

United Kingdom Clinical Research
Collaboration

Public Health Research Centres of
Excellence

North East Centre of Excellence for
Translational Research in Public Health
Work in Progress

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Four National Health Services



Partnership: Key Stakeholders

- 5 universities – 2 old (Durham, Newcastle), 3 new (Northumbria, Sunderland, Teesside)
- National Health Service organisations
- Regional Government Office
- Local authorities
- Others

Purpose of Centres of Excellence

- To boost sustainable research infrastructure and build capacity in public health research through
 - training and career structure
 - multi-disciplinary and collaborative working
 - maximising use of existing data

Priority Areas for Improving Public Health

- Diet and nutrition
- Physical activity
- Alcohol, tobacco and drugs
- Mental health?

What is the Problem?

- Public health facing crisis of action and accomplishment
- Public health weak in respect of implementation
- Gap in public health implementation research
- Poor understanding of interventions and their impact
- Inappropriate adherence to rational linear model of change
- Need to embrace complexity theory – public health is a complex adaptive system

Strategic Objectives of Centres of Excellence

- Promote research excellence in public health by increasing investment in infrastructure
- Build sustainable public health research capacity and expertise in UK
- Encourage and forge multi-disciplinary partnerships between world class scholars, policy makers and practitioners
- Increase the evidence base in public health research
- Demonstrate leadership by tackling challenging issues

Mission and Key Objectives of North East Centre

- Create innovative paradigm for effective translation of research into policy and practice
- Bring together a critical mass of research leaders
- Expand internationally renowned research on understanding health-related behaviour change
- Enhance understanding of causes of health inequalities
- Research translation of evidence into policy and practice
- Establish effective dialogue between researchers, policy-makers and practitioners
- Advance theoretical and methodological issues in public health research
- Build sustainable capacity for applied public health research

Research Programme: Two Complementary Themes

- Translation of evidence for public health into policy and practice
- Public health improvement

Evidence Translation Theme

Systematic research on

- commissioning for public health
- professional and organisational behaviour change
- participatory research on knowledge translation processes

Public Health Improvement Theme

Major strands of work on

- Health-related behaviour change
- Understanding and tackling health inequality
- New professional roles

The Challenge

- Bridging worlds of policy, practice and research
- Developing hybrid researcher-practitioner roles rather than exclusive reliance on external researchers
- Develop mechanisms to promote active boundary spanning, dialogue and joint learning – organisational ‘boundroids’
- Promote better understanding of policy-making by researchers and research by policy-makers

Issues for Consideration

- Overcoming tension between world class research and translational research
- Balancing collaboration versus competition
- Being inclusive while focused and well-managed
- Bridging diverse cultures: research, policy, practice
- Resolving perverse incentives, eg impact of research assessment exercise (RAE)
- Being clear about leadership challenge

Resolving the Tensions (1)

- Lost in translation
- Focus on paradigm shift: ensuring effective dialogue to get research into policy and practice
- New ways of working with policy-makers and practitioners
- Playing to complementary strengths of 5 universities
- Distributed leadership across themes and universities

Resolving the Tensions (2)

Rebalance the push and pull of policy and research

- *Push approaches* are research-driven and insufficient to achieve change
- *Partner and pull approaches* are driven by exchange and collaboration in research process