

## **BRIEFING FOR BRITISH COUNCIL COLLEAGUES**

### THE CONTEMPORARY DEVOLVED UK



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## The Contemporary Devolved UK

### Introduction

The British Council's Corporate Plan 2018-2020 sets out the organisation's strategic priorities for the next three years. It acknowledges a number of external factors that directly impact upon the framework and delivery of our work across the world, including Brexit and the ongoing refugee crisis. Devolution features prominently amongst these considerations; as the Corporate Plan acknowledges, **devolved administrations in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales set the legislative and policy agendas in key areas, including education and culture.** Furthermore, the British Council UK Strategy calls for our work to make a significant contribution to the UK's long-term international objectives by representing and serving *all* parts of the UK as well as the particular interests of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.<sup>1</sup>

The 2014 Triennial Review acknowledged the value of the British Council to all four countries of the UK. Specifically, it noted that 'devolved governments and regional bodies value access to the [British] Council's global network and its help in bringing an international dimension to cultural events'.<sup>2</sup> The Triennial Review also acknowledged areas for improvement with regards to the British Council's interactions with devolved administrations. Specifically, it recommended that:

- guidance to overseas offices on doing business with the devolved governments and regions be refreshed and re-circulated regularly to ensure a more consistent service
- the [British] Council coordinate its activities much more closely with those leading the development and implementation of domestic UK and devolved government policy.<sup>3</sup>

This guidance aims to provide colleagues across the organisation with a foundational knowledge and understanding of devolved government structures and policy. It contains an overview of the UK governance framework and subsequently examines each devolved administration in closer detail, encompassing highlights of programmes of government, international frameworks and priority geographies, and key policy foci and stakeholders in arts and education. Devolution to city regions in England is subsequently considered.

In addition to providing analysis of governance and policy frameworks, this guidance also references guidelines and toolkits developed between the UK Government and the devolved administrations. It outlines the approach that should be adopted by British Council colleagues when working across UK countries. This effective practice guidance should be adopted to ensure both consistency of service and effective stakeholder management.

Ultimately, cultural relations help to create a more nuanced understanding of the diversity of the UK. Our work also builds international connections at city, regional and country level across the UK. We trust this guidance will assist you to achieve our shared objectives.

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<sup>1</sup> British Council (2018). *Corporate Plan 2018-2020*.

<sup>2</sup> Foreign and Commonwealth Office (2014). *Triennial Review of the British Council*.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

## UK Governance Framework

The UK Government is currently comprised of 25 ministerial departments, 20 non-ministerial departments (headed by a civil servant rather than an elected representative) and more than 300 agencies and other public bodies, including the British Council. While some departments (such as the Ministry of Defence) cover the entire country, not all departments are responsible for policy and its implementation in all four countries of the United Kingdom. This is due to devolution, a process of decentralization in which powers are passed from one parliament to another with a view to allowing local factors to be better recognised in decision-making.

In 1997, the people of Scotland and Wales voted in favour of devolution during two referenda. The following year, devolution formed a key component of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement which supported the peace process following conflict in Northern Ireland. The UK Parliament subsequently passed three acts: the Scotland Act 1998, the Northern Ireland Act 1998, and the Government of Wales Act 1998. As a result, three devolved legislatures were established and granted some powers previously held by the UK Parliament. Additional powers have since been passed to the devolved administrations in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, including through the Wales Act 2017 and Scotland Act 2016. Levels and use of devolved powers varies across the devolved administrations, notable recent examples being changes in social security and taxation in Scotland.

The devolved administrations have responsibility for many significant domestic policy areas in their respective countries. Furthermore, their legislative bodies are able to pass laws in these areas. These devolved powers include, but are not limited to, health, education, culture, the environment and transport. Reserved matters (i.e. decisions taken by the UK Parliament at Westminster which affect England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) include foreign policy and defence.

Herewith an overview of the governance structures across the United Kingdom:

|  | <b>NORTHERN IRELAND</b>  | <b>SCOTLAND</b>                        | <b>WALES</b>   | <b>UNITED KINGDOM</b>  |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| <b>Legislative body</b>                  | The Northern Ireland Assembly  | The Scottish Parliament                | National Assembly for Wales (commonly known as the Welsh Assembly) | The Parliament of the United Kingdom (commonly known as the UK Parliament)   |
| <b>Number of elected representatives</b> | 90   | 129                                    | 60   | 650  |
| <b>Executive body</b>                    | The Northern Ireland Executive   | The Scottish Government                | The Welsh Government   | Her Majesty's Government (commonly referred to as the <b>UK Government</b> ) |
| <b>Leader</b>                            | First Minister and Deputy First Minister                                   | First Minister                         | First Minister   | Prime Minister   |
| <b>Current government</b>                | Ordinarily, a power-sharing Executive is in place. Talks to restore power- | A minority government comprised of the | A minority government  | Conservative government  |

|                                 |   |                         |                            |  |
|---------------------------------|---|-------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| <b>(correct at August 2018)</b> | sharing in Northern Ireland continue since its dissolution in January 2017. | Scottish National Party | formed by the Labour Party |  |
|---------------------------------|---|-------------------------|----------------------------|--|

Unlike UK general elections, which operate solely on a ‘first past the post’ (FPTP) basis, the devolved assemblies and parliament have an ‘Additional Member System’ (AMS) which elects candidates based on a mix between FPTP and proportional representation.<sup>4</sup> The devolved administrations have their own political objectives; civil servants in the Northern Ireland Executive, Scottish Government and Welsh Government therefore work to their respective governments’ priorities and do not serve Her Majesty’s Government.

