



# School-University Partnerships: *Fulfilling the Potential* Summary Report

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## **A report by:**

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# 1. Background

## The context:

The landscape for both schools and universities in the UK is changing fast, with significant implications for school-university partnership working. The push for a self-improving school-led system in England has radically reduced the role of Local Authorities and requires new, more commercial, relationships with universities in areas such as Initial Teacher Education (ITE). Universities are wrestling with how to balance the books and position themselves in a marketised system thanks to the increase in tuition fees, the removal of the student number cap and research budgets that are diminishing in real terms. Many of the ringfenced budgets that supported partnership working between schools and universities in the past have disappeared.

While many of the above factors might be seen to be making school-university partnerships more challenging, there are also countervailing forces. For example, research funding increasingly requires Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to focus on public engagement and impact, while schools are being encouraged to increase their use of evidence-informed practice and to establish subject expertise hubs that draw in HEI expertise.

## The school-university partnership initiative learning project:

The school-university partnership learning initiative ran from January to September 2014, funded by Research Councils UK and coordinated by the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement. The project was commissioned to learn from existing work on schools university partnerships, and to explore the potential for an ongoing programme of work aimed at enhancing the quality and impact of school-university partnerships. The learning initiative is linked to, but separate from, the three-year School-University Partnership Initiative which links researchers with schools – SUPI.<sup>1</sup>

The learning initiative was undertaken by Professor Toby Greany (Institute of Education), Professor Qing Gu (Nottingham University), Professor Graham Handscomb (independent) and Matt Varley (Nottingham Trent University), in collaboration with the NCCPE team led by Paul Manners and Sophie Duncan. It explored the following questions:

- How are school-university partnerships perceived by different stakeholders?
- What are the conditions required for sustainable school-university partnerships?
- How can such partnerships secure 'collaborative advantage' for both parties?
- Is there emerging evidence of shared benefits and impact?
- Are there shared challenges and opportunities that would benefit from further work and exploration and how might such a collaborative project be designed?

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<sup>1</sup> For details see [www.rcuk.ac.uk/pe/PartnershipsInitiative](http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/pe/PartnershipsInitiative)

### **The project involved three linked strands:**

- A literature review: this drew on key studies and reviews in English over the past three decades.
- Interviews and survey: Twelve semi-structured interviews were carried out with leaders in the following areas: five key stakeholders and policy makers, four school leaders, and three universities. The survey was completed by 42 individuals representing universities, schools, funding bodies, the third sector, professional bodies/learned societies and policy.
- Workshop: the workshop was attended by over 50 stakeholders representing schools, universities, policy makers, and wider third sector and professional organisations. It provided an opportunity to reflect on the findings from the literature review, surveys and interviews and to assess the current context for school-university partnerships in the UK.

Reports from each of the above three strands are published alongside this summary report.

## 2. Key findings

### 2.1 Literature review

The **literature review**<sup>2</sup> brought together a wealth of mostly qualitative studies, indicating the breadth and scale of school-university partnerships across different education systems and the extent to which they have been researched over several decades.

While the focus of each partnership is different, at the highest level partnerships tend to focus on one or more of the following areas:

- widening participation of under-represented groups in universities.
- increasing participation in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) subjects with a view to increasing the number of students entering university.
- relationships between faculties of education and schools, generally focussed on initial teacher education, continuing professional development and/or collaborative research.

High hopes have been held for school-university partnerships at different points in time and in different parts of the world, but successive evaluations have found that those hopes remain unfulfilled in many cases due to a 'litany of barriers' (Smedley, 2001).

The root of the challenge seems to lie in the deep cultural differences between the two sectors. These differences are enshrined in different accountability structures, operating models and languages, which then drive individual and organisational behaviour. Other factors compound the challenge, not least the sheer logistical challenges of partnering one, complex university with multiple schools.

Nevertheless, there are many individual examples of successful school-university partnerships in the literature as well as examples, such as Finland, where collaboration is more systemic. Successful partnering seems to require pragmatism and an acceptance of incremental change, working to build trust within a framework of shared values and aspirations. This requires commitment and capacity building over the long term from both partners, although policy and funding changes can easily disrupt such work.

