

Insights North East Prospectus

Turning Evidence Into Action



Introducing **Insights North East:**

A collaborative hub for place-based policy insights, based at Newcastle University

The North East of England faces complex public policy challenges that don't fit neatly into academic disciplines or policy departments. Insights North East empowers policymakers with evidence and support to tackle these issues, shape new possibilities for the region, and improve lives.

We bring together what's often kept separate: rigorous academic research, the practical wisdom of frontline practitioners and decision-makers, and the lived experience of communities. This isn't just about assembling information or translating finished research into policy briefs. It's about creating a fuller picture that equips policymakers with insights that are

relevant, grounded, and actionable.

We take a tailored and relationship-centric approach. We bring the right people into conversations early, when questions are still being formed and approaches are open. This allows research to shape policy from the start, and policy challenges can inspire more relevant research for the long term.

Alongside our partners, our knowledge systems allow evidence to reach those who can use it to transform lives in the North East.

Together, we can turn **thinking into doing** for a better North East.

The INE Difference

Our mission is to ensure that world-class research, community insight, and practitioner expertise reach the changemakers working for the public good.

Rooted in boundary-spanning collaboration, we work with public policy partners in health, local and combined authorities, voluntary organisations, and communities across the region. We occupy a unique space: trusted by academics, embedded with policymakers, and connected to communities.

By bringing together evidence, experience, and community, we create the conditions for genuine transformation in the North East.

Who We Are

Embedded partners, not fly-by observers.

We don't do one-off reports or pre-packaged solutions. We build lasting relationships that bring academics, policymakers, practitioners, and communities into meaningful dialogue.

System-builders, not service providers.

We're creating a sustainable infrastructure for research-informed decision making across the region. We are experienced facilitators, able to create the space for conversations that step out of day-to-day delivery.

Working 'with', not 'for'.

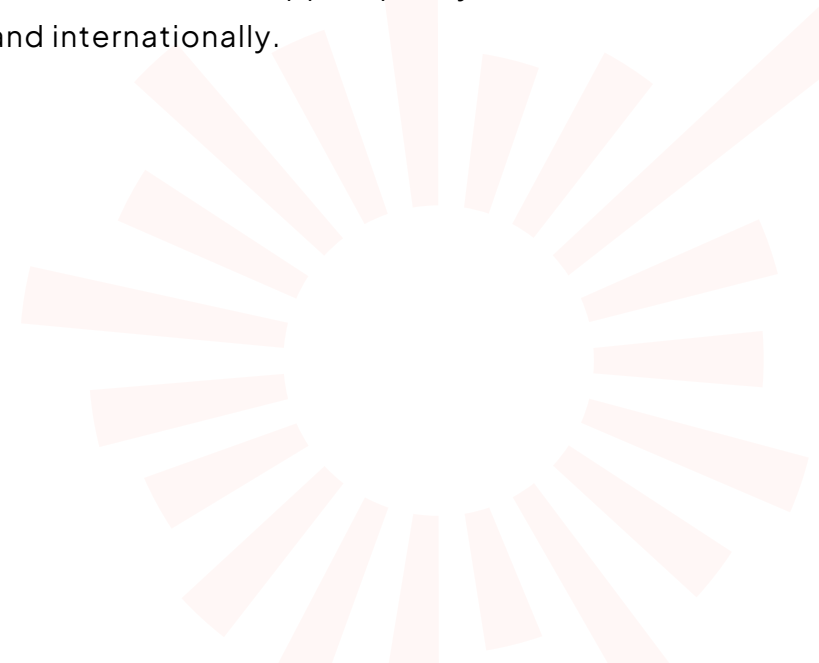
We understand the pressures policymakers face, the questions communities ask, and the research being produced. We work beyond delivering outputs by being part of the team, advising on internal socialisation and ensuring that our insights genuinely add value to existing knowledge and approaches.

Agile, not rigid.

We respond to emerging priorities and tailor our approach to each context.

Of and for the region.

