Social Renewal
Annual Review 2017

www.ncl.ac.uk/socialrenewal
Social Renewal was launched at Easter 2012 to provide a focus for colleagues’ attempts to make a difference to wider society through engaged research and teaching. This civic university approach is now embedded in the work of many across the University and beyond. NISR has supported an extraordinary volume and range of activity and outputs showcased in our Annual Reviews and on our website, as confirmed by an independent, external review of NISR’s work.

Among our highlights was Freedom City 2017, marking 50 years since this university awarded an honorary doctorate to Martin Luther King. This will have a legacy for many years, both in this region and in this University’s commitment toward social justice. We continued to work with many partners on our priority themes of Social Renewal in the North East; Thriving through and after Brexit; and New Pathways to Social Renewal. We held joint events with the Carnegie UK Trust and TCPA among others as well as supporting the emergence of Tyne & Wear Citizens and the Policy Academy. The following pages convey more of the huge range of social renewal activities in 2017.

The Institute for Social Renewal has been in transition while the University refreshes its vision and strategy, and we are pleased that we now have clarity and confidence about our work continuing into the future. Our experience of fostering and supporting engaged research will help extend the co-creation of knowledge, enduring networks of knowledge, and an innovative approach to interdisciplinary, problem-based project teams. This builds also on our work as part of the EU-funded Accomplish project on co-creation and impacts of social science and humanities research.

On a personal note, this will be my last Annual Review as Director as my second 3 year term ends in the summer of 2018 and a new Director will then take over. I have had the rare opportunity to advocate and pursue, with institutional support, a model of universities which engage with and for society, and to work with inspiring colleagues and partners across the university and beyond. Thank you to everyone involved.

Professor Mark Shucksmith OBE, Director.

2017 was a year of considerable challenges, economically, politically, and socially, as NISR’s focus on ‘Thriving in Turbulent Times’ recognised. It was also a year of deep reflection for Newcastle University as we came together with our partners in the region to mark the year of Freedom City 2017. As we reflected, through the numerous events, interventions and engagements held throughout the year, on the themes of social justice and social renewal in Dr King’s acceptance speech – a rallying cry in which he highlighted the triple challenges of poverty, war and racism in his own time – we also pledged to continue his radical and important work into the future. NISR was a key partner in Freedom City 2017 and many of the projects and ideas it fostered, supported or enabled during that year are reflected in the report that follows along with other contributions to policy making.

We were all immensely proud to be part of the honorary degree ceremony and statue unveiling in November 2017 that marked the culmination of the Freedom City programme. Who could not be moved to see Andrew Jackson Young Jr, who had accompanied Dr King five decades earlier, back in the beautiful King’s Hall setting of the University to receive his own honorary degree? But we are equally aware – as Young so powerfully reminded us in his own inspirational address – that there is much work yet to do to counter social and economic disadvantage, locally, nationally, and globally, and NISR will be an important part of that future effort.

Professor Julie Sanders, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.
Social Renewal: making a difference

Newcastle University Institute for Social Renewal exists to answer the question ‘how can people thrive in turbulent times?’ The Institute aims to make a difference in the lives of individuals, communities and the world through excellent research and working across disciplinary, societal and international boundaries. A concern for social justice is at the heart of our work. This Annual Review highlights some of the innovative projects of the last year towards that aim, but it also tells a story about the methods that the Institute has used to pursue social renewal with partners and colleagues in Britain and abroad.

Working across the university, Social Renewal focuses on the following themes:

- Arts and Culture in Social Renewal
- Children and Young People
- Digital Innovation
- Enterprise in Society
- Health, Inequality and Wellbeing
- Knowledge, Evidence and Policy
- Learning for Change
- Martin Luther King Legacy
- People, Place and Community
- The Past in the Present

Methods of engaged research

Developing our understanding

In the Institute for Social Renewal, we have been developing our understanding of methods of engaged research by our involvement in the ACCOMPLISSH project, a European Commission Horizon 2020 project involving partners from 14 universities across Europe. The ACCOMPLISSH consortium (ACcelerate CO-creation by setting up a Multi-actor PPlatform for Impact from Social Sciences and Humanities) aims to develop and hone good practice for co-creation: the joint unlocking of knowledge by academics, business partners, government and civil society. It’s this combination of partners from all strands of the “quadruple helix” that creates the most useful knowledge and solves the most pressing problems in society. Throughout 2017, our involvement in this platform has given us the opportunity to understand many aspects of research design and communication, and to gain insights from different sectors of how to be equal partners in research that makes a difference.