Where partnerships are more successful, a number of factors appear to be present:

- Power and control: all voices to be heard. Successful partnerships reject a hierarchical approach in which the university dominates and practitioner knowledge is devalued. Instead, the recent work on design-led partnerships in US (Byrke et al, 2011) builds on previous examples to exemplify ways in which school and university staff can have an equal voice, with practitioner priorities and knowledge explicitly valued.
- Mind the gap - cultural differences. Successful partnerships often appear to succeed by creating a 'third space' which is separate from the culture of either institution and allows for more creative ways of working. This cultural dialogue is powered by trust (which relates to the points above and below regarding power, control and leadership), but trust can easily be fractured if key personnel move on or priorities change.
- The importance of leadership. Partnerships and networks are not naturally self-organising. They require strategic leaders who recognise and prioritise external working of this nature as well as distributed and shared leadership across the boundaries between the partners. Opinion leaders – who may or may not be in formal roles – play a pivotal role in shaping and galvanising successful partnerships that overcome the cultural and practical barriers faced. Also important are the 'blended professionals' who work across institutional boundaries.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/supi\\_literature\\_review.pdf](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/supi_literature_review.pdf)

- Strategic relevance and fit. Partnerships work well when there is joined-up coherence and strategic fit. Successful partnerships are often design led and focussed on solving locally defined problems through an enquiry approach: bringing together academic research, practitioner knowledge and priorities, and commercial expertise in a sustained programme of activity. Many partnerships – particularly those focussed on widening participation – also have an extended membership from the wider community, including parents. Even where not focussed on solving local problems, positive outcomes are more likely when they are conceived and achieved as part of the partnering process itself.
- Material resources: making it happen. Partnerships pose a challenge and have transaction costs – the time, energy and resources necessary to keep the partnership alive and well. Therefore funding is a crucial contributor to partnership success, but partnerships also need to develop strategies to persist in austere times.

As yet, there is relatively little hard evidence of improved outcomes from school-university partnerships. For example, despite a number of attempts to address this issue, participation and retention of students from lower income families in university remains extremely low. That said, wider benefits – ranging from enriched professional learning to efficiencies enabled through the better use of complementary resources – are frequently cited. Equally, there is tangible learning from some evaluations around how to enhance partnership working: for example, increasing STEM participation is now seen to require early intervention as action post 14 is too late. Nevertheless, partly in recognition that evaluation evidence is weak, there are frequent calls for a stronger focus on monitoring and evaluation in the literature.

## 2.2 Interviews and survey findings

The **interviews and survey**<sup>3</sup> highlighted many of the same themes as the literature review, but placed these in the current UK context. Five themes emerged overall:

### i. **School-university partnerships have changed significantly in the last five years and continue to evolve, although the legacy from historical approaches and cultures remains strong.**

The relationships are characterised by some schools as somewhat distant and a *'one way street'*, with the universities repeating a *'traditional offer... about which schools were not thinking much ... (as they were) restricted in their thinking'* (Head Teacher, School). While this annual cycle remains, there has been a *'significant change in the nature of school-university partnership over the last three to five years'* (Head Teacher, School).

Policy initiatives and funding mechanisms are seen to have steered these shifts. At the most strategic level, policy makers have emphasised *'the importance and effectiveness of long term, sustained and targeted activities'* (Policy Adviser).

This focus does appear to be changing practice. For example, whereas in the past *'universities were only interested at the point that pupils were reaching the end of their time in school, now there is much more engagement from them further down the school'* (Head Teacher, School). Examples include projects aimed at informing pre-GCSE choices in Northern Ireland through improved understanding of study and career pathways.

Another area is the CPD needs of teachers and their engagement in and with research. One University has shifted to deeper partnership over the last five years through a focus on *'teaching as clinical practice'* that has resulted in a *'qualitatively different experience for teachers and university staff'* (Senior Lecturer, University). Another has established a post-graduate certificate in research development that promotes the involvement of teachers in research.

Other policies have taken a more disruptive approach by actively shifting the balance of power towards schools. School Direct, the Coalition Government's new approach to Initial Teacher Education in England which gives training places to schools who then commission support from

<sup>3</sup> [www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/survey\\_and\\_interviews.pdf](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/survey_and_interviews.pdf)

HEIs and other accredited providers, has led to some difficult conversations between schools and universities. However, it has also resulted in *'an increase in schools' confidence ... (and) a growing recognition that schools have something to offer as well'* (Head Teacher, School). There has been a *'wide spectrum of responses from universities, from the defensive to the progressive... we shopped around for a more creative HEI when it came to School Direct'* (Head Teacher, School).