The British Council works in the fields of arts and culture, English language, education and civil society – all of which are devolved matters in the United Kingdom. In other words, **the governments of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales legislate and implement policy in their respective countries for our main areas of work.** As a result, there is significant diversity in policies and approaches across the four countries of the UK, an invaluable resource that we can call upon to make a positive contribution to England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, as well as countries we work with across the world.

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<sup>4</sup> Institute for Government (2016). *Devolved Elections 2016: Politics and Parliaments*.

# Northern Ireland

Capital city: Belfast

Population (2017): 1.87 million (2.8% of total UK population)<sup>5</sup>

## Programme for Government and International Outlook

In January 2017, Northern Ireland's devolved government was suspended when the power-sharing parties – the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and Sinn Féin – became deadlocked. Since then, Northern Ireland has been without an executive and it remains possible that Northern Ireland may return to direct rule from Westminster. British Council Northern Ireland has continued to operate fully during this prolonged period of political instability through its work with departments and its Northern Ireland Advisory Committee.

In 2016, the Northern Ireland Executive consulted on a Programme for Government (2016-2021) based on 14 specific outcomes it wanted to achieve for its citizens.<sup>6</sup> The Northern Ireland Civil Service has subsequently produced a delivery plan which sets out the actions that departments intend to take during 2018-19. This gives effect to the previous Executive's stated objective of improving wellbeing for all – by tackling disadvantage and driving economic growth.<sup>7</sup>

The plan's starting point is the framework of 12 outcomes that was developed by the previous Executive and subsequently consulted on and refined during 2016-2017. The framework reflects population conditions in 12 key areas of economic and societal wellbeing that people said mattered most to them. The 12 outcomes are listed below and are unlikely to change radically with any future restoration of the Northern Ireland Executive:

- we prosper through a strong, competitive, regionally balanced economy (outcome 1)
- we live and work sustainably – protecting the environment (outcome 2)
- we have a more equal society (outcome 3)
- we enjoy long, healthy, active lives (outcome 4)
- we are an innovative, creative society, where people can fulfil their potential (outcome 5)
- we have more people working in better jobs (outcome 6)
- we have a safe community where we respect the law, and each other (outcome 7)
- we care for others and we help those in need (outcome 8)
- we are a shared, welcoming and confident society that respects diversity (outcome 9)
- we have created a place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest (outcome 10)
- we connect people and opportunities through our infrastructure (outcome 11)
- we give our children and young people the best start in life (outcome 12).<sup>8</sup>

British Council Northern Ireland focuses on **education and civic society**, and **arts**; its work in these areas strategically aligns with a number of the above outcomes set out by the Northern Ireland Executive which will be underpinned by a set of government strategies. In particular, the Children and Young People's Strategy has resonance with much of our work in schools.<sup>9</sup> The British Council continues to work with partners in core government departments in Northern Ireland (e.g. the Department for the Economy), all of which remain operational, as well as Belfast City Council, universities, colleges, schools, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, and festivals and arts organisations.

Although the Programme for Government and Executive's priorities remain outstanding, certain countries and regions are of specific international interest to Northern Ireland across a number of sectors and

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<sup>5</sup> Office for National Statistics (2018). *Population Estimates mid-2017*.

<sup>6</sup> Northern Ireland Executive (2016). *Programme for Government Consultation Document*.

<sup>7</sup> The Executive Office (2018). *Outcomes Delivery Plan 2018-19*.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Department of Education (2017). *Children and Young People's Strategy 2017-2027*.

departments. Specific geographies relevant to Northern Ireland are China, India, USA, EU, Colombia, MENA and Canada.

## Policy and Stakeholders

With no government ministers in place, senior civil servants are currently running the various government departments. As a result, there have been no significant changes to policy in Northern Ireland since the dissolution of the government, and Permanent Secretaries are not implementing any new major policy changes or developments. Nevertheless, Northern Ireland retains some distinctive features in both arts and education.

### i. *Education Policy Landscape*

The management and organisation of schools in Northern Ireland is somewhat distinctive. Controlled schools (nursery, primary, special, secondary and grammar schools) are managed by Boards of Governors while teachers are employed by the nationwide Education Authority. They represent 48% of all Northern Ireland schools. While controlled schools are open to pupils of all faiths and none, two-thirds of pupils identify as Protestant.<sup>10</sup> Maintained schools (nursery, primary, special and secondary) are also under the management of Boards of Governors but teachers are employed by the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS). These schools are also open to all pupils but practice and teach the Catholic faith. More than 95% of pupils in maintained schools identify as Roman Catholic.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to controlled and maintained schools, some 65 integrated schools educate children from both Protestant and Catholic traditions as well as those of other faiths and none together.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, Irish-medium education (education provided in an Irish-speaking school/setting) is also available. More than 6,000 pupils are educated in 30 Irish-medium schools and 10 Irish-medium units attached to English-speaking schools; there are also Irish-medium nurseries.<sup>13</sup> Finally, grammar schools in Northern Ireland are able to use academic selection as the basis for admission. In 2017-18, 45% of post-primary (i.e. high school) students were taught in academically-selective schools.<sup>14</sup>