Putting it into practice

After five years of Social Renewal, this shared learning about engaged research and open innovation has produced a network of researchers who aim to work across disciplines and with the community, and every project that Social Renewal funds must include an element of partnership working as a result. Taking these Networks of Knowledge forward, the Institute would like to be a pioneer of methods of engaged research, understanding the difference that they can make to real and wicked problems that face society and the world. Whether this is in enabling academics to build relationships of trust with external partners, or by facilitating knowledge exchange with policy makers, the Institute for Social Renewal is committed to putting Newcastle University excellence to work.

A laboratory for exploring new ways of working

A survey respondent describing the Institute for Social Renewal, 2017

Images: 1 - Tyneside Cinema Freedom City 2017 screening and discussion (credit: Brett Cherry) 2 - ACCOMPLISSH research project dialogue platform (credit: ACCOMPLISSH project) 3 - Attendees at the “Social Renewal in Action” showcase, 2017 (credit: Simon Veit-Wilson) 4 - Freedom on the Tyne (credit: North News & Pictures) 5 - Freedom on the Tyne (credit: Richard Kenworthy)
Community Renewal

Societal change often happens at individual and community levels, and in the North East and beyond, we have been working with communities to come up with solutions to challenging problems.

New Town Futures

Peterlee is a post-WW2 new town in the North East. Like other similar towns, many young people from there have lowered aspirations, and will never travel outside of the town until they are adults. Some experience mental health issues. Exploring these issues and the intergenerational aspect, this Social Renewal funded project was conducted by Teresa Strachan from Newcastle School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape, volunteers from the YES Planning project and final year Planning Masters students. They gathered young people’s views of the town, engaged them about their future aspirations, and exhibited their findings to other generations within Peterlee. This research unlocked reflections on the town, and instilled a sense of pride in the young people, which in turn we hope will raise aspirations and expectations of the future.

Challenging Race Hate Crime

After the vote for the UK to leave the European Union, a disturbing trend became evident in some post-industrial areas and elsewhere: an alarming rise in reports of the number and type of ‘race’ hate crime incidents. The North East Race Equality Forum wanted to do something about this hostility towards non-white minorities, and develop some understanding of best practice, using the consolidated knowledge of many regional organisations.

With funding from Social Renewal and with Jenny Johnstone, from Newcastle University Law School, the forum developed a directory of organisations that can provide advice on ‘race’ hate crime and related issues. Organisations also contributed to an online source of models of best practice, fed into a public consultation, and heard from Dame Vera Baird (Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria). The message was: “There’s no place in Northumbria for targeting someone for who or what they are.”

Feedback from Inspirational Women of the Law 2017 event.

A triumph that will impact the lives of those young women Law students, especially the BME students, probably for the rest of their lives.

Inspirational Women of the Law 2017

The Institute for Social Renewal also supported a body of work in Newcastle University around inspirational women, aiming to raise aspirations of girls and young women. The most recent project, led by Social Renewal Theme Champion Professor Kathryn Hollingsworth and Dr Nikki Godden-Rasul, was Inspirational Women of the Law 2017. Its focus was black, Asian and minority ethnic women, coinciding with the 50th Anniversary of the conferral of an honorary degree by the University on Dr Martin Luther King (and part of Freedom City 2017). The moving and inspiring event and exhibition celebrated the achievements of iconic and influential women who have a strong connection to the law – including legal practitioners, academics, and campaigners. It had a very strong impact on all who attended: students (Newcastle and local sixth formers) were encouraged and inspired to use the law in their careers, whatever that might look like.

Images: 1 - Participants at the Cooperative Neighbourhoods workshop (credit: Zander Wilson) 2 - Salmon Fishing on the Tweed funded project (credit: Helen Jarvis) 3 - Lecture on Freedom City 2017, Newcastle University 4 - Speakers at the Inspirational Women of the Law 2017 event (credit: Newcastle Law School)
Economic Renewal

The Institute for Social Renewal believes that truly innovative research often involves partners from all parts of society - government, academia, civil society and business. In shaping the questions asked and in using research findings, all sectors will also all be involved in making significant changes that will help individuals thrive in turbulent times. This section considers business and industry, and how Social Renewal projects have made a difference in prosperity, inclusive growth and the thriving of small businesses.