We have a deep understanding of the underlying drivers and cross-system actors that form the North East policy environment. We are committed to effecting real change for our place and the people who live here. Our deep regional knowledge informs how we support policy partners nationally and internationally.



Our Partnership Offer

INSIGHTS

EVIDENCE-BASED ACTIONABLE ANALYSIS

We provide demand-led analytical support that gives you timely access to evidence and expert insight. Our approach is built on trusted relationships that allow us to engage early in policy development, so we can have the greatest impact on decisions.

To deliver actionable insights, we've developed practical tools like our 'Defining the Challenge' workshops. These bring together policymakers, decision makers, academics, and other experts to agree on clear parameters and priorities for emerging policy challenges.

We work across two modes:

RAPID RESPONSE

Rapid Response draws on existing research to deliver quick insights for short-term opportunities or new interventions.

DEEP DIVE

Deep Dive projects emphasise co-creation, balancing policy pragmatism with academic rigour to develop evidence-based recommendations that can genuinely be implemented.

Key activities: defining the challenge workshops, policy blogs and briefs, evidence synthesis

TRANSFORM

LONG-TERM SYSTEM-WIDE TRANSFORMATION

Transform complements our demand-driven insights by giving policymakers space to step back from delivery and consider the deep-seated underlying drivers that the region needs to tackle. This is where we identify game-changing opportunities setting the course for a distinctively North East approach to future policy.

Improving outcomes requires coordination across health systems, housing, education, transport, and local economies. Yet the institutional arrangements governing these sectors often operate in isolation or even work against each other, limiting the ability to pursue shared goals. Community organisations, despite their long-term presence and legitimacy, can be invisible in these conversations.

We use evidence to build cross-system alignment and support place-based transformation. Our Transform work connects the dots between sectors, brings community voices into the conversation, and draws on international learning through our Global Insights Council – a new network of global associates that will help us to access the best evidence and examples from around the world.

Key activities: events programme, connecting community engagement expertise, supporting Areas of Research Interest, place-based pilots and test-beds, research funding proposals, Global Insights Council



NETWORKS

BUILDING REGIONAL CAPACITY

Networks are a crucial foundation of our work, bringing together organisations, people, and expertise with a shared commitment to strengthening evidence-informed policymaking.

NORTH EAST POLICY EVIDENCE NETWORK

The new North East Policy Evidence Network (NEPEN) will connect partners across academia, government, health, and the voluntary and business sectors to create a more collaborative regional policy evidence ecosystem.

Working through a flexible, opt-in model, the network will build on existing knowledge mobilisation capacity to strengthen how evidence is generated, shared, and applied. NEPEN will curate evidence across the system, support the development of skills for evidence-informed policymaking, and enable collaborative responses to shared regional challenges.

Key activities: network coordination, evidence curation, skills development, collaborative responses to regional challenges

INE ASSOCIATES

Our Associates programme is a growing network of colleagues from across the North East, spanning universities, government, health, and the voluntary and community sector. Associates gain expanded access to our pipeline of policy challenges, with opportunities to connect these to existing research, contribute to INE projects, and co-create new work in response to regional needs.

- **For academics and university-based colleagues**, the programme provides greater visibility among policy partners, strengthens pathways to real-world impact, and supports alignment between research and regional priorities.
- **For policymakers, practitioners, and VCSE professionals**, it offers streamlined access to multidisciplinary evidence, connections to relevant expertise, and opportunities to shape research through frontline insight.

We run regular peer-to-peer networking events and research showcases, bringing Associates together to build cross-sector relationships and create ongoing opportunities for collaboration.

Key activities: networking events, research showcases, project brokerage, cross-sector introductions, peer-to-peer support

DATANET

DataNEt is a vibrant community of academics and policymakers working to harness data for better public policy. Co-created by Insights North East and the North East Mayoral Strategic Authority, with support from the ESRC, the network brings together experts from the Strategic Authority, local authorities, the NHS, the Office for National Statistics, the National Innovation Centre for Data, and regional universities.

