

## World-Class Social Sciences

### Contributing to Growth and Community



## About N8

N8 is a partnership of the 8 most research intensive universities in the North of England – Durham, Lancaster, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Sheffield and York.

### The mission of N8 is to:

- Promote collaboration between universities, business and research users
- Deliver excellence through our research capabilities and programmes
- Drive economic growth by generating income, jobs and new businesses

### The N8 universities have a critical mass of research capability:

- Almost 15,000 academic staff – 12% of UK total
- Over 38,000 postgraduate students – 11% of UK total (taught and research)
- Total research income in 2010/11 was £747m – 17% of UK total
- Almost £500m of Government research funding – 18% of UK total
- £72m of UK industrial research funding – 16% of UK total
- £120m from overseas research partners

## Track Record

N8's successful track record in bringing together industry and university partners has created the N8 Industry Innovation Forum – a collaboration of N8 universities, private sector partners, the Technology Strategy Board and HEFCE.

We have already built strong, and applied, research collaboration in science and technology. We are now using our experience of working together to lever critical mass across the N8 universities in social science, especially where it underpins growth and addresses key social and cultural challenges.

N8 has leading-edge expertise across the full range of social sciences with a large number of established world-class research groupings. This particular initiative focuses on those areas that are of direct relevance to core economic and societal issues, especially those that will support the achievement of a more balanced economy:

- business and management
- enterprise, innovation and entrepreneurship
- health and ageing
- social justice and inequalities
- urban and regional development

## The Approach of N8

We are firmly convinced that N8's research and development activity in this area should be demand led. **Co-production** is at the heart of our approach: we work with the users and funders of research to identify the key issues and gaps in knowledge on a particular theme. This ensures we design research programmes that address an articulated need and maximise the opportunity to produce outcomes that offer value. A key success measure for N8 is that this research has practical relevance, and translates into on-the-ground practice.

Multi-level collaboration between research users, funders and universities also ensures engagement of the key stakeholders and at the highest level. This positions the research strongly to achieve impact and influence where it matters.

## How We Work

N8 offers a new model of collaboration geared towards resolving complex issues. The level of collaboration we can achieve is distinctive to N8: we look inwards and outwards to develop research partnerships. Our experience shows that our research can have greater impact if universities, research users, business and policy partners work together to define and deliver the research agenda. Within N8, inter-disciplinary and cross-institutional 'best-with-best' teams provide world-class capability to tackle large-scale and ground-breaking research beyond the capabilities of a single institution. Within N8, it is a proven model that is based on co-operation and durable partnerships.

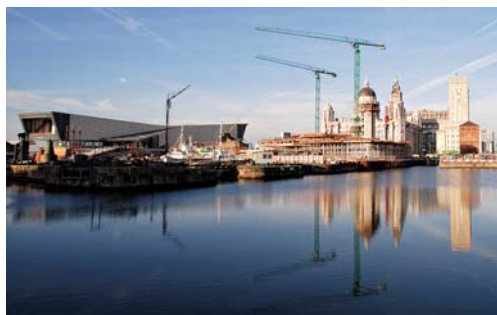
### Impact of Demographic Change in the North of England

This research<sup>1</sup> examined the impact of demographic change and the ways in which policy can maximise economic benefits and minimise costs. Whilst focusing on northern England and city regions within it, the study also looked at the wider UK, European and global impact. The research was designed and delivered through a multi-level collaboration including N8, Government Departments and agencies, city regions and other experts. This emphasis on engagement ensured the research attracted high-level policy interest and supported evidence-based policy development.

1. [www.n8research.org.uk/research-themes/demographic-change/](http://www.n8research.org.uk/research-themes/demographic-change/)

## Current Research Agenda

Our new programme, designed in close partnership with end users and funders, focuses on a small number of significant challenges. Although international and national in their scope, many are of particular and timely relevance to the North of England. Also, our links with local communities build on the strong civic contributions of the N8 universities.

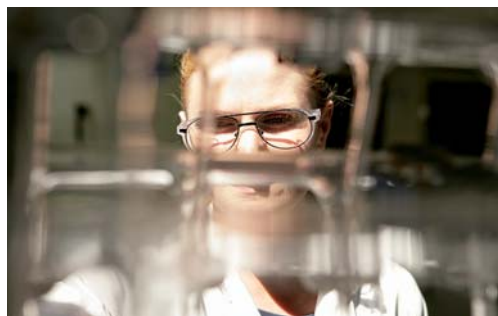


## Transformational Infrastructure

Investment in infrastructure is seen as crucial to economic growth. The North – like the rest of the UK and Europe – is facing massive changes in its physical and electronic infrastructure. This includes projects like HS2, the Northern Hub and Atlantic Gateway. Against a background of global debate and concern over infrastructure investment and management, N8's team of experts from the universities of Durham, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield is seeking to develop a comprehensive research programme in partnership with Government departments and agencies, business and key infrastructure providers. The research will focus on identifying alternative options and models for infrastructure development in northern England that will achieve transformational effects. It will also identify the ready-to-go infrastructure schemes and, importantly, will determine the cumulative impacts of Government policies and infrastructure investment plans on northern England to inform future planning and investment.

## Cities

Cities are the drivers of economic growth. They are also at the heart of economic, social and cultural changes and, sometimes, pressures. Five of the eight 'core cities' are in the North of England, and there are numerous important second-tier cities and towns in the North. Cities are now facing multiple challenges – generating economic growth, tackling inequality, stimulating creativity and adapting to fiscal austerity. N8 has drawn together a team involving experts from the universities of Manchester, Newcastle, Sheffield and York, which is now working with cities, Government, and other partners to develop research on strategic decision making, policy and practice in the cities of the North of England.



## Creative and Cultural Economy

Since the early years of the industrial revolution, the North's creative and cultural economies and communities have been at the heart of change. The creative and cultural industries are among the fastest growing sectors in the northern economy, and northern cities have made powerful and distinct commitments to the creative and cultural economy. N8 is intending to enhance its own contribution to the creative and cultural economy. The universities of Newcastle, Lancaster, Manchester, Leeds and Liverpool are working with a range of partners, including research councils and businesses to design a research programme that will highlight how we can capture the economic dynamism of the sector and harness its growth potential.

## Other Areas of Activity

In addition to this ambitious research agenda, N8 is also pursuing other relevant opportunities that bring together world-class social science research collaborations to address the needs of business and/or the public sector. In particular, we are looking at ways of supporting local authorities and local enterprise partnerships and in contributing to the economy and the community.

We are keen to discuss our current programme and other opportunities with potential partners across the research community.

For further information please contact [info@n8research.org.uk](mailto:info@n8research.org.uk)



[www.n8research.org.uk](http://www.n8research.org.uk)



THE UNIVERSITY of *York*