A “whole city” approach to problem-solving

What kind of city do we want Newcastle to be? That’s the question that the Newcastle City Futures project asked in 2014 when it was established. Since then, in its unique involvement of policy-makers, researchers from all disciplines, the business community and civil society, it has mushroomed, and become one of five Urban Living Partnership pilots funded by RCUK and Innovate UK. Professor Mark Tewdwr-Jones of the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape and Social Renewal Theme Champion leads the project, which aims to discover the medium to long-term trends likely to impact upon urban development, and to help with collaboration between city leaders and communities. From digitally enabled homes for the ageing to sustainable shopping streets, Newcastle City Futures continues to cross boundaries and create change from the bottom up. In 2017, twenty new projects within Newcastle City Futures are being funded. Other cities around the world are now looking to Newcastle to replicate its model.

Industrial Strategy

One of our key drivers is the UK Industrial Strategy and the Research Fund attached to it. Post-Brexit and in the current age of financial uncertainty, the challenges facing our businesses are closely linked to the grand challenges of AI and Data Economy, Clean Growth, the Future of Mobility and an Ageing Society. In this context, we aim to make a difference to businesses locally and beyond.

Turning Around Towns

During the 1970s, a quiet shift occurred in the UK’s small towns. As cities grew and larger authorities swallowed up smaller councils, small towns saw a decrease in both their prosperity and their decision-making power. Once significant hubs of community and democracy, towns like the local North Shields declined, and many continue to do so. From a combination of innovative leadership, involvement from the business community and local citizenship, North Shields is turning around its fortunes, and is as a result one of a set of case studies that the Carnegie UK Trust have researched on the issue. In July 2017, the Trust and the Institute for Social Renewal co-organised a workshop in North Shields with local teachers, business leaders, council members and residents to discuss innovative and co-produced solutions. Whether in North Shields or beyond, the turnaround towns initiative is expected to share many examples of good practice and models of working, and the Trust has now produced recommendations for local governments, business and voluntary communities and individuals themselves.

Captured

Newcastle University Business School’s Captured programme is an innovative research based leadership programme targeted towards micro-businesses (fewer than 10 employees). The programme draws on the Business School’s ‘anchor institution’ status to recruit small firms and managers from larger regional firms. It consists of four half-day facilitated workshops over two months. Each series of workshops has a cohort of up to eight small firms and for the middle two workshops the small firm owner is paired with a manager from a large regional firm. Since January 2016, Captured has worked with over 80 small firms in 15 cohorts, pairing them with experienced managers from more than larger regional organisations. Recognised as an AACSB International 2018 Innovation That Inspires (http://www.aacsb.edu/innovations-that-inspire), Captured is overseen by an industry-led steering group comprising representatives of the larger firms, small business organisations and the North East Local Enterprise Partnership, who also co-fund the programme with the Business School.

Images: 1 - Urban Sciences Building, Newcastle University campus 2 - Turning Around Towns workshop participants (credit: Kevin Harrison) 3 - Salmon Fishing on the Tweed funded project (credit: Helen Jarvis)
Public Renewal

Newcastle University is home to a wealth of expertise on topics that are of relevance and interest to local and global policy makers, and academics are increasingly keen for opportunities to present their findings to a wider audience and see their research making a real impact. Policy makers are equally keen to increase their engagement with the University and make use of this valuable resource.

Muslim Youth and Political Participation

With debates about the political participation of Muslim youth frequently revolving around the stereotypes of disengagement or extremism, this project aimed to provide a more nuanced and critical understanding. Professor Peter Hopkins and Dr Robin Finlay (School of Geography, Politics and Sociology) worked with Muslim youth in Scotland to explore their perspectives and the political issues that are most pertinent to them, through interviews and focus groups. What they found was a diverse range of political interests: from activism and charity work to global and electoral politics. In particular, the Scottish independence referendum galvanised some of the interest, and young Muslims were also concerned about media and political representations projecting a negative image of Islam. The research has had significant social engagement, with 10 national newspapers reporting the findings. Having shared the final report with Anas Sarwar MSP, the project team have since worked with him to set up a Cross Party group on Tackling Islamophobia in the Scottish Parliament.

Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, the United Nations developed its Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) - a set of ambitious aims to establish peace and prosperity for all people on the planet. From eradicating poverty and hunger to establishing gender equality and clean water for all, these goals have specific targets attached to them, and researchers all over the world will be playing their part in understanding and achieving them. The Institute for Social Renewal is working with the Institute for Sustainability to deliver a UN SDGs seminar series in 2018. The seminar series will help researchers engage with the UN SDGs and consider how their research can influence policy and practice to help deliver the goals. The events will focus on ‘Cities’ (led by Social Renewal), ‘Biodiversity’ (led by Sustainability) and ‘Sustainable Consumption and Production’ (led by Newcastle University, London), corresponding to 3 of the 5 UN SDGs that will be reviewed this year at the 2018 UN High-level Political Forum.