DataNEt provides a forum for knowledge exchange, learning from best practice, and pulling in expertise to solve data challenges. A recent focus has been on AI's potential in policymaking by exploring AI infrastructure in local government, its ethics in public health research, and practical applications for policy data analysis.

Key activities: networking events, workshops, data knowledge sharing, peer-to-peer learning

UNIVERSITIES POLICY ENGAGEMENT NETWORK

INE is an active member of the Universities Policy Engagement Network (UPEN), which operates at national level and across the UK. UPEN brings together organisations who work to improve the use of academic evidence in public policymaking.



ADVANCE

KNOWLEDGE MOBILISATION CAPABILITY AND CAPACITY

Advance supports those already shaping policy in the region while nurturing the next generation of place-based knowledge mobilisers. We provide a structured but flexible approach to developing capability across the ecosystem: connecting academics, policymakers, practitioners, and communities, and creating opportunities to learn, collaborate, and apply evidence in practice.

We identify secondment opportunities for policy partners and run events focused on key regional priorities, strengthening the community of changemakers central to our work. We create hands-on opportunities for students and early career researchers to develop practical understanding of how policy works in real-world settings.

Working with Newcastle University's Policy Academy, we help to build the skills, confidence, and networks of academic and professional services colleagues. In parallel, we partner with organisations supporting community and voluntary groups to extend capacity for policy engagement, ensuring that a wider range of voices and experiences can inform evidence and decision-making across the region.

Key activities: events programme, secondments, student development opportunities

We provide targeted pro bono support to address priority policy challenges in the North East. This is complemented by a bespoke consultancy offer for organisations both within and beyond the region where additional depth or capacity is needed. We welcome conversations about your priorities and can help shape the right approach.



How We Work

Every policy challenge is different, so our approach is tailored to your needs. Whether you're exploring options at an early stage or ready to tackle a complex issue head-on, we work alongside you to bring together the right insights and expertise.

Here's how:



Scanning the Horizon

You've identified a policy challenge and need to explore your options.

Even if your thinking is at an early stage, we can help. Whether you're trying to understand the root causes of a problem, explore what's worked elsewhere, or identify regional implications, our team is continuously horizon-scanning for opportunities to support evidence-informed policy.



Initial Exploration

We meet to understand your challenge and how we might help.

In this conversation, we'll explore what evidence you've already gathered, your timelines, who else needs to be involved, and your capacity to collaborate. We'll also look at how we might break down complex challenges into manageable areas of inquiry.



Mapping the Route

We identify whether INE can support your project.

We progress with projects that have a North East dimension, potential for actionable insights, align with university expertise, and have genuine demand from policy partners. Following our initial exploration, we'll provide options for you to consider.



Choosing your approach

We offer two response modes, which work together and are tailored to your needs:

- **Rapid Response – Quick insights for urgent questions.**
- **Deep Dive – In-depth exploration of complex challenges.**

Where challenges overlap with an area of focus in our Transform work, we convene partners and draw together findings to address interconnected issues.



Building your evidence Base

We curate insights from multiple sources.

Drawing on academic research, practitioner expertise, lived experience, and our network of over 100 INE Associates, we bring together an evidence mosaic that's relevant to your specific context. We can also connect you to the North East Data Network (DataNEt) when data expertise is needed.



Actionable Insights

We co-produce recommendations that align with your levers for change.

We work with you to test and iterate recommendations, identifying interventions that can be practically delivered, then supporting with dissemination and engagement.

Where We Focus

Our work spans five interconnected themes that reflect the North East's most pressing challenges and opportunities.

Education, Skills & Opportunity

Our network has vital information on skills gaps, labour market challenges, and economic inactivity, alongside questions of social mobility and educational equity.

Energy, Environment & Climate Action

Evidence on everything from retrofitting barriers and sustainable farming to community climate action and fair transitions that ensure no one is left behind.

Inclusive Economy, Innovation & Growth

We support evidence-informed strategies for regional development with an emphasis on understanding how to ensure that everyone and every place can benefit.

Public Health & Wellbeing Equity

We collaborate with regional academic health networks to focus on underlying factors like poverty, housing, and access to services that shape health outcomes.

