks to address. As set out above, available data shows that younger people experience worse wellbeing outcomes and are more likely to report mental health issues than older people. It is therefore considered that enough information is available to understand the needs and experiences of younger people who will be affected by the policy.
Disability*	As set out above, available data shows that disabled people experience worse wellbeing outcomes than non-disabled people, and that the number of people with a health condition or disability that limits their day-to-day activities is on the increase. It is therefore considered that enough information is available to understand the needs and experiences of disabled people who will be affected by the policy.
Ethnicity and Race	As set out above, specific data on the wellbeing of people from minority ethnic backgrounds is not readily available in the Carnegie UK and Ipsos report. However, there is information suggesting that black and minority ethnic people are more likely to live in the most deprived parts of Scotland, as well as findings that people living in the most deprived areas experience markedly worse wellbeing outcomes than those living in the least deprived areas. Data also suggests that ethnic minority populations in Scotland experience inequalities in other areas, such as health. While more detailed information on wellbeing scores for different ethnic and racial groups would be helpful in drawing a conclusion, it is considered that there is enough information available to understand that people from minority ethnic backgrounds may be more likely to experience worse wellbeing outcomes.
Sexual Orientation	There are not considered to be any particular needs relevant to this characteristic.

Marriage and Civil Partnership	There are not considered to be any particular needs relevant to this characteristic.
If not, what other information is required	N/A.
(4) What does the information given say about how the policy might impact positively and negatively on different groups	
Gender* (including transgender, maternity and pregnancy)	In light of the data set out above, it is considered that the Bill will have a positive impact on people of all genders, with no disproportionate impact on any specific gender.
Religion and Belief	There is considered to be a neutral impact on this characteristic.
Age*	It is considered that the Bill will have a positive impact on children and young people, who currently experience worse wellbeing and mental health outcomes than older people, according to the data set out above. It is also clear that activity-limiting health conditions and disabilities remain prevalent among older people, and are increasing among younger people. By embedding sustainable development and wellbeing as core considerations in public policy and decision-making, the Member in charge envisages that the provisions of her Bill will equip Scottish public bodies as a collective to tackle intersecting societal issues, such as climate change, inequality and poverty, which disproportionately impact younger people. Therefore, younger people will be more likely to see the positive impacts of the effective implementation of the Bill within their lifetimes. However, the Member considers that the issue of keeping people well and healthy needs to rise up the agenda for both older and younger people. The Policy Memorandum accompanying the Bill includes a statement by the Member in charge that, in her view, the provisions of the Bill have a positive impact on compatibility with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) requirements.¹³
Disability*	It is considered that the Bill will have a positive impact on

¹³ [Policy Memorandum accessible](#), pages 31-32.

	disabled people, who currently experience worse wellbeing outcomes than non-disabled people, according to the data set out above. The Member in charge considers that a more sustainable approach to policymaking in areas that impact disabled people, such as health, social care, education, social security and transport, will lead to positive outcomes for people with this characteristic, such as improved accessibility of public services and facilities. She also considers that this could lead to more preventative policies taking precedence in areas such as health, which will help to keep people of all ages well and healthy. For example, in response to the consultation on the Bill, Public Health Scotland highlighted the benefits of preventative health policy, which it described as “the most cost-effective means of improving population health and wellbeing”.¹⁴ It is considered that an increased focus on preventative health policy that leads to improved population health and wellbeing could have a positive impact on the management and treatment of long-term health conditions, which would in turn have a particularly positive impact on disabled people.
Ethnicity and Race	It is considered that the Bill may have a positive impact on black and minority ethnic people. The Member in charge believes that fostering a greater culture of sustainable development and policymaking focused around wellbeing will require addressing inequalities between people and communities. For example, sustainable policies and decisions in areas such as housing, social security and health may reduce inequalities experienced by ethnic minorities in relation to deprivation and health outcomes.
Sexual Orientation	There is considered to be a neutral impact on this characteristic.
Marriage and Civil Partnership	There is considered to be a neutral impact on this characteristic.
Completed by the Non-Government Bills Unit: July 2025	

*Although not a protected characteristic, carers should be given specific consideration in this category (e.g. the potential impact on those who care for older people)

¹⁴ [Proposed Wellbeing and Sustainable Development \(Scotland\) Bill: Summary of Responses](#), page 68.

Member's Comment on NGBU's Equalities Impact Assessment	
Evidence gaps identified	No evidence gaps were identified.
Member's comment: I am happy with the analysis from the Non-Government Bills Unit including the data identified.	
Adverse impacts identified	No adverse impacts of the Bill were identified.
Member's comment: I consider that the Bill will, as opposed to having any adverse impacts, have a positive impact in relation to a number of characteristics and will lead to benefits going forward.	
Completed by: Sarah Boyack MSP, 27 October 2025	