Regardless of school setting, all learners in publicly-funded schools follow the Northern Ireland Curriculum which was introduced in 2007 and covers all 12 years of compulsory education. It is a responsibility of the **Department of Education (DE), one of nine government departments in Northern Ireland.**<sup>15</sup> **Its primary function is to promote the education of people in Northern Ireland and ensure education policy is effectively implemented.**

In Northern Ireland, the Department for the Economy is responsible for higher education, including policy and strategy, finance governance, student finance and research policy. The department's remit also includes further education as well as employment and skills. Northern Ireland has three autonomous universities, two initial teacher education colleges and seven further education colleges. Almost 55,000 students were enrolled in higher education programmes of study in Northern Ireland in 2016/2017.<sup>16</sup>

### ii. *Arts Policy Landscape*

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<sup>10</sup> Controlled Schools' Support Council (2018). *Controlled Education Sector*.

<sup>11</sup> Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (2014). *Shared/Integrated Education Inquiry*.

<sup>12</sup> Department of Education (2018). *Integrated Education: 2017/2018 Key Statistics*.

<sup>13</sup> Department of Education (2018). *Irish Medium Education: 2017/2018 Key Statistics*.

<sup>14</sup> Department of Education (2018). *Annual Enrolments at Schools and in Funded Pre-School Education in Northern Ireland, 2017/2018*.

<sup>15</sup> In Northern Ireland, the executive agency is titled the Department **of** Education. In contrast, the Department **for** Education is responsible for children's services and education in England.

<sup>16</sup> Higher Education Statistics Agency (2018). *Where do HE students study?*

Arts and Culture falls under the remit of the Department of Communities, the largest of the nine Northern Ireland Civil Service departments. It sets arts policy, provides funding for the arts in Northern Ireland, and supports arts based initiatives. It is also the government lead for the creative industries, a sector that employs some 36,000 in Northern Ireland.<sup>17</sup> Notably, the Minister for Communities ordinarily has responsibility for the culture, arts and leisure sectors, indicating the potential role of the arts in bringing divided communities together. The sub-title of Northern Ireland’s Draft Strategy for Culture and Arts 2016-2026 – ‘how arts and culture can best promote equality and tackle poverty and social exclusion: making arts and culture available to everyone’ – reinforces the position of the arts as an economic driver as well as a tool for community cohesion in Northern Ireland.<sup>18</sup>

The Department of Communities funds the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, the development and funding agency for the arts in Northern Ireland. In turn, it distributes public money and additional community funding to develop and deliver a wide variety of arts projects, events and initiatives across Northern Ireland. In 2016/17, 107 arts organisations received £13.92m as part of its Annual Funding Programme<sup>19</sup>. The British Council in Northern Ireland has a MOU with the Arts Council.

### Key Agencies and Stakeholders in Arts and Education

| BODY                                    | FUNCTION   |
|---|--|
| <b>Department of Education</b>          | Ministerial department charged with promoting the education of the people of Northern Ireland and ensuring the effective implementation of education policy. Its remit includes curriculum and learning, teachers’ pay and conditions and community relations among schools. |
| <b>Education Authority</b>              | Charged with ensuring efficient and effective primary and secondary education services are available.  |
| <b>Department for the Economy</b>       | Ministerial department responsible for higher education, further education and employment and skills policy and funding.   |
| <b>Department of Communities</b>        | Ministerial department with strategic responsibility for arts and culture.   |
| <b>Arts Council of Northern Ireland</b> | Funding and development agency for the arts.   |

<sup>17</sup> Department for Communities (2018). *Arts Overview*.

<sup>18</sup> Department for Communities (2015). *Strategy for Culture and Arts 2016-2026*.

<sup>19</sup> Arts Council Northern Ireland (2017). *Annual Funding Survey Results*.

# Scotland

Capital city: Edinburgh

Population (2017): 5.42 million (8.2% of total UK population)<sup>20</sup>

## Programme for Government and International Outlook

The Scottish Government produces an annual programme outlining the policies the government will implement in the parliamentary year, as well as the Scottish Government's legislative programme.<sup>21</sup> In addition, the Scottish Government refreshed and relaunched Scotland's National Performance Framework in June 2018. Eleven new National Outcomes reflect the Scottish Government's ambitions. Of these, five are particularly relevant to the British Council, namely:

- we have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy
- we respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination
- we are open, connected and make a positive contribution internationally
- we are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society
- we are creative and our vibrant and diverse cultures are expressed and enjoyed widely.<sup>22</sup>

The National Performance Framework functions as a measurement tool for the public sector in Scotland but also as an overarching structure; across departments, the Scottish Government aligns its work to the framework. It will thus influence legislative, policy and resourcing decisions during the new parliamentary session. The National Performance Framework has also been mapped across the Sustainable Development Goals.

As indicated in the National Outcomes above, the Scottish Government places a strong emphasis on international engagement and Scotland's position as an outward-looking country. It revised its international policy statement and framework in 2017 and has identified a series of priority geographies, specifically North America, EU Europe, China, India, Pakistan, and Japan.<sup>23</sup> The Scottish Government focuses its international development efforts in Rwanda, Zambia and Malawi and has produced engagement strategies for each of its priority countries.<sup>24</sup>

The Scottish Government and its agencies continue to increase their international footprint. Scottish Development International, the international arm of the country's enterprise agencies which leads on inward investment, has over thirty offices globally. In recent years the Scottish Government has started to establish a network of Innovation and Investment Hubs in key geographies including Dublin, Brussels, Berlin and Paris. These hubs are intended to support a range of interests, including diplomatic and government-to-government relationships, cultural collaborations, research and innovation collaborations and broader economic interests. The Scottish Government has had a First Secretary for Scottish Affairs post in the UK Embassy in Beijing for a number of years.