Connectivity, Community & Housing

This includes transport and multi-modal connectivity, alongside the housing, planning, and design challenges facing the region. Work also explores neighbourhood cohesion, community engagement and the role of social infrastructure in creating pride in place.

Whether your challenge sits squarely within one area or cuts across several, we can help you navigate the challenge and bring together the expertise you need.

Our Expertise



Education, Skills & Opportunity

Social and emotional learning
Skills gaps and ambition
Migrant workers
Special Educational Needs
Economic inactivity
Gender equality
Green skills
Labour market
Social mobility and opportunity
infrastructure
Child poverty
Youth crime and justice
Safeguarding and child protection
Best start in life
Children's rights and participation



Energy, Environment & Climate Action

Net zero pathways and climate mitigation strategies
Retrofitting barriers and solutions
Carbon accounting
Decarbonisation
Green jobs and offshore wind
Active travel
Sustainable behaviour change
Green finance
Community climate action
Biodiversity conservation
Nature-based solutions
Food waste
Just transitions



Inclusive Economy, Innovation & Growth

Agriculture and rural development
Regional economic strategies
Productivity improvement
Enterprise and entrepreneurship
Foundational economy
Business barriers to starting and scaling
Innovation corridors
Inclusive innovation
Economic inclusion
Left-behind places
Regional institutions and governance structures
Frontier technologies and AI adoption
Local government finance
Social innovation



Public Health & Wellbeing Equity

Health inequalities reduction
Social and emotional learning
Dental health equity
Public health data capabilities
Healthy environments for work and play
Digital health
Behavioural change
Food insecurity
Behavioural change
Neighbourhood health
Multiple and complex needs
AI applications in public health policy
Youth wellbeing & mental health
Public sector reform & prevention
Children's transitions in and out of hospital



Connectivity, Community & Housing

Land-use mapping
Spatial policy evolution
Urban design and planning
Bus franchising economic models
Public transport and devolution
Multi-modal transport design
Community engagement
Neighbourhood cohesion and pride in place
Social capital
Migration and integration
Sport
Combating organised crime
Digital exclusion
Social infrastructure



Our Story So Far

Established Through Partnership

Insights North East was established as a collaboration between Newcastle and Northumbria Universities, the NHS, and local authorities. From the outset, our mission has been clear: to bring evidence, expertise, and collaboration to the heart of policymaking in the North East.

What began as a knowledge exchange initiative has evolved into something more ambitious—building the systems and relationships that make evidence-informed decision making sustainable and embedded across the region.



Built on Credibility and Experience

Our collaborative foundation gives us legitimacy across the academic-policy ecosystem. We're embedded within institutions, not external to them, which means we understand both the rigour that research demands and the pressures policymakers face.

Our team includes experienced public policy professionals who know what it's like to work at national, regional, and local levels. Alongside them are academic researchers, skilled at synthesising and assessing knowledge to generate robust insights.



Our Track Record

We've delivered rapid responses to urgent policy questions and sustained engagement on complex, long-term challenges across all five of our thematic areas. We've brought together hundreds of academics, policymakers, practitioners, and community voices, creating conversations that wouldn't have happened otherwise.

But our real measure of success isn't the number of projects delivered. It's the relationships built, the trust earned, and the decisions informed by better evidence. It's the policy interventions shaped by rigorous research and the communities whose voices are heard in policy rooms.

Who We've Worked With



Kim McGuinness
North East
Mayor



**Northumbria
University**
NEWCASTLE



ACADEMY
of SOCIAL
SCIENCES



Local Trust



**If you're interested in working
with INE, please get in touch:**





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Insights North East Associates made up of colleagues from across the North East from the university, public, and voluntary sectors

1,500+

contacts

220

DataNet members

20

live projects

55

events

consisting of workshops, seminars, roundtables, conferences, and more with



52

completed projects

3,300+

event attendees

22k

unique website users

54

reports and resources produced (blogs, policy briefings, reports, research summaries)

98k

website views



35k

post impressions on social media



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