



The SDG Accord

The University and College Sector's Collective Response to the Global Goals

Integration of SDGs in

- Institutional governance/strategic level
- SDGs in research
- SDGs in campus operations
- SDGs in curriculum development
- SDGs in student engagement activities
- SDGs into community activities
- SDGs at a whole-institution level

Focus on

- Goal 1 - No poverty
- Goal 2 - Zero hunger
- Goal 3 - Good health and wellbeing
- Goal 4 - Quality education
- Goal 5 - Gender equality
- Goal 6 - Clean water and sanitation
- Goal 7 - Affordable and clean energy
- Goal 8 - Decent work and economic growth
- Goal 9 - Industry, innovation and infrastructure
- Goal 10 - Reduced inequalities
- Goal 11 - Sustainable cities and communities
- Goal 12 - Responsible consumption and production
- Goal 13 - Climate action
- Goal 14 - Life below water
- Goal 15 - Life on land
- Goal 16 - Peace, justice and strong institutions
- Goal 17 - Partnerships for the goals

For each of the themes selected, please provide the relevant case study following the structure below:

SDG Accord Reporting 2021 CASE STUDY

The relevance of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for Newcastle

A team from Newcastle University, led by Dr. Emily Clough and Dr. Graham Long from the School of Geography, Politics and Sociology, have been looking at the relevance of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for Newcastle. Internationally, cities are increasingly using the SDGs in monitoring and policymaking. In addition to individual cities reporting on the SDGs (e.g. New York, Buenos Aires, London, and Bristol), comparative exercises organised by OECD and SDSN (the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network) aim to use the SDGs to measure and rank city performance. The power of the SDGs as a framework for local action lies in their broad and interlinked agenda that targets action on climate change and environmental protection, but also on equality, inclusivity and good governance.

The SDGs are centred on a set of global goals and targets. Working in partnership with Newcastle City Council, the team worked to identify a set of local indicator metrics that reflected SDG targets in the Newcastle context. This list aims to cover the full SDG agenda and focus on key points of relevance, whilst reflecting specific local issues and priorities and being mindful of the data available.

The team has sourced data addressing this list of 50 indicators, presenting this data (along with an analysis of trend), and a high-level analysis of progress and challenges as a resource for policymakers and the public. This work has shown that the SDGs can be used to frame a comprehensive overview of Newcastle's challenges and progress, and also offer a framework from which to reflect on what is missing from currently available local data.

The team also worked to test the scope for supplementary metrics focusing on health and wellbeing. Both the larger data picture compiled by the SDG project and this higher frequency health and wellbeing data could be useful resources in monitoring efforts to 'build back better' in the North East's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

BENEFITS

1. This work has shown that the SDGs can be used to frame a comprehensive overview of Newcastle's challenges and progress, and also offer a framework from which to reflect on what is missing from currently available local data – an approach which has wider potential for other cities.
2. The SDGs pose two larger global themes that resonate in Newcastle. The first is the SDGs' pledge to 'leave no one behind' in implementation and review. Just as the COVID-19 crisis has highlighted vulnerable and marginalised populations within society and exacerbated their situation, the SDGs insist on a focus on the worst off and most disadvantaged in review at all levels. Reflecting this, the team has begun to systematically consider and categorise intersecting dimensions of marginalisation in Newcastle to assess what is revealed - and concealed – in available data, how this might be supplemented, and how to ensure inclusivity and voice for marginalised groups.
3. The second aspect of the SDGs – linking back to the commitment to 'leave no one behind' and again underscored by the COVID-19 pandemic - is the importance of inclusive, participatory stakeholder engagement. This global approach translates in the local context into a 'whole of Newcastle' approach. As part of the project, then, work in progress sketches an initial roadmap for stakeholder engagement in Newcastle, outlining basic principles and next steps.

SDG Accord Reporting 2021 CASE STUDY

BARRIERS

1. Further exploration of health and wellbeing indicators is important to underpin the Future Needs Assessment and better align with the WHO Healthy Cities Framework. The initial Newcastle SDG indicator set reflects roughly 12 of the priority issues within the six WHO themes of people, planet, place, prosperity, peace and partnership.
2. Important caveats remain on the standards by which to judge performance, and any efforts to assign responsibility or accountability for progress or setbacks.
3. There are important gaps in data availability, these include plastics in rivers, food insecurity, poverty, sexual and reproductive health and rights, satisfaction with local services, R&D expenditure, precarious employment, environmental footprint and consumption emissions (amongst other areas)

CONCLUSIONS

This project shows how the SDGs can be a useful framework to think about the present and future of Newcastle – with applicability to other cities. Though the work is still ongoing, it seems clear that Civic universities have a vital role to play in taking on a local SDG agenda. Universities are natural partners in undertaking city-level SDG review: many of the Voluntary Local Reviews taking place worldwide are being led or supported by universities.

The Newcastle team, though, also find two specific potential roles. First, universities might contribute data and research capacity to address particular data gaps, for example generating new qualitative and quantitative local-level data on vulnerable and marginalised groups. Second, as sites of reflection and deliberation they might help convene the city-wide conversations, and create the city-wide partnerships, that are so crucial to efforts to 'localise' the SDGs.