In April 2018, the Scottish Government and a number of its national agencies launched 'Scotland is Now', a new international marketing campaign.<sup>25</sup> It aims to reposition Scotland internationally by championing the openness of the country to students, investors, migrants and visitors. This £6m advertising campaign promotes Scotland as innovative, open, welcoming, diverse, responsible and committed to human rights.

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<sup>20</sup> Office for National Statistics (2018). *Population Estimates mid-2017*.

<sup>21</sup> Scottish Government (2017). *A Nation with Ambition*.

<sup>22</sup> Scottish Government (2018). *Scotland's National Performance Framework*.

<sup>23</sup> Scottish Government (2017). *Scotland's International Framework*.

<sup>24</sup> For example, Scottish Government (2017). *Scotland's International Framework: US Engagement Strategy*.

<sup>25</sup> Scotland is Now (2018). *Scotland is Now*.

## Policy and Stakeholders

British Council Scotland focuses on **education** and **arts**, both of which are fully devolved responsibilities. While policy in both areas has long been distinctive, it has transformed significantly since devolution and often diverges from approaches taken in other countries of the UK.

### i. *Education Policy Landscape*

In **schools**, Scotland has a distinctive 'Curriculum for Excellence'. It intends to provide a coherent, flexible and enriched approach to learning from age three to eighteen with the purpose of supporting young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. It aspires to develop the knowledge, skills and attributes required by learners for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is supported by a unique and internationally renowned inspection and improvement system alongside a system-wide commitment to high quality teacher training, induction and development. Furthermore, the Scottish Qualifications Authority provides a distinctive suite of qualifications for learners in Scotland and internationally.

In **vocational education and training**, Scotland has a distinctive approach to work-based learning, qualification frameworks and college funding. Colleges are public bodies and their role in supporting social inclusion and progression, including to higher education, is emphasised in funding agreements. College regions have been established as part of a system-wide approach to post-16 education and training where policy incentives focus on strong college partnerships with schools, employers and universities working together to address regional needs. Focused attempts to reduce youth unemployment by 40% by 2021 underpin this.<sup>26</sup>

In **higher education**, Scotland notably abolished tuition fees for domiciled undergraduate students and has a distinct four year degree structure. Policy incentives and funding agreements that emphasise widening access and education as a public good underpin a joined up and collaborative approach by Scotland's 19 higher education institutions. This is evidenced by quality assurance and credit recognition processes that are owned by the sector as well as 'enhancement themes' that place learner benefit at the centre. Collective and individual research strengths are evidenced by the comparatively high levels of international and UK funding the sector secures and the results of the UK Research Excellence Framework 2014; all of Scotland's higher education institutions undertake research judged to be 'world leading' and research impact scores are above the UK average.<sup>27</sup> Innovation and collaboration in research is supported by Research Pools and Innovation Centres that facilitate the pooling of complementary strengths across institutions.

### ii. *Arts Policy Landscape*

Scotland has an international reputation for innovation and quality in **culture**, supported by a domestic policy approach that emphasises the role culture plays in identity, wellbeing and quality of life. Scottish Government structures and funding schemes used to implement policy acknowledge the vital role played by the historic environment, heritage, national collections and institutions, contemporary art practice and the creative industries in supporting cultural and economic development. Indeed, a single Cabinet Secretary is responsible for a government portfolio including Culture, Tourism and External Affairs, thus demonstrating the strength of Scotland's cultural assets and the important role they play in the promotion of Scotland internationally.

In June 2018, the Scottish Government published a draft Culture Strategy for Scotland; a public consultation is now underway.<sup>28</sup> The Scottish Government has protected culture funding in recent years with an increase of almost 10% in 2017/18 across its portfolio of national arts companies (e.g. Scottish

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<sup>26</sup> Education Scotland (2018). *Developing the Young Workforce (DYW)*.

<sup>27</sup> Universities Scotland (2014). *Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014*.

<sup>28</sup> Scottish Government (2018). *A Culture Strategy for Scotland: Draft for Consultation*.

Ballet), institutions, arts/cultural policy and funding organisations.<sup>29</sup> Creative Scotland is responsible for policy and distributing funds to the arts, film and creative industries, with the enterprise bodies also investing in the creative industries. Its annual budget in 2017/18 was £74m.<sup>30</sup>

The Edinburgh Festivals, alongside other major festivals such as Celtic Connections and Glasgow International, provide a globally renowned platform for international connections to develop, and provide a catalyst and opportunities for collaborations and exchanges to emerge for the wider arts sector. Edinburgh's role as 'The World's Festival City' attracts artists, audiences and media from more than 70 countries and generates £313 million annually for the Scottish economy<sup>31</sup>. While the major cities in the central belt of Scotland are home to the majority of artists and cultural organisations, Scotland's other cities, as well as rural and island communities, support a vibrant arts network and valuable cultural assets of international significance.

### Key Agencies and Stakeholders in Arts and Education

| BODY   | FUNCTION  |
|--|---|
| <b>Education Scotland</b>                    | National improvement agency for education (including curriculum, inspection and review).                                  |
| <b>General Teaching Council for Scotland</b> | Self-regulating body for teaching that promotes, supports and develops the professional learning of teachers.             |
| <b>Scottish Qualifications Authority</b>     | Devises and develops qualifications, and accredits qualifications other than degrees.                                     |
| <b>Colleges Scotland</b>                     | Representative body of the colleges sector.   |
| <b>Skills Development Scotland</b>           | National skills agency (supports individuals to build their career management, work-based and employability skills).      |
| <b>Scottish Funding Council</b>              | Responsible for funding teaching and learning provision, research and other activities in colleges and universities.      |
| <b>Universities Scotland</b>                 | Representative body of <b>Scotland's</b> 19 higher education institutions.  |
| <b>Scottish Development International</b>    | International arm of the Scottish Government and Scotland's enterprise agencies (supports inward investment to Scotland). |
| <b>Creative Scotland</b>                     | Public body that supports the arts, screen and creative industries nationwide.  |

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Creative Scotland (2017). *Creative Scotland Annual Plan 2017/2018*.

<sup>31</sup> Scottish Government (2018). *A Culture Strategy for Scotland: Draft for Consultation*.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Festivals Edinburgh</b>                    | Collaborative body that supports Edinburgh's festivals in sustaining and developing their position as the world's leading festival city.                        |
| <b>Edinburgh International Culture Summit</b> | A biennial summit that brings together Culture Ministers, artists, thinkers and arts leaders from around the world to share ideas, expertise and best practice. |
| <b>Glasgow Life</b>                           | Charitable organisation dedicated to inspiring Glasgow's citizens and visitors to lead richer and more active lives through culture, sport and learning.        |

# Wales

Capital city: Cardiff

Population (2017): 3.13 million (4.7% of total UK population)<sup>32</sup>

The Welsh and English languages have equal status in public life in Wales.<sup>33</sup> Welsh is an official language and all public sector bodies, including the British Council, have a duty to treat both languages equally. Our Welsh Language Scheme explains which services we provide in Welsh (e.g. responding to phone calls or emails from Welsh speakers and our use of the Welsh language on signs, forms and publications).<sup>34</sup>

## Programme for Government and International Outlook

In 2016, the Welsh Government published its Programme for Government. Titled *Taking Wales Forward*, it sets out the government's key priorities over a five year period to enable a Wales that is healthy and active, prosperous and secure, ambitious and learning, and united and connected.<sup>35</sup> These four themes are underpinned by 12 well-being objectives, some of which are highly relevant to and supported by the work of British Council Wales:

- support young people to make the most of their potential (objective 7)
- build ambition and encourage learning for life (objective 8)
- equip everyone with the right skills for a changing world (objective 9)
- build resilient communities, culture, and language (objective 10).<sup>36</sup>

The programme is supported by a national strategy which sets out how it will be delivered by co-ordinated working across the Welsh public sector. Titled *Prosperity for All*, it focuses on achieving a good quality of life for residents as well as strong, safe communities.<sup>37</sup>

In 2015, *The Welsh Government's International Agenda* was published.<sup>38</sup> It highlights at the macro level the necessary steps to ensure Wales has a strong footprint around the world., The Welsh Government has also stated its ambition for 'Wales to become the most creatively active nation in Europe'.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, the Secretary of States for Wales (an appointment at Westminster) positions Wales as 'an ambitious outward-looking nation, home to some of the most innovative businesses developing products that are being sold around the world'.<sup>40</sup> Interest in international engagement has grown since Brexit with notable Welsh Government investment in its international reputation and reach. By the end of 2018, it will have 21 representations in the UK and Ireland, Germany, Japan, China, India, UAE, USA, Canada, Belgium, Qatar and France.<sup>41</sup> Offices are responsible for trade and investment, government relations, tourism, culture and education while the primary focus of the Brussels office is EU matters.

Future reform for the Welsh Assembly includes **a change of name to Welsh Parliament before the end of the current Assembly (2021)**.<sup>42</sup> A recent inquiry also recommended an increase in the number of Assembly Members; a more **proportional electoral system**, switching to the Single Transferable

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<sup>32</sup> Office for National Statistics (2018). *Population Estimates mid-2017*.

<sup>33</sup> Welsh Government (2011). *The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011*.

<sup>34</sup> British Council (2018). *Welsh Language Scheme*.

<sup>35</sup> Welsh Government (2016). *Taking Wales Forward 2016-2021*.

<sup>36</sup> Welsh Government (2017). *Well-being Statement 2017*.

<sup>37</sup> Welsh Government (2017). *Prosperity for All: the National Strategy*.

<sup>38</sup> Welsh Government (2015). *The Welsh Government's International Agenda*.

<sup>39</sup> Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee (2016). *Written Evidence: Portfolio Priorities*

<sup>40</sup> Office of the Secretary of State for Wales (2018). *Welsh Economy One of the Fastest Growing in the UK*.

<sup>41</sup> Welsh Government (2018). *International Offices*.

<sup>42</sup> National Assembly (2018). *Assembly Reform Programme*.

Vote system; and **lowering the minimum voting age** for Assembly elections to include **sixteen and seventeen year olds**.<sup>43</sup>

## Policy and Stakeholders

British Council Wales focuses on **education, arts and public affairs**. Policy-making is almost entirely devolved in our principal areas of work. In the two decades since devolution, the political landscape in Wales has changed radically and policy-making has begun to diverge markedly from other UK nations.