Overall therefore it appears that *'universities are becoming more interested in engaging with schools ... The most enlightened universities are working genuinely in partnership, rather than doing stuff to schools'* (Programme Manager, Research Council / Funding Body). In some universities this is reflected in *'a more strategic approach... through a raising of the importance of working with schools to a more strategic level within the University and also through the University working with a set of educational partners that are themselves working at a more strategic level, e.g. qualification bodies, school improvement services and local authorities'* (Community Engagement Manager, University).

**ii. There remain many barriers to schools and universities working together, including cultural, logistical, and structural barriers, the speed and nature of the changes in the school sector, and issues to do with knowledge definition and creation.**

Despite the positive picture painted above, there remain fundamental cultural and logistical barriers to effective partnership working between schools and universities, compounded by a lack of understanding of how each other works.

A number of references were made to a mis-match between HEIs and schools in terms of the rhythm of their years and the speed at which they need to move. The interface between these two worlds is *'clunky and unhelpful'* (Principal Lecturer, University).

The speed and nature of the changes taking place in the school sector presents particular challenges, for example with the reduction in many Local Authority services making it harder to engage and work with groups of schools.

At the practical level, *'different schools want different things'*– from mentoring for their pupils to enhancing chemistry lessons with explosions – making it hard for one university to respond flexibly to multiple school partners (Senior Leader, University). This can be compounded when teams within a university don't communicate and where there is no *'single, obvious entry point'* (Director, HEI) for external partners.

The availability of time is also a key challenge, with a need to plan well in advance. *'It is very difficult for teachers to be released and the teachers that we are working with are in the shortage subjects. So we have to be very careful that the processes of building this exciting experience for the students and teachers do not actually have a negative impact in terms of the core teaching'* (Programme Director, HEI).

Questions about how knowledge is generated and by whom are fundamental. Universities may see themselves in this role, but some hold the view that the knowledge that they produce is often too impenetrable and not disseminated effectively. A better approach may be if *'teachers and academics could publish together, citing projects that involve teachers'* (Head Teacher, School).

As a result of these barriers, the general view is that there is further to go to take full advantage of the opportunities for school–university partnerships. Each has *'far more value to the other than has yet been realised – in particular on the research agenda, and on subjects and curricula'* (Policy Adviser, Government).



### **iii. National policy is disjointed and funding is reducing and uncertain, so coherence may be best realised through local, sub-regional or regional effort.**

The widely-held view is that national policy in the area of school-university partnerships is neither coherent nor sustained.

Within this there are also significant differences in policy between the home countries. In Scotland, the implementation of the Teaching Scotland's Future initiative is founded on local partnerships involving schools, Local Authorities and universities. One of its key recommendations is to strengthen and formalise existing partnerships, without getting in the way of existing good practice. Local Authorities are seen as crucial to this effort. In contrast, the role of local authorities in England has reduced sharply as academies and free schools have expanded.

Some suggest that policy perspectives are almost inevitably partial, reflecting the priorities of different ministries and policy teams (Policy Adviser, Government). For example, the Aim Higher initiative was affected by the removal of Connexions Services at a time when the work of careers services in schools had been criticised. Certainly, the extent to which different national government agencies work together varies between policy areas: the Departments for Education (DfE) and Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) have many links with each other on STEM activities, some links on Widening Participation, and very few on ITE (Policy Adviser, Government).

The impact of this incoherent policy landscape is that different initiatives are launched backed up by funding, resulting in local action, but once the funding runs out the activity stops. This stop-start model hampers sustained partnership building since: *'The main factor for building these relationships is time. Funding for a few years is not sufficient. Universities need to build up an internal structure to support these relationships and schools need time to pick up on this and for word of mouth to spread.'* (Project Manager, HEI)

Some argue that greater policy coherence and funding is needed because partnership effort can *'no longer be done on a wing and a prayer'*. Ideally this would take the form of dedicated partnership funding, either located within HEIs (Policy Adviser, Government) or within partnerships themselves (Policy Adviser, HEI).

