



Insights North East - Bridging research and policymaking

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## Funding boost to better connect research to North East communities

**A new partnership between Newcastle's two universities and four of the region's public bodies has received significant funding to maximise opportunities for connecting academic research to the needs of local communities.**

The [Insights North East \(INE\)](#) project has been established through an existing partnership between Newcastle University, Northumbria University, Northumbria Healthcare NHS Trust, Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS

Foundation Trust, North of Tyne Combined Authority and Newcastle City Council, and over time may expand to include other partners including private sector companies and voluntary and community organisations.

The Newcastle University-led project has received £5.5M, including £2.8m from Research England's Development Fund. The remaining funding has been provided by the INE partners.

INE aims to build a shared understanding of the knowledge and data within each partner organisation and develop new ways of connecting and interrogating that knowledge base so that regional policymakers can better address the needs of local communities.

The project is structured around three policy challenges that align with the expertise in the two universities and the priorities of policymakers in the region – improving **health and wellbeing, a just transition to net zero, and delivering inclusive growth**.

By bringing this knowledge together, INE will create better links between academics and policymakers to close the gap between publicly funded research and policy design and implementation and ensure that policies that address these three key challenges meet the needs of communities in the region.

INE will be led by **Dr Louise Kempton, from Newcastle University's Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies**, who said: "This is a strategically significant initiative for the region that takes our partnerships to a new level. INE has been designed and developed in collaboration with partners who operate at the heart of our communities to ensure it delivers actionable outcomes that will make a difference to the lives of people in our region. With this funding, INE will build a bridge between the worlds of research and policymaking."

One of the first objectives of the project will be to map and analyse the many areas in which effective research and policy collaboration between INE partners is already taking place. INE will also gather national and international evidence on best-practice regional research and policy engagement activities to better understand 'what works' for effective research to policy translation.

Additionally, against each policy challenge area INE will build and curate a web-based directory of researchers, policymakers and practitioners and host a comprehensive programme of events and workshops for academics and policymakers to share information about existing data, develop links around common themes of interest and build relationships that will shape future research agendas.

As a result, INE will directly help to leverage investment for the region by providing local, place-based evidence for future funding opportunities, and ensure that future policies are based on an understanding of the needs of end-users in the region.

The three policy challenges were identified following work by Urban Foresight that showed there was a demand among regional policymakers to have better information with which they could make locally-relevant decisions in these areas.

**Professor Chris Day, Vice-Chancellor and President, Newcastle University,** said: “We face a range of deeply complex problems in our region that can only be solved by working in collaboration. INE will underpin and add value to these partnerships by providing the evidence to guide effective decision making on issues that involve billions of pounds of public spending. This will deliver better outcomes that benefit the people, economy and environment of the North East, and ensure that ‘levelling up’ is done in an inclusive way.”

It is hoped that INE will become an exemplar for how - by working collaboratively with their public and health sector partners - universities can collaborate to maximise the potential for university research to inform place-based policymaking and ensure future research agendas are demand-led, shaped by the needs of the place.

It will share learnings and successes with the higher education, health and public sectors across the UK and internationally, providing a blueprint for how other places can establish their own place-based initiative for the design and delivery of local initiatives.

**Pam Smith, Chief Executive, Newcastle City Council,** said: “The work of INE will be transformative to the council’s policy making capacity, providing us with rich insights into evidence and data through globally leading academic expertise, as well as increased collaboration with partners to share

challenges and develop solutions to tackle critical issues that have a profound impact on residents and businesses across the city. This will in turn directly impact on our decision making about services to residents, and how we invest the council's budget to support the city's inclusive economic growth."

**Dame Jackie Daniel, The Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation**

**Trust, said:** "Newcastle Hospitals has a proud record of collaboration with partners across the City and wider region to deliver the maximum positive impact on the health, wealth and wellbeing of the population we collectively serve. We see the development of INE as a unique opportunity to further this work and to apply leading research expertise from our universities to the steer the NHS' approaches to population health and sustainability, and more widely in our role working with partners as an anchor institution."

**Professor Tom Lawson, Interim Vice-Chancellor for Northumbria University,**

**said:** "INE is an important collaboration between regional and city partners and Newcastle's two universities. It will enable our research to support and inform policy and decision-making to deliver a more prosperous, fairer and sustainable future for Newcastle and the North East. Deepening our partnership with Newcastle University will also strengthen our combined research power, enabling further collaborations which will have a positive impact on peoples' lives."

**Sir James Mackey, Chief Executive, Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation**

**Trust, said:** "We are increasingly using local data and shared insights from our clinical teams and public health practitioners from our local authority partners to guide our work on health inequalities. Having an increased and more targeted evidence base from INE, coupled with specific policy outputs, will help us to better achieve our programme objectives and benefit our patients and population."

**Henry Kippin, Chief Executive, North of Tyne Combined Authority, said:**

"Insights North East will help us to address the big opportunities and challenges for the region – providing the evidence base for investments that improve our economic, social, environmental and public service infrastructure. I am excited about the new insight, capacity and collaboration that INE will bring to the region to drive this work forward. INE will be an important partner in strengthening devolution and helping the region to make progress towards inclusive economic growth, Covid recovery and our



net zero transition.”

Longer term, the vision is for INE to become a National Innovation Centre for Policy, with INE leading to the establishment of a new policy research hub in the North East that will harness the knowledge and expertise of each partner, maximise the opportunities for knowledge transfer and place an evidence-based approach at the centre of policymaking across multiple sectors.

For more information about Insights North East visit  
[www.insightsnortheast.co.uk](http://www.insightsnortheast.co.uk)

Ends

### **Notes to editors**

INE is also a key strand of Collaborative Newcastle, an innovative partnership formed in December 2020 between the city’s anchor institutions to work jointly to improve the health, wealth and wellbeing of all its citizens. For more information about Collaborative Newcastle, visit  
<https://www.collaborativenewcastle.org/>

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