### i. *Education Policy Landscape*

The **Welsh school** system is distinctive. A notably different curriculum is being developed for Wales which makes learning more experience-based, assessment more developmental, and offers teachers greater flexibility to deliver to the learners they teach. It places emphasis on equipping young people for life and seeks to develop ambitious, capable learners; enterprising, creative contributors; ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world; and healthy, confident individuals. The final curriculum and assessment arrangements will be available at the beginning of 2020 and the curriculum will be progressively rolled out – initially from primary school to Year 7 and then year on year from 2022 onwards.<sup>44</sup>

Wales has a genuinely bilingual school system and since 2000, the teaching of Welsh has been compulsory in all schools in Wales up to age 16. Of the 1,500 schools across Wales, more than a quarter are exclusively Welsh-medium. A further 7% are bi-lingual.<sup>45</sup> Estyn, the office of Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales, inspects quality and standards in education and training in Wales in English-medium, Welsh-medium and bi-lingual settings. The role of Welsh-medium education reflects broader government ambitions – in 2016, the First Minister launched plans to grow the number of Welsh speakers to one million by 2050, and the strategy was launched in 2017.<sup>46</sup>

In **vocational education and training**, Wales has a distinctive approach to work-based learning (whereby provider-based training in further education colleges and other settings is combined with training in the workplace). In 2017, the Welsh Government announced its commitment to delivering 100,000 all-age apprenticeships by 2022 in order to address reports of skills shortages and the demands of Welsh businesses and the wider economy.<sup>47</sup> A wider range of apprenticeships is being developed, including 'junior' (age 14-16) and degree level. More broadly, further education is popular among young people in Wales: two-thirds of all 16-18 year-old learners choose to study at colleges.<sup>48</sup> The further education sector thus directly supports the Welsh Government's aim to widen participation and stimulate economic regeneration.

Significant **higher education** policy reform is underway in Wales. The Department for Education and Skills (which encompasses schools, further education, higher education, skills and training) is currently developing a new student finance system by 2019, a new framework for its post-compulsory education system, and new initial teacher training programmes to support the delivery of the new curriculum and assessment system in schools. The department funds the higher education sector in Wales through the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales. This body regulates tuition fee levels at Wales' nine universities, provides a quality assurance framework for institutions, and assesses the performances of universities.<sup>49</sup> Support for students is provided by Student Finance Wales. While research funding is not devolved, the Welsh Government has invested heavily in its Sêr Cymru II programme to support 150 high-

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<sup>43</sup> Assembly Commission (2018). *Consultation on Creating a Parliament for Wales*.

<sup>44</sup> Welsh Government (2018). *New School Curriculum*.

<sup>45</sup> Stats Wales (2018). *Schools by Local Authority, Region and Welsh Medium Type*.

<sup>46</sup> Welsh Government (2017). *Cymraeg 2050: Welsh Language Strategy*.

<sup>47</sup> Welsh Government (2017). *Aligning the Apprenticeship Model to the Needs of the Welsh Economy*.

<sup>48</sup> Colleges Wales (2018). *The Further Education Sector in Wales*.

<sup>49</sup> Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (2018). *Higher Education Funding Council for Wales*

quality researchers in Wales to build critical mass and capacity to generate future competitive funding for Wales.<sup>50</sup>

Qualifications Wales regulates the qualifications system in Wales as well as all non-degree qualifications that are developed and delivered by the awarding bodies that they recognise.<sup>51</sup> Qualifications frameworks are markedly different to other countries of the UK. The Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) is an all-inclusive framework designed to provide greater clarity on the qualifications system in Wales. It encompasses higher education, regulated qualifications (which includes vocational and general qualifications), and Quality Assured Lifelong Learning.<sup>52</sup>

## ii. *Arts Policy Landscape*

The **arts** fall under the ministerial portfolio for Culture, Tourism and Sport. Funding is distributed from the Welsh Government through the Arts Council of Wales; in 2018/19, the Welsh Government provided nearly £32m grant-in-aid funding to the Arts Council of Wales.<sup>53</sup> The Welsh Government sets out a number of priorities and expectations for the Arts Council to incorporate into its operational planning at the outset of each financial year. These draw directly upon the Programme for Government and its core themes, namely healthy and active, prosperous and secure, ambitious and learning, and united and connected. The latest remit instructions for 2018/19 strongly reflect the wider Welsh Government's ambition of prosperity (i.e. a good quality of life) for all and increased participation from people of all backgrounds. They also, however, reflect Wales' increasingly global outlook, with instructions to 'maintain and develop ... existing international links, including those within the EU, in China, and in India; help us to ensure that Wales is properly represented in relevant UK-wide cultural initiatives overseas'.<sup>54</sup>

The Arts Council of Wales, the country's funding and development organisation for the arts, decides how to distribute funding among organisations and individuals. As a legally, culturally and socially bi-lingual nation, Welsh-medium arts are prominent – the Arts Council of Wales delivered some 10,000 Welsh-medium participatory events in 2016/17, attracting 192,000 participants.<sup>55</sup>

As previously noted, the Welsh Government aspires for 'Wales to become to most creatively active nation in Europe'.<sup>56</sup> As the new curriculum is developed for schools across Wales, creativity is being given a central role. This is in response to 12 recommendations made by Professor Dai Smith who examined arts in Welsh schools.<sup>57</sup> The Welsh Government subsequently produced a Creative Learning Plan (2015-2020) in collaboration with the Arts Council of Wales which seeks to enable children and young people to have the opportunity to engage in arts and cultural activities. In doing so, it endeavours to improve attainment through creativity, increase and improve arts experiences in schools, and support teachers and arts practitioners in developing their skills. It also aims to support schools, teachers and arts practitioners in developing practice that will prepare them for the new curriculum.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Welsh Government (2017). *Sêr Cymru II Inception Evaluation Executive Summary*.