Others accept that policy coherence and additional funding are not realistic. Instead, effort needs to be focussed on driving local coherence and capacity building. Certainly, some universities have managed to draw in other funding sources to support their efforts. For example, one university obtained funding from the London Schools Excellence Fund – a one year programme aimed at supporting teacher CPD – to support their outreach and SUPI effort. Charges are made for some programmes, while others are provided for free.

One interesting policy area is evidence-based teaching, where the DfE has taken a deliberately low key approach, but schools are nevertheless felt to be *'quietly interested'* (Policy Adviser, Government). However, the view from some head teachers is that *'a lot of universities have focused on ITE and should be further on with research and professional development'* (Head Teacher, School): this feels like a gap yet to be closed, and perhaps the lack of funding has contributed to this.

Ultimately, despite the challenges, there does seem to be a recognition among some that schools and universities do need each other: *'a self-improving school system couldn't be realised by schools alone ... schools don't have the capacity or skill by themselves ... We need to challenge the dismissal of the HEI role in ITE'* (Head Teacher, School).

### **iv. For these reasons, purpose, commitment, leadership and a strategic approach are crucial to the success of partnership effort.**

In the face of the challenges involved in developing and sustaining partnership effort between schools and universities, a clear purpose and strong commitment are essential if they are to succeed.

Two-thirds of the survey respondents suggested that these partnerships are driven by HEIs rather than schools. As one put it: *"usually it is the university that tries to reach the school. Schools often are unaware of what is available or are just too busy ... (or) feel it is above their station"* (Education Adviser, Professional Body / Learned Society).

The extent to which universities are invested in partnership effort, and to which leaders within universities are focused on this, is therefore crucial. Success requires *'a clear sense from senior academics that this sort of work is supported and rewarded among more junior researchers'* (Director, HEI). Such commitment might stem from altruism, a need to demonstrate public engagement and impact or simply pragmatism, for example as a way to recruit students and fulfil Widening Participation targets. If such factors are not present then universities may not engage.

An overarching strategic approach across a university is seen to be important. Knowledge Exchange and Public Engagement initiatives can provide a strategic umbrella for such work, perhaps co-ordinated by a corporate board or group that includes representatives from schools as well as other partners. Other approaches include having facilities such as a Reach Out Lab and membership schemes. Nevertheless, the federal nature of most universities means that coordination can be challenging and it will always be *'lots of people's jobs to do (partnership)'* (Senior Leader, University).

**v. Successful partnership is all about relationships, mutuality, and win-win propositions – but this requires the right kind of approach if it is to be successful and sustain.**

The factor most commonly identified by survey respondents as important to the success of school-university partnerships was relationships. One interviewee described partnerships as *'people with passion who have managed through a range of rather coincidental circumstances to find partners. I wish I could see it being more systematic than that!'* (Director, HEI). However, this foundation can be flimsy; *'you have to start again each time the people change'* (Senior Lecturer, University). Equally, it makes partnership haphazard: you need *'somebody in each school who wants to make it work. ... that's where funding becomes an issue'* (Senior Teacher, School).

The dispositions of the individuals involved in the partnership was the second most commonly identified success factor in the survey. One interviewee encapsulated this in terms of: *'trust, honesty, time investment from both parties, previous experience of working together, an understanding that we can't do it alone and a mutual aim to do it as well as possible'* (Secondary Partnership Coordinator, HEI).

Institutional values and culture are also of key importance. A senior leader at one university pointed to the founding of the institution during the Enlightenment with a commitment to being a *'place of useful learning'* as being key to sustaining a core purpose of reaching far beyond the privileged minority into professions and trades.

Finding and demonstrating win-win propositions for all partners is also fundamental. *'This is the key. Unless both parties get something out of it, it won't work ... Without government subsidy, the costs need to be worth the benefits ... You need to examine the DNA of the institutions involved ... Are they truly really committed to the partnership? Everyone is very busy, on both sides. It needs to work for everyone to be a success'* (Senior Leader, University). The SUPPI initiative is seen to have enabled such a win-win in several cases, supporting professional development and impact for early career researchers and subject knowledge enhancement for teachers. The design of the programme, giving schools a strong voice in how the funding is used, is seen to have helped this.

Underpinning partnership with structural and legal arrangements – for example through involvement in governance boards – can be important. This can happen where universities are involved in sponsoring academies and University Technical Colleges. Such arrangements can foster deeper strategic relationships and shared working (HEFCE). ITE partnerships are most likely to involve more formal agreements because Ofsted requires this: elsewhere formalised arrangements are rarely mature.