Global Challenges

The Global Challenges Research Fund is a five year RCUK fund that targets development needs and the sustainable growth of developing countries. The fund is designed to work across the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and to join up key knowledge for impact. Newcastle University and the Institute for Social Renewal are helping to build the capacity of our academics to access the Global Challenge Research Fund by establishing challenge-based and regionally focused research networks as well as through a seminar series planned for 2018. It is important that Newcastle University research achieves a global impact as well as local and regional effect.
Cultural Renewal

Culture expresses communities’ aspirations and desires in a highly significant (and undervalued) way. This year, cultural renewal has had special significance in Newcastle, where we reflect on a legacy of civil rights activism, and on shared futures.

Not as it is written

To help us hear Dr King’s warnings about the tenacious grip that poverty, racism, and militarism have on our world, the Institute for Social Renewal and others supported a new international exhibition in Newcastle’s Great North Museum, featuring the African American experience in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA, as a case-study of one city grappling with the issues that Dr King fought against. Curated by history lecturer Ben Houston, the exhibition showcased audio selections of oral histories from people who lived this history, matched with historic photos from photographer Charles ‘Teenie’ Harris of Pittsburgh, and a companion app. The pioneering exhibition invited the public to share their reactions to Pittsburgh’s historical example and relate it to their present day as part of the ongoing process of social renewal, then and now.

Freedom City

On 13th November 1967, Newcastle University awarded Dr Martin Luther King an honorary degree, the only UK university to do so in his lifetime. On accepting this award, Dr King made a moving address, calling for us to join him in the ongoing struggle against war, poverty and racism. Freedom City 2017 brought together international artists, musicians, filmmakers, academics and community groups to inspire a new generation to contribute towards tackling the issues that Dr King spoke of in his acceptance speech.

Freedom City Comics

Although Freedom City 2017 centred on one inspirational radical, Dr Martin Luther King, the North East has a longer history of civil rights campaigning and activism than you might think. That’s why the Newcastle University Humanities Research Institute and comics creator Lydia Wysocki (School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences) produced the inspiring Freedom City comics. The new anthology, co-funded by the Institute for Social Renewal, presents snapshots of the history of civil rights and politics linked to the North East, including suffragette Emily Davison, the Jarrow Marchers and anti-slavery campaigner Frederick Douglass. The creators of Freedom City Comics hope that adults and children alike will learn something new about Newcastle’s place in the global struggle for equality and human rights. The next stage of this project involves working with teachers to develop a learning framework, using each chapter of the comic as a jumping off point for school groups to find out more about the North East’s civil rights heritage. You can pick up a free copy of the Freedom City comics from venues around Newcastle, or read free online at http://research.ncl.ac.uk/fccomics/

Diverse Voices?

Children’s literature is increasingly recognised as a highly significant dimension of culture. The stories told can be a measure of the values and ideas of a society, and they can expose otherwise hidden prejudices. They shape the ideas of new generations. It’s for this reason that Newcastle’s Seven Stories: The National Centre for Children’s Books and Newcastle University’s Children’s Literature Unit organised the joint symposium “Diverse Voices? Curating a National History of Children’s Books”. Supported by the Institute for Social Renewal and part of Freedom City 2017, the symposium explored how Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic voices are represented in our national story of children’s literature. Professor Karen Sands O’Connor (SUNY Buffalo) reflected on the event: “it will take hard work and difficult discussions to change children’s literature in the UK if we are going to make every child feel a sense of belonging in the world of books. We must read differently – think differently – speak differently. We must cross the barriers that keep us apart by any means necessary.” With the support of the CLU, Seven Stories hopes that its collection and exhibitions will play a key part in creating this change.

Ethiopian Connections

In 2013, Newcastle University’s Dr Peter Kellett (School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape) volunteered as a Visiting Professor at an Ethiopian university on a capacity building programme. He returned in 2015, and while in the country, collected numerous objects and images that expose the modernisation and socioeconomic change that Ethiopia has experienced. These ordinary, everyday objects have formed the basis of a series of stunning art exhibitions in 2017, exploring themes of food security, water, childhood, maternal health, language and religious traditions. In Bath, the exhibition (funded by the Institute for Social Renewal) was held in a house gifted to the city by the historical Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie I, adding to the significance of the themes explored. The events around the exhibition will encourage creative activities around development themes with the aim of fostering understanding and dialogue between different social and ethnic groups, and in so doing, it is hoped that they will contribute to community cohesion and social renewal.

We must come together now to set free those who are oppressed, and continue this mission for many years to come.

Ambassador Andrew Young at Freedom City 2017 Honorary Degrees Ceremony
Freedom on the Tyne

Freedom City 2017 was a year-long programme of events that brought communities together to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Dr Martin Luther King receiving an honorary degree from Newcastle University, and to explore the three themes he mentioned in his speech that day in Newcastle. These were the three ‘urgent and great problems’ of racism, poverty and war. Each project within Freedom City 2017 was developed with legacy in mind, seeking a lasting impact in tackling at least one of these three great challenges.

One highlight was the great drama of Freedom on the Tyne which wove together the stories of Selma, Amritsar, Sharpeville, Peterloo and the Jarrow march in a unique immersive performance and pageant involving hundreds of citizens and directed by Tim Supple. Another highlight was the unveiling of a statue of Dr Martin Luther King at Newcastle University and the award of honorary degrees to four individuals who have made a significant contribution to tackling the challenges of war, poverty and racism: Andrew Young, Archie Sibeko, Malorie Blackman and Thomas Caulker.

“A beautiful cold evening in Newcastle and Gateshead on Sunday got me thinking about the interplay between the history of a place, its stories and its sense of self. Freedom on the Tyne – a vast and awe inspiring theatrical celebration of Martin Luther King’s brilliant speech as he received his honorary doctorate from the University of Newcastle fifty years ago – culminated in a celebration on the Tyne Bridge eerily reminding everyone of the infinitely more terrifying march at Selma.

But it wasn’t the extraordinarily skilled acrobatic dancers, the stilts walkers or the moving speeches that hit me most. It wasn’t even the experience of seeing a busy urban route free of traffic. It was the huge joint commemoration of the Peterloo Massacre, the Jarrow Marchers, the siege at Amritsar, the Sharpeville Massacre as well as the decision to cross at Selma, which together fired a celebration of protest and resistance, of global connections, and of pride in a place that could put all this on.

Our public square can be a desiccated place – here were people apparently from communities across Tyneside, reimagining history, remembering music, celebrating historic oratory, poetry and dance, and doing so in a way that made those apparently distinct unconnected struggles feel incredibly relevant today. Historic connections across time and space really matter – and they speak to all sorts of people.”

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Freedom City 2017 was a partnership between many organisations across the NE region, led by Newcastle University, Northern Roots and the Newcastle-Gateshead Initiative. The Institute for Social Renewal was honoured to play a small part in this.
Rewriting Children’s Rights Judgments

Rewriting Children’s Rights Judgments: From Academic Vision to New Practice (Stafford, Hollingsworth and Gilmore, eds) is the culmination of an AHRC-funded international collaboration involving academics, lawyers, NGOs and judges. The book, which includes a foreword by Lady Hale (President of the UK Supreme Court), was launched at the Supreme Court in October 2017. Including rewrites of 28 existing legal judgments relating to children, it considers how they might have been drafted if adjudicated from a children’s rights perspective. Professors Kathryn Hollingsworth and Helen Stafford (the co-directors of the project) are now working to disseminate the findings with a rights perspective. Professors Kathryn Hollingsworth and Liz Todd. It brought together researchers from across the University whose work involves children and young people to discuss common interests, methodologies and theoretical approaches. The aim of the Hub is to provide a focal point for the multitude of research that takes place across the University on and with children and young people. It has an internal purpose (to allow researchers to swap ideas and best practice and explore inter-disciplinary research projects) and an external purpose (to allow those outside the University to more easily identify academics with expertise in research relating to children and young people). In 2017, this work is not only continuing to develop, but also is a platform for research grant applications.

Children and Young People Research Hub

Street Law

In 2011, a meeting with representatives from local Youth Groups identified a lack of advice and support available for children and young people regarding their general and legal rights. The pro bono Street Law project equips students recruited from Newcastle Law School to fill that gap. The Street Law Ambassadors are trained by Youth Focus North East, and have developed materials on police powers, access to legal advice, rights at school, street drinking and transitions into adulthood. From 11 students in 2011 to 40 in 2017, the Street Law project works with a range of local schools, community groups and voluntary sector organisations, including West End Women and Girls Centre, Young Women’s Outreach Project, the Royal Air Force Air Training Corps (Air Cadets), Safetyworks (Northumbria Police) and Investing in Children. In 2017, the Scheme’s extraordinary community reach has been recognised in several awards and nominations, including the NUSU Award for Youth Volunteering 2017 and Pride of Newcastle Awards winner of Outstanding Contribution to the Community 2017.