<sup>51</sup> Qualifications Wales (2018). *Regulatory Role*.

<sup>52</sup> Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (2017). *Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales*.

<sup>53</sup> Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport (2018). *Arts Council of Wales Remit Letter*.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Arts Council of Wales (2017). *General Activities and Lottery Distribution*.

<sup>56</sup> Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee (2016). *Written Evidence: Portfolio Priorities*.

<sup>57</sup> Welsh Government (2013). *The Welsh Government Response to Professor Dai Smith's Report*.

<sup>58</sup> Welsh Government (2017). *Creative Learning through the Arts Plan*.

## Key Agencies and Stakeholders in Arts and Education

| BODY   | FUNCTION  |
|--|---|
| <b>The Department for Education and Skills</b>           | Ministerial department responsible for education and skills. Its remit includes raising standards and delivering a suitably skilled workforce across schools, further education, higher education, skills and training. |
| <b>Higher Education Funding Council for Wales</b>        | Regulates fees, ensures a framework is in place for quality assurance and assesses the performance of universities.   |
| <b>National Academy for Educational Leadership Wales</b> | Supports and develops leadership practice across the school level education system in Wales.  |
| <b>Qualifications Wales</b>                              | Qualifications Wales is the statutory body that regulates the qualifications system in Wales as well as all non-degree qualifications that are developed and delivered by the awarding bodies that they recognise.      |
| <b>Estyn</b>   | Education and training inspectorate for Wales providing an independent inspection and advice service on quality and standards in education and training provided in Wales.  |
| <b>Universities Wales</b>                                | Representative body of <b>Wales'</b> 9 higher education institutions.   |
| <b>Colleges Wales</b>                                    | National organisation representing all further education colleges and institutions in Wales.  |
| <b>The Department for Culture, Tourism and Sport</b>     | Ministerial department responsible for participation in and engagement with the arts, tourism and sport.  |
| <b>Arts Council of Wales</b>                             | Funding and development organisation for the arts.  |
| <b>Wales Arts International</b>                          | Arts Council of Wales agency which develops international opportunities in the arts.  |
| <b>Welsh Language Commissioner</b>                       | Promotes and facilitates use of the Welsh language, including raising awareness of the official status of the language in Wales and by imposing standards on organisations.   |

# Devolution to City Regions in England

Local government has a remit for a range of vital services for people and businesses in defined areas. These include functions such as social care, housing, education, culture, licensing and environmental services. Devolution across England aims to transform local governance in order to maximise efficiency, promote local economic growth and integrate public services. This is in response to the uneven distribution of economic prosperity across the different regions, cities and communities of the UK. Successive governments have sought to tackle these persistent gaps in prosperity by improving local economic performance.

The Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill 2015-2016 was introduced to provide greater powers to areas with a combined authority that agreed to have a directly elected mayor.<sup>59</sup> In July 2015, HM Government requested submissions from combined authorities so that powers could be devolved as part of the Spending Review and Autumn Statement 2015. Thirty-eight bids were submitted to HM Treasury.

A combined authority (CA) is an area larger than the existing local authorities but smaller than the regions. Combined authorities are created voluntarily and allow a group of local authorities to pool appropriate responsibilities and receive certain delegated functions from central government in order to deliver transport and economic policy more effectively over a wider area. A CA is a legal body set up using national legislation that enables a group of two or more councils to collaborate and take collective decisions across council boundaries. It is more robust than an informal partnership or a joint committee. The creation of a CA means that member councils can be more ambitious in their joint working and can take advantage of powers and resources devolved to them from national government. While established by the UK Parliament, CAs are locally owned and have to be initiated and supported by the councils involved.<sup>60</sup>

Directly elected mayors are chairs of their area's combined authority and are elected by the residents of this area. The mayor, in partnership with the combined authority, exercises the powers and functions devolved from HM Government that are set out in the local area's devolution deal. With the exception of Cornwall, all devolution deals require areas to have a directly elected mayor. This is intended to provide clear accountability over the powers, functions and funding that is devolved from national to local level.<sup>61</sup>

So far, ten devolution deals have been secured by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (2016), Cornwall (2015), Greater Manchester (2014), Liverpool City Region (2015), London (2015), North of Tyne (2017), Sheffield City Region (2014), Tees Valley (2015), West of England (2016), and West Midlands (2015).<sup>62</sup> Thus far, the devolution deals secured can be characterised as a 'menu with specials'. The core powers made available to most areas include restructuring the further education system, business support, the Work Programme, managing EU structural funds, fiscal powers, integrated transport systems, planning and land use, and capacity-building and upskilling for change. Bespoke devolved powers (i.e. the 'specials') have been offered to a limited selection of combined authorities in housing, health and social care, intra-city transport, local industrial strategies, and projects which drive productivity by improving connectivity and utilising new mobility services and technology. The Devolution Register provides an overview of what different areas have achieved in their deals.<sup>63</sup>

Broadly speaking, the arts, culture, education and society have not been at the centre of devolution agreements. However, the contribution of each of these fields to economic development is increasingly recognised due to the visitor economy, support to SMEs, business growth (particularly in the creative economy), increased employability and skills, and the development of inclusive growth of benefit to all communities (often with a particular focus on social enterprise). Furthermore, devolution is a dynamic

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<sup>59</sup> Local Government Association (2015). Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill.