In terms of challenges, partnerships can be affected by increased competition between schools, between HEIs, and between schools and HEIs. The removal of the student numbers cap is placing a premium on marketing and recruitment and this will affect collaboration between HEIs. Similarly, the ITE policy in England in recent years has accelerated this, asking schools to become purchasers of services from HEIs and thereby acting against the development of partnership (Policy Adviser, University).

If schools and universities are to become equal partners, then HEIs need to become more flexible and '*less precious*' about their provision and processes, but HEI quality assurance processes can mitigate against this (Policy Adviser, HEI).

Evaluating partnership initiatives and being able to demonstrate the benefits that they provide to each partner is crucial to gaining support and securing sustainability. Such evaluations are hard to do well, whether because there is too little money, the study is initiated too late, the initiative doesn't run for long enough to allow sufficient time for the full range of benefits to be demonstrated, or the methodological problems are hard to overcome.

Finally, investing in the necessary capacity to develop and maintain partnership effort is crucial to sustainability, but can be hard to establish. Aim Higher (an initiative that received significant national funding aimed at Widening Participation over 8 years) is seen as one good example of sustainability. The longevity of the initiative created '*a fair amount of stability*' and enabled '*deep collaboration*' to grow. In the last three years the partnerships and the benefits that they delivered '*really began to embed*'. Some twenty of these out-reach partnerships have survived thanks to the energy and determination of a few committed people. Different models have been pursued; for example, in Birmingham a number of institutions have pooled funding to set up an office towards the cost of which schools pay a small fee.

## 2.3 Event outcomes

The participants at the **event**<sup>4</sup> had the chance to reflect on the findings from the literature review, interviews and survey, providing a further chance to put these findings in context and identify strategic themes and issues. These were as follows:

- **Re-inventing wheels and duplication – ‘a ludicrously crowded space’:** In addition to incoherent policy, there are multiple, overlapping projects on the ground that are not learning the lessons from previous initiatives and research and that are confusing for schools to navigate.
- **Poor quality evaluation and weak focus on understanding value for money:** Interim and long-term outcomes which focus on the process of partnerships as well as the impact of partnership working are rarely planned in and tracked from the outset of most projects. National funding for partnerships can unlock capacity, but it can also skew activity and prevent a focus on agreeing shared outcomes, so perhaps such funding should be focussed on supporting rigorous evaluation of existing partnerships.
- **Difficulties in establishing ‘pull’ from schools and equitable relationships:** Partnerships can feel driven by Higher Education (HE) or simply difficult due to different cultures, attitudes, languages and ‘world views’. There are different cultures in schools and universities with regard to asking questions and it being okay not to know the answers, though more experienced Head teachers can be more receptive to partnership and taking risks.
- **Moving beyond the ‘safe pair of hands’:** Partnerships are often based on individual relationships, but movement of key staff can then make them fragile. There would be value in exploring the role of placements, secondments and joint appointments between schools and universities, which is beginning to happen more.
- **The need to recognise – and audit – the range of partners and partnerships:** Organisations such as learned societies, subject associations and the Education Endowment Foundation can be important players in this space, often helping to enable sustained links between schools and universities. More impromptu school-driven networks are also emerging, such as ResearchEd and the Teacher Development Trust.
- **Understanding effective practice and sustainability:** The research should include greater exploration of the practical logistics of effective partnership and how to manage policy change.
- **Déjà vu may be right, but the current landscape is also very new:** The school system is in a state of flux, with a sense of increased competition and potential loss of trust on all sides, which will have profound long-term implications for school-university partnerships.
- **There is a danger of using only one model of research:** We must accept there are different discourses and different types and levels of research. Critical debate and critical research as an aim seem to be missing from the current discourse on partnerships, which is focussed on a performance and effectiveness model.
- **There are inherent contradictions in policy which need to be recognised and managed:** This includes an attack on HE and its role in relation to schools by Michael Gove and other Conservative ministers, which is regrettable and risks the highly effective and profitable partnerships in place.
- **Mediation and brokerage are complex but important functions:** Where they work well it fits with the impact agenda of universities and research councils.
- **A culture of research in teaching schools is developing.** For example one secondary school includes ‘undertaking research’ as one of its staff performance criteria. Teachers need to be able to evaluate the rigour of research they access and apply a ‘good enough’ test in terms of practical research they undertake.

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<sup>4</sup> [www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/supi\\_workshop\\_event\\_report.pdf](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/supi_workshop_event_report.pdf)

- **Dissemination**, in particular of practitioner research findings, remains a significant challenge.

The second half of the workshop was focussed on the potential for a second phase of learning and inquiry around how to develop sustainable school partnerships. Six challenges were identified and developed as potential priorities for the next phase to focus on, as follows:

i **Limited evidence of impact/benefits from partnerships and a lack of investment in evaluation**

Funders should work together with universities and schools to develop a framework or concordat for effective practice in evaluating partnership working. There should be an expectation for all funded projects to contribute to shared learning on effective practice.

ii **Lack of shared vision/agendas at policy level and between universities and schools**

In England in particular, the lack of a high level vision for school-university partnerships that aligns policy making, funding decisions and practice on the ground appears to be a significant fault-line. That said, as noted below in v), there is an argument that policy and funding can 'get in the way' of partnership working. Therefore there is a need for policy makers and funders across the four nations to share approaches in order to understand effective ways forward.

iii **Recognising, rewarding and communicating good practice in partnerships**

This work should focus on recognising emerging good practice in three areas: schools; brokerage and universities. There is a need to define what success or good practice looks like and how it should be judged. This requires evaluation and the development of appropriate metrics and impact measures. Secondly, there is a need to decide what form the recognition should take. A key focus for these awards should be on communicating and celebrating effective practice in order to raise the profile of this work and highlight the lessons learned.

iv **Lack of recognition of the skills and capacity required for key brokerage roles and the associated expectations of researchers and practitioners**

There is currently limited understanding of the skills and capacity required for intermediary brokerage, and too little recognition of its importance. In order to address this we need: a picture of who the brokers are and what they are doing; career recognition and training for them; stronger links between school partnerships and wider public engagement; an exploration of how such roles could work in schools; and a commitment to cross sector working.

v **Policy pressures make partnerships difficult, including accountability, imposed models and timescales**

We need ways to communicate the benefits of partnerships to policymakers effectively, but also to be realistic: there are some policies we won't change, so we need to focus on specific areas where change would make a demonstrable difference and equally allow the argument to grow through local, community led examples rather than a single national push.

vi **Cultural barriers make partnerships difficult – how to create a 'third space' which allows schools and universities to recognise each others' strengths and work together?**

This means really identifying and understanding the cultural differences and then deciding practical ways of addressing them.

### 3. Conclusion

At the highest level, the literature review gives a somewhat downbeat message that school-university partnerships are inherently difficult to secure and that, as a result, they have failed to fulfil their promise. Yet the survey, interviews and workshop all suggest that many practitioners and institutions continue to work together to shape positive school-university partnerships in the UK. While the current landscape is arguably more challenging than ever, there are signs that some universities are investing greater strategic effort in such partnerships and that many schools are becoming more actively engaged.

The lack of a robust evidence-base around the specific impact that different types of partnership can secure is a significant gap and might arguably be a prime focus for the next stage of work. Beyond this lie many related questions, including:

- How might the nature of partnership working shift as partnerships become more commercially orientated? Is the notion of a 'third space' that exists between the two institutions and enables collaborative working still relevant and possible in a more transactional environment? What will be the role of critical engagement and research in such an environment?
- Why is it that some partnerships succeed whilst others struggle? There appear to be sharp contrasts between the theoretical, sometimes 'utopian', literature on school-university partnerships and the 'on-the-ground' reality of delivery – which can often feel very chaotic. Can research evaluate 'what works?' more systematically without losing sight of the complexity?
- The role of brokers, match-makers and translators – professionals who catalyse partnerships and who empower others to engage in dialogue - has been highlighted throughout the project. Is there a case for greater investment in this intermediary level, for example through a national network, professional training or award scheme?

Next steps from the project will include mapping the potential for a second phase of work focussed on building the evaluation capacity in order to understand the nature of effective partnerships and the difference they can make.



## **National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement**

The National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement's vision is of a higher education sector making a vital, strategic and valued contribution to 21st-century society through its public engagement activity. We are working to help support universities to improve, value and increase the quantity and quality of their public engagement and embed it into their core practice.

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