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Looking Ahead

Place

Newcastle University is passionate about creating inspiring places – improving the economy, health and social wellbeing and cultural richness of the places in which it operates. This will require a nuanced understanding of what constitutes ‘place’. Humanities and social sciences recognise that places are not just geographical, but are socially constructed, contested, relational and contingent. Place exists in a power-infused world of meaning, defined by people’s lived experiences. Place is also fundamental to the (re)making of identity and difference.

A global relevance

On the other hand, the Institute plays several other important roles, helping to create inspiring places, according to the more nuanced understanding of place suggested above. These include research, education and engagement which reveals the (hidden) power relations, the contested meanings, the complex intersections, the lived experiences of different social groups, and the remaking of identity and difference.

A local focus

The Institute for Social Renewal wants to develop locally on the one hand, as exemplified by Newcastle City Futures and Tyne and Wear Citizens, so helping to reduce economic disparities between regions in the UK, and within the NE. In 2017, the Institute hosted a workshop with Northumberland County Council, opening up a conversation about the planned North of Tyne Combined Authority and a Border Uplands Demonstrator Project. Academics from disciplines as diverse as planning and engineering to sociology and education contributed to the discussions, and these opened channels of communication are vital to the creation of inspiring places.

Place-shaping

In this way the Institute aims to hold up the mirror to society so that citizens and their elected representatives are more informed, effective and just in their place-shaping. Newcastle University itself can play a leading part in shaping meanings of place and place-identities, as it did with Freedom City 2017 (constructing a narrative of Newcastle’s civic rights traditions) and in NSR’s series of ‘inspiring a generation’ projects (Inspirational Women of the NE; Inspirational Women of the Law; the HOME project with the West End Refugee Service; and working with City of Sanctuary).

Health Gap

Newcastle Thousand Families Study

Last year the famous ‘Red Spot’ babies marked their 70th birthday and the Institute for Social Renewal were delighted to join forces with the Institute for Ageing and the Institute for Health and Society to put on a fitting celebration. The Red Spot babies are part of an incredible cohort study, the Thousand Family Study, set up by Newcastle University and the Royal Victoria Infirmary, which initially aimed to examine the health of infants in the City following the Second World War. All but four babies born in Newcastle between May and June 1947 were recruited into the study, which continues even today as many of the participants settle into retirement. Over the course of their lifetime the study has evolved from childhood infections to researchers now looking at issues such as bone density, hearing, heart and lungs and mental health and discovering that adult lifestyle is more important than previously thought in determining incidence of problems like heart disease and diabetes when compared to early growth. Newcastle University researchers intend to follow up the Red Spots as they grow older and look forward to the invaluable insights into ageing that will be derived from this work.

Social Interactions of Ageing

In 2017, the Institutes for Ageing and Social Renewal jointly sponsored a funding call to support projects that explore the social interactions of ageing. The call encouraged excellent interdisciplinary research, building on existing and developing new collaborations across fields.

- Ageing and ICT
- Social policies and ageing
- Unequal ageing
- Arts, culture and ageing
- Housing options for ageing populations
- Extended working lives
- Communication in older age
- Intergenerational relations

Ways to Wellness

Social prescribing within primary care is a way of linking individuals to non-clinical support services that help deal with long term health problems, and addresses the social and economic factors that are associated with ill-health. Ways to Wellness is a social prescribing intervention based in the West End of Newcastle which to date, has helped 4000 people with long term conditions by offering personalised support and linkage into a diverse range of community and voluntary services such as welfare rights, debt and housing advice, physical activity classes and arts based activities. The Institute for Social Renewal (jointly with the Institute for Ageing) funded a study which demonstrated that behaviour change could be maintained by social prescribing, but identified significant challenges to doing so in the context of multi-morbidity and social and economic problems. This research supported a successful bid to the National Institute of Health Research Public Health Programme for a full scale evaluation of social prescribing commencing in summer 2018.
What have we achieved during our first five years?

An independent review of NISR’s first 5 years (Meagher Associates, 2017) concluded (from surveys, interviews and case studies) that: “NISR has contributed to a wide range of impacts beyond academia, including but not limited to deeper understanding of critical issues related to social renewal, development of city and regional policies, collaborations with external organisations and stakeholders, and inspiration of the next generation.”

