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## Free online directory launches to support people with experience of homelessness

Researchers at Northumbria University have launched a free, searchable online directory covering more than 1,000 services to support people experiencing homelessness across the North East and Cumbria – uniquely bringing together housing and healthcare services with social, community and creative activities in one accessible place.

The directory, called [Support Me North](#), has been developed as part of [See Me North, a £1.4 million research project](#) led by Northumbria University and funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) through the Arts and

Humanities Research Council (AHRC), as part of its *Mobilising Community Assets to Tackle Health Inequalities* programme, delivered in collaboration with the National Centre for Creative Health.

Designed with inclusivity at its heart, the directory was co-developed with experts by experience – people who have themselves lived through homelessness – to ensure it is easy to navigate and genuinely reflects the breadth of support people need and want to access. It is intended to serve both individuals seeking help and the professionals supporting them, as well as encouraging new connections between organisations across the healthcare system.

What makes Support Me North distinctive is its recognition that effective support goes beyond crisis services. Alongside traditional housing, health and social care provision, the directory includes arts, sports, gardening, cooking and other community-based activities – reflecting growing evidence of the positive impact of creative health approaches on wellbeing and recovery.

[Professor Monique Lhussier](#), co-lead of See Me North and a social scientist with expertise in marginalisation, welfare and wellbeing at Northumbria University, said: “Support Me North is about making sure that no one falls through the gaps simply because they didn't know what support was available, or because services weren't connected to one another. We've worked closely with people who have lived experience of homelessness to build a directory that is genuinely useful – one that recognises people's strengths and aspirations, not just their needs. We want this to be a tool that helps shift the system from crisis response towards something more proactive, joined-up and human.”

Searchable by location, each listing provides key details such as opening hours, contact information and directions with a website designed to link individuals with services in as few clicks as possible. Input from those with lived experience has ensured the inclusion of features such as a “crisis support” button for those needing access to emergency mental health support and an “exit site quickly” button to help protect those living through a coercive or controlling relationship.

Six partner organisations – [Tyne Housing](#), [Groundswell](#), [Alphabetti Theatre](#), [Art Gene](#), [Chilli Studios](#) and [Helix Arts](#) – and a network of housing providers, arts organisations and healthcare services from across the North East and

Cumbria are helping to inform in the project. The research is also being supported by two regional community interest companies, [Media Savvy](#) and [Roots and Wings design](#), making the project highly collaborative and grounded within crucial support organisations in the region.

The broader See Me North research aims to develop and evidence an integrated creative care model for people with experience of homelessness, moving away from siloed working and crisis management towards collaborative, person-centred partnerships that enable early intervention and prevention. This will inform the development of an evidence-based regional policy for homelessness which sits alongside the growing Support Me North website – which it is hoped will be transformative for people on their journey out of homelessness.



Members of the See Me North team pictured at a workshop held during the research and development of the Support Me North online directory.

[Dr Christina Cooper](#), co-lead of See Me North and Assistant Professor in Community Wellbeing at Northumbria University's [School of Communities and Education](#), said: "Too often, creative and community activities are treated as an afterthought – a 'nice to have' rather than a vital part of the support landscape. Support Me North challenges that assumption. By bringing social

and creative opportunities into the same space as health and housing services, we are helping people – and the professionals working with them – to see the full picture of what's available. Building this with lived experience experts has been central to everything we've done, and we believe that makes it a genuinely better resource for the people who need it most.”

Dean is one of the experts by experience who have fed their own thoughts and ideas into creating the Support Me North online directory. As a regular volunteer for the charity Crisis, who helped him find housing when he was struggling with his mental health and alcohol addiction, Dean believes Support Me North is a vital resource.

“It’s really important to me to do what I can to challenge stigma, whether that’s around homelessness or mental health. Particularly men’s mental health challenges,” explained Dean, who lives in Gateshead and has now completed the Great North Run three times to give back to the charity that was there for him when he needed it.

“When I heard about See Me North I wanted to get involved because it’s important that people who have lived through the reality of homelessness and everything that goes with it have a voice. I was street homeless for a time and then ended up sofa surfing so my situation was often unseen. For me, this was my chance to step up and have my voice heard in a way that I know will help others.”

Many of the See Me North experts by experience have already received specific training on co-producing research through bespoke [Public Involvement and Co-production of Research training modules](#) offered by Northumbria University. This gives individuals the chance to become a student, develop skills, and [in some cases complete a recognised University qualification](#).



Dr Christina Cooper (left) and Professor Monique Lhussier (right) pictured with some of the graduates from the Public Involvement and Co-production of Research training modules at Northumbria University.

Tackling stigma surrounding homelessness is also a key focus of the research. Working with the project partners, exhibitions have already been held across the region to showcase creative responses developed by those with lived experience of homelessness. In October, to mark World Homeless Day, plans are being developed for a larger exhibition of See Me North activities as part of a series of national events.

Earlier this month, See Me North opened up a call for funding for creative and cultural organisations based in the North East and Cumbria to work with people with experience of homelessness. More than 20 applications have been received and will be reviewed by a panel of experts by experience. Each project, funded up to a maximum of £3,000, will produce outputs to contribute to the national exhibitions. This work is part of a broader aim to use See Me North to mobilise community assets to tackle stigma and open up conversations about homelessness.

Research from See Me North has also been represented in Westminster for the third time as Dr Cooper was invited to a [Parliamentary Reception hosted by the Rt Hon. Baroness Therese Coffey DBE](#), showcasing trauma responsive

work in action across the North of England. In 2024 the team contributed to the [Woman of the North report](#) spotlighting the challenges and inequality faced by women in the North of England. And in 2025, they took part in an [All Party Parliamentary Group roundtable](#) on creative health interventions.

The Support Me North online directory is now live and free to access at [supportmenorth.org](http://supportmenorth.org)

## **ENDS**

### Notes to editors

Image captions:

- See Me North project logo.
- Members of the See Me North team pictured at a workshop held during the research and development of the Support Me North online directory.
- Dr Christina Cooper (left) and Professor Monique Lhussier (right) pictured with some of the graduates from the Public Involvement and Co-production of Research training modules at Northumbria University.

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--- Please contact [media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk) with any media enquiries or interview requests ---

## Contacts



**Andrea Slowey**

Press Contact  
Head of Corporate Communications (interim)  
[andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk)  
07708 509436



**Rachael Barwick**

Press Contact  
PR and Media Manager  
[rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk)  
07377422415



**Kelly Elliott**

Press Contact  
PR and Media Officer  
[kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk)



**Ruth Lognonne**

Press Contact  
PR and Media Officer  
[ruth.lognonne@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:ruth.lognonne@northumbria.ac.uk)  
07923 382339



**Gemma Brown**

Press Contact  
PR and Media Officer  
[gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk)