Developing a regional Public Health Research Hub: reflections on 15 years of Fuse

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What is Fuse?

- Centre of Excellence in Public Health Research
- A virtual centre, operating across 5 North East universities
- USP - Translational Research in Public Health
- Working in partnership with policy makers and practitioners, enabling research findings to be understood and applied to public health issues
- Founding member of NIHR School for Public Health Research (SPHR)

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Fuse Aims

Fuse’s mission is to transform health and well-being and reduce health inequalities through the conduct of world-class public health research and its translation into value-for-money policy and practice.

To achieve this our three broad aims are to:

• Deliver world-class public health research
• Build sustainable capacity
• Build effective and lasting partnerships
Fuse Research Programmes

Complex Systems

Translational Research

Behaviour Change

Early Life and Adolescence

Healthy Ageing
Fuse Structure

• **Fuse Infrastructure:**
  • 10 Senior Investigators, incl. 5 Associate Directors
  • 7 Core staff (KE/Comms/PICE/administrative)
  • 7 PhD students (45 completions; Fuse funded & affiliated)
  • 200+ Associate members from practice and academia across North East
  • >1500 network members

• **Fuse Governance:**
  • Centre Strategy Board
  • Centre Management Group
  • Research Strategy Group
  • Communications group
  • Public Involvement & Engagement group
Funding

• UKCRC funding June 2008 until December 2018 (£9Mln)
• Core funding from the British Heart Foundation, CRUK, ESRC, MRC and NIHR
• Sustained by partner Universities until 2027 (annual subscription fee £40K) for core staff
• Project funding drawn from NIHR School for Public Health Research (£600K)
What has Fuse achieved?

• £210M in grant funding
• Published over 2,000 peer reviewed papers with over 60,000 citations
• 477 projects
• 389 public engagement events
• 314 conference presentations
• 45 Fuse-funded PhD students successfully completed their training
• Awards winning blog, research digests, tweets
What does Fuse do?

1. *Awareness raising*: Communication Manager, Fuse website, newsletter, social media
2. *Knowledge sharing*: QRMs, international conferences, AskFuse
3. *Making evidence fit for purpose*: KEB, AskFuse, embedded research
4. *Supporting uptake & implementation*: capacity building, co-production, linking KE activities

Van der Graaf et al. 2019
No single interface for collaboration (applying Saner’s model)

- **Function:** *Go* (developing new research) or *Stop* (controlling processes or outputs)
- **Focus:** internal or external audiences. Often fluid, e.g. internalising external audiences
- **Engagement:** *info management* (evidence reviews), *linkage* (joint meetings), *capacity development* (training, internships), *decision and implementation support* (AskFuse)
Structural approaches to collaborations

• **Linking** a range of knowledge exchange **activities**

• Engaging policymakers and practitioners at **different levels, intensities and points** in their decision-making processes

• Dealing with complexity: breaking KE process down into **practical steps** (awareness raising, knowledge sharing, making evidence for purpose, supporting uptake and implementation)

• **Starting small**, developing into larger/longer-term collaborations, securing ‘**quick wins**’ early on (evidence summaries/ joint case studies)
Next steps

- **Build capacity and expertise** by linking with other infrastructures (ICBs, HDRCs, ARCs, CRN NENC): seamless interface with their responsive services
- **Scale-up provision** nationally (NIHR PHIRST, NIHR SPHR)
- **Strengthen international collaborations** (Bronfenbrenner Center for Translational Research, USA; and Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research in Canada, Tilburg and Erasmus Universities NL)
References


Thank you!

“My job is to make decisions. Your job is to make them good decisions.”