The evaluation drew attention to the mechanisms by which NISR has achieved its impact: “Perhaps of particular note are the ways in which NISR has contributed. By bringing people together at its own events, as well as by building direct relationships with stakeholders in Newcastle City and in the third sector as well as elsewhere, NISR has acted as a liaison or visible portal through which new interactions have taken place. Through connections it has made, it has often acted as a facilitator or catalyst for engagement between Newcastle academics and stakeholders. With its grants, which despite their modest size are much appreciated by academics in the humanities and social sciences, it has enabled novel projects to take place and new collaborations to develop.”

The report notes that NISR’s innovative approach as an enabler/facilitator has been crucial to its success: “From its foundation, NISR and its Director chose not to act as an institute with ‘hard infrastructure’ that sought to fund itself through external grants. Instead, it deliberately chose a path for which conventional institutional metrics are not suited – the path of helping others. Taking this path often involves nearly ‘invisible’ actions such as facilitation, spotting opportunities or making introductions. While this understated approach makes the famously problematic task of attributing causality for impacts even more difficult, there is no doubt that NISR has helped multiple academics to engage with external stakeholders in effective ways that have led toward impacts.”

Five years of Social Renewal

2012
Institute for Social Renewal is established
Sponsorship of Community Champions Awards
Lord Patten Annual Lectures for Social Renewal launched
Newcastle Fairness Commission

2013
Award for project exploring livelihoods of post trafficked women in Nepal
Queen’s Anniversary Prize for work on rural economics
TED prize for Sugata Mitra for “School in the Cloud” work

2014
Digital Civics grants awarded by EPSRC
Project on the impact of welfare reform launched
Newcastle City Futures exhibition

2015
Inspirational Women of the North East exhibition inspires “Inspirational Women of the Law” programme of work
Carnegie UK Trust fellowship exploring how the voluntary sector and academia can work together to influence policy “Getting the Facts Right” co-produced guide to involving young people in research written and presented to Scottish Government

2016
Poverty Proofing the School day project with Children North East
Book on “The Civic University” published as culmination of work on Anchor Institutions
Tyne and Wear Citizens established with Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and Institute for Social Renewal as partners

2017
NISR celebrates Freedom City 2017, the 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr receiving an honorary degree from Newcastle University
Cross-cutting priorities: Social Renewal through Brexit; Social Renewal in the North East and New Pathways to Social Renewal
**Social Justice**

Newcastle University aims to be a champion of social justice, and for the Institute for Social Renewal, that has meant focussing on particular challenges facing our city and region, and how to tackle inequality. From community organising to celebrating diversity, the Institute aims to better understand how structures can enable social justice, and make society fairer for all.

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**Tyne and Wear Citizens**

Tyne and Wear Citizens is a chapter of the national charity Citizens UK (CUK), famous for the Living Wage campaign, amongst others. It creates an alliance of diverse institutions and through these organises communities to act for the common good. Newcastle University’s Institute for Social Renewal and Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences are jointly one of 5 founding partners, enabling the recruitment of a community organiser (Sara Bryson ex-Children North East & England’s Children’s Commissioner office). The organisation works by training citizens in community organising and by identifying an action agenda through an in-depth local listening campaign carried out through and by all member organisations. Tyne and Wear Citizens has established the following action areas by this means: poverty, mental health and safer cities, and welcomed 964 attendees to 2017’s launch assembly.

As its actions towards social justice develop, Newcastle University staff and students are involved in all the action groups and in student placements with Sara Bryson. Regional impact is already in evidence.

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**City of Sanctuary**

Globally, one in every 122 humans is now either a refugee, internally displaced, or seeking asylum. Unfortunately such displacement is likely to be a continuing feature of the 21st Century. It’s for this reason that Newcastle University is committed to welcoming asylum seekers and refugees to our city and protecting their human rights. The City of Sanctuary organisation works closely with communities, voluntary and faith organisations to help new arrivals to the city settle in and highlights the contribution of refugees to the area they have made their home. In 2017, Newcastle University signed a pledge to support the movement, co-signed by Newcastle City of Sanctuary coordinator Sarah Smart. Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Chris Day said: “I’m proud to sign this document, which pledges our support to an organisation which is working so hard to help people who are making a new home in this city. We share many of the values of Newcastle: City of Sanctuary and this is another example of Newcastle University’s ongoing commitment to social justice.”