<sup>60</sup> Local Government Association (2018). Combined Authorities.

<sup>61</sup> Local Government Association (2018). Directly Elected Mayors.

<sup>62</sup> Local Government Association (2018). Devolution Deals.

<sup>63</sup> Local Government Association (2018). Devolution Register.

process – the combined authorities that secured early devolution deals have subsequently negotiated the transference of additional powers. The introduction of CAs and the process of devolution constitute a significant policy and governance shift with long-term transformational potential.

### **Combined Authorities/City Regions: International Outlook**

Many cities in England have dedicated international agencies, teams and strategies with identified priority markets and countries – this is not a new phenomenon. They typically focus on exporting goods and services, attracting visitors and students, and boosting inward and foreign direct investment. Combined authorities now seek to maximise their international impact across a wider geography, working collaboratively as a cluster of local authorities. For example, the *Greater Manchester Internationalisation Strategy 2017-2020* sets out how the city region will ‘compete on the international stage for talent, investment, trade and ideas’.<sup>64</sup>

We see an opportunity to utilise the British Council’s network in over 100 countries and over 150 cities to support and develop mutual collaboration between cities, embedding cultural relations at the heart of city growth and city connectedness. In the UK, there is a clear opportunity to work with city leaders, key stakeholders and influencers to support a city’s international strategy, particularly vis-à-vis education, the arts and society. Our Global Cities Strategy puts in place a clear framework and way of working which enables us to build strong, sustained relationships with city regions/combined authorities and their leaders.

Key stakeholders in city regions in England include the CAs and local authorities mentioned above. Other important stakeholders at the local level include England’s network of Local Economic Partnerships which lead on economic growth and job creation at the local level. A key national network is the Core Cities Group, which is a network of eight English cities plus Glasgow and Cardiff.

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<sup>64</sup> Greater Manchester Combined Authority (2017). *Greater Manchester Internationalisation Strategy 2017-2020*.

# Working across UK Countries: Guidance for Staff

The multi-faceted nature of the British Council's work means no pro-forma guidance can accommodate all of our operations. Nevertheless, as the Triennial Review pointed out, it is imperative that we offer both a consistent approach and level of understanding when interacting with devolved governments and regions. We therefore set out the following guiding principles for all staff to follow.

1. The UK Region team is advised at the earliest opportunity of aspirations or plans to engage with devolved administrations, agencies and/or stakeholders. British Council Northern Ireland, British Council Scotland and British Council Wales manage the organisation's relationships with stakeholders in the respective countries; as such, agencies/individuals should not be approached without informing the relevant country team who are best placed to signpost appropriate organisations and individuals.
2. Policy and practice in the British Council's core areas of business differ significantly across the UK. While staff based outwith the UK are not expected to be policy experts, colleagues should use this guidance as well as the links it contains to ensure a foundational knowledge of the policy landscape in the devolved administration(s) of interest. Staff should be confident that they possess this understanding prior to engaging with stakeholders on the relevant topic (e.g. quality assurance, arts for social change). When necessary, colleagues should call upon the expertise of the arts and education staff in Belfast, Edinburgh and Cardiff who possess a detailed knowledge and understanding.
3. Colleagues should take advantage of any additional training opportunities to ensure they are equipped to represent and serve all parts of the UK as well as the particular interests of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.
4. Colleague should be mindful of the need to both take account of and reflect the diversity of the UK when developing programmes, campaigns or seasons.

It is important for colleagues to be aware that agreements, protocols and concordats have been developed between HM Government and the devolved administrations, including in relation to foreign policy and international relations. These derive from the Memorandum of Understanding between the UK Government and devolved administrations which is overseen by the Joint Ministerial Committee (comprised of the Prime Minister the First Ministers of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland).<sup>65</sup>

The MOU and related protocols set out devolved administrations' obligations regarding foreign policy and other matters. Furthermore, it sets out the expectation that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will:

*involve the devolved administrations as fully as possible in discussions about the UK's policy position on all EU and international issues which touch on devolved matters. ... [It] will provide the devolved administrations with timely, relevant and comprehensive information and analysis on international developments that may affect their responsibilities or be relevant to their interests. This will include relevant reporting from UK Missions overseas.*<sup>66</sup>

This would be relevant, for example, when a bilateral MOU between the UK and another country is being considered or developed. The protocol also notes that the British Council:

*will continue to promote the UK and all its constituent parts. The British Council will maintain operational links with the devolved administrations through its offices in Belfast, Edinburgh and Cardiff and will invite two senior officials from each devolved administration to sit respectively on its advisory Northern Ireland, Scottish or Welsh Committees. The devolved administrations will also be able to use the Council's expertise for specific tasks on a contract basis.*<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Cabinet Office (2012). *Devolution: Memorandum of Understanding and Supplementary Agreement*.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.