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**Digital stories for widening participation**

Newcastle University already leads an impressive widening participation programme to encourage young people from diverse backgrounds to attend university. Despite this we have heard from young people how widening participation discourses can often reinforce stigma and feelings of marginalisation. To counter this stigma a collaboration between Dr Laura Mazzoli Smith and the Careers Service has launched the ncl+ Advanced Award in Digital Storytelling. Students develop skills in digital storytelling. Some will choose to have those stories made public to encourage others to know the individual and varied backgrounds and learning journeys of those who go to university. This award builds on the evaluation of Laura Mazzoli Smith and Karen Laing of a Raising Aspirations Partnership project to support the progression of Looked After Young People to University. This research highlighted the power of life stories to connect with young people currently in care and their foster carers.
Social Renewal in the North East

The North East is a region with vibrant communities and culture, but one that faces increasingly complex problems, with poorer outcomes than the national average for health, education and the economy. In November 2017, the Institute for Social Renewal hosted the launch event of the Social Renewal in the North East project. We welcomed stakeholders from the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector and local authorities to a collaborative workshop to discuss key challenges in the region. Based on conversations with selected stakeholders and knowledge of existing practices and projects, regional case studies will be identified and their approaches to social renewal and social justice will be considered in-depth for inclusion in an accessible edited book. Additional key outputs will include workshops, knowledge exchanges and briefing papers for debate. Led by Professors Mark Shucksmith, Liz Todd, Simon Davoudi and Derek Bell, and supported by Dr Mel Steer, this project will identify practice that aims to improve the lives of people and communities in our region.

Social Renewal through and after Brexit

The results of the UK referendum on 26th June 2016 revealed that 52% of those who voted, voted leave. In the North East region, this percentage increased to 58%1. Supported by funding from the Economic and Social Research Council Impact Acceleration Account, two workshops in March 2017 explored the challenges and opportunities that Brexit presents. Participants representing local authorities, voluntary, community and social enterprise and the private sectors discussed the implications of the leave vote on employment, the local economy and skills and training. Key to the discussions was a consideration of how the region might respond and adapt to the challenges presented and thrive through and after Brexit to create a fair, just and prosperous region. As the details of the UK’s exit strategy from the EU become clearer, the Institute for Social Renewal plans a follow-up workshop with regional partners to explore ways forward for our region.

New Pathways to Social Renewal: alternatives to neoliberalism

Globalisation, deregulation and digital technologies have changed the ways we live. In the west, Keynesianism and Monetarist policies failed to deliver sustained economic growth and reduce inequality. UK government policies that promote individual responsibility and the transference of risk to individuals with a smaller role for the state (neoliberalism) are entrenched. Austerity policies following the economic crash in 2008 have widened inequalities. Although employment levels are high, wages have stagnated and many people are in low paid, insecure employment. Welfare Reform has meant that the incomes of the poor have fallen in real terms. These challenging times require new ways of thinking to formulate new theories and approaches to solve global societal challenges. Utilising commentators’ and scholars’ thoughts, the Institute for Social Renewal will explore the evidence-based approaches and innovative thinking that may inform solutions to these societal challenges, to forge new pathways to social renewal.

Our Priorities

The following three areas of work are the Institute for Social Renewal’s current priorities, building on existing networks of knowledge, and making a difference in tangible ways. These three projects are particularly relevant to the current turbulent times, and are led by Institute Research Excellence Academy Fellow Mel Steer.

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Social Renewal in Numbers

- **23** schools and centres from across Newcastle University where we have supported or funded projects
- **1067** media appearances related to Social Renewal
- **73** external organisations involved in our funded projects from across the Quadruple Helix; Voluntary and Community organisations, Social Enterprises, schools and colleges, local authorities and business
- **10** capacity building events to support stakeholder engagement with research
- **Over 100** Social Renewal funded projects
- **261** workshops, summits, conferences and events related to or supported by Social Renewal
- **5** Social Renewal high profile annual public lectures attended by more than 1800 people
- **£21 million** worth of research grants related to Social Renewal
- **£240,984** - total value of awards made by Social Renewal made through our funding call
- **10** external organisations involved in NISR Advisory Board
- **4** Social Renewal lectures delivered by Postgraduate Research students in the ‘New Voices in Social Renewal’ series
- **4** targeted campaigns using Newcastle University Institute for Social Renewal research for policy impact
Institute for Social Renewal

Find out more about the work of the Institute:

 Go online for more information: www.ncl.ac.uk/socialrenewal
 Follow us: @Social_Renewal

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