

# Speech: Nurses are mission-critical to culture change in the NHS

It's good to be back in Birmingham – I wasn't sure if I was going to make it today...

There's been a few things going on in Westminster this week, as you may have heard, and the entire nation could probably do with a little nursing at the moment.

So, I'm delighted to be here with you, at my first ever Chief Nursing Officer Summit.

And there's a lot I wanted to say today.

But when I was thinking about it, there's really one message I want to leave with you, more than any other.

And that message is that nurses, and chief nurses in particular, are mission-critical to the change in culture we need to see in the NHS.

Because you lead the organisations that you work in, at every level, from chief nurse to clinical specialist, to paediatrics, to ward matron, to theatre nurse, every nurse, caring for every patient, in every setting across the land.

Because the foundation of nursing and the NHS is the same: caring.

Valuing the care you provide is fundamental to creating the right culture within the NHS.

So I will pledge you my support to tackle the challenges I can take on and I'll say a little about those in a moment.

And in return my request from you, is that you seize this challenge to change the culture of the NHS:

To make it the best it can be, by breaking down hierarchies, integrating care, removing barriers, empowering staff, embedding that spirit of continuous improvement that's vital to making the NHS the best it possibly can be.

And in doing so, we need to change how people think of this profession.

I've worked with the NHS, as a local MP, for almost 10 years now, and I know the incredible work that nurses do, but I also know that the public perception of the profession is deeply sympathetic, yes, and we must never lose that.

But the public just don't get what a highly skilled, highly technical,

knowledge-based profession nursing is, so we must change that.

And I'm delighted that Ruth has been doing so much to challenge and raise the public perception of nursing since she started.

She's a vital and valued part of my team, and let me tell you: she makes sure your voice is heard at the top table – and she can be pretty direct.

Ruth and I met some primary school pupils from here in Birmingham this morning.

They are part of the brilliant Nursing Now campaign to encourage more young people to think about a career in nursing.

I asked how many wanted to be nurses when they grow up and many of them said they would – strangely none of them wanted to be MPs.

And what was refreshing is that girls, and boys, were excited about the idea of becoming a nurse.

And we were able to tell them that this is a profession at the cutting edge of research, science, and technology.

Caring, yes, perhaps more than any other profession, but it's so much more too.

We could tell them what we need to tell the world about what modern nursing is all about:

You are pioneering new treatments and new clinical models.

You lead teams across wards, departments, hospitals and trusts.

You run the show, whether it's the frontline or the boardroom.

I've seen it for myself. You know it too.

You're the brains and the heart of every organisation you work in.

You're so in demand that an NHS nurse could go to any country on earth and be guaranteed to get a job – not that I want you to of course.

Junior doctors look to you for leadership.

Senior doctors – the smart ones at least – work with you hand-in-glove.

Frankly, without you there is no NHS.

And yet...

Our society doesn't value nursing enough.

Why? Why is that?

I've been thinking about this a lot.

I think it's because not enough people know what modern nursing is.

Too often, nursing is still seen as Florence Nightingale – maybe not the lady with the lamp, but ladies with sponges and bandages: the most basic level of nursing.

The image of nursing in the popular imagination is half a century out of sync with the modern-day reality. Nursing is an aspirational career choice for girls and boys.

Caring, compassionate, and highly, highly skilled.

We need to talk about the reality, the possibilities and opportunities of a nursing career.

Equal as a challenge to being a doctor or an engineer, a profession young men and women aspire to join.

As Professor Alison Leary puts it:

The compassion and caring are really important, but it isn't generally compassion that will save somebody's life.

If we can help society to understand that nursing is a "knowledge intensive occupation", she believes it would help nursing to be more valued and attract more men and women into the profession.

I wholeheartedly agree with her.

I don't need reminding that nurses are some of the most caring and compassionate people in our society: I've seen it for myself.

I see it every time I visit a hospital.

I see it every time I'm on a night shift.

I've seen it in simple gestures that speak volumes:

Senior nurses bringing junior staff cups of tea in the middle of night, checking they're OK, asking if they need anything – even though their own night has been just as tough and tiring.

But the real reason I understand what it's like, and what it takes to be an amazing nurse, and where my admiration for nurses comes from, is my grandma, Pem.

My grandmother Pem Hills worked nights at the Pilgrim in Boston until my early childhood.

And I saw first-hand her dedication, her love for the job and her sacrifice.

I can see her now, in her uniform, with her funny upside-down watch.

And even after she retired, she never stopped caring.

She had a deep reservoir of love and kindness to draw on, just when you needed it.

But she was also the most ferociously organised person I ever knew. And I bet she kept those doctors under control.

So let's shout loud and clear about the value of nursing.

And I tell you this straight: let's not talk down the profession either.

I fear that sometimes – and in particular the public debate – people talk so much about the struggles and the difficulties – and I get that there are serious challenges in the NHS, but we focus on them so relentlessly that we rarely hear, in the public debate, about the possibilities and the opportunities.

Now of course, we must tackle those challenges – and we will.

And I will do my part, and the NHS leadership will do their part too.

We need to recruit more nurses. We now have a record number of undergraduate nursing places. Dido is going to expand that number even further in the Workforce Implementation Plan.

We need to attract the best international talent. And after Brexit we must and will continue to welcome nurses from around the world into the NHS.

We need to do more on retention. Retention isn't a single policy – it's about asking how we can keep people supported and motivated in their jobs.

We are going to have a constant focus on continuous improvement to policy. One of the things I've heard repeatedly is about the motivational power of CPD and how there's not enough of it. I agree.

I've been hammering home the importance of continuous learning and education since I started.

So I'm delighted Simon set out yesterday that he's going to do whatever it takes to restore CPD because it is vital to valuing and retaining our nursing staff.

So, we will do our bit at the centre. We don't have all the answers – we don't even have most of the answers. You do.

Let's work together to address those challenges, but let's also talk about how fulfilling the profession is, how exciting and essential being a nurse is.

Let's give people reasons to want to join this great, noble profession and the brilliant, talented people within it.

Let's challenge old-fashioned, outdated perceptions of who nurses are, and what nurses do, and tell the story of why a bright, talented 18-year-old would choose to become a nurse.

We do that by creating the right culture. And the right culture starts at the top: it starts with leaders.

It starts with you.

The type of leadership we need in the NHS is the type of leadership John F Kennedy demonstrated when he visited NASA after setting them the Apollo mission.

Kennedy stopped to talk to a janitor sweeping the floor and said: "Thank you, for helping to put a man on the moon."

The only difference I have with what JFK said is that I really think he should have been gender neutral.

Great leaders know the importance of making everyone feel valued, making everyone feel part of the same team, with the same mission.

And I've found that nurses are some of the best leaders within the NHS.

Nurses often make better leaders than doctors because you understand that caring for your staff is mission-critical for caring for your patients.

You know hierarchy can be a hinderance to improvement.

I find it shocking that, in my grandmother's day, nurses were expected to stand up when a doctor entered the room.

And worse, I find that's still the case in some antiquated, archaic corners of the NHS. I want it to stop. If anything, it should be doctors standing up for nurses.

Because who runs a hospital at 2am in the morning?

Who keeps the show on the road?

We need more nurses as leaders.

We need more nurses leading NHS trusts: inspiring others to aim higher, empowering staff through empathetic leadership.

We need better leadership to build a better, and bigger, workforce.

That's the only way we're going to seize this once-in-a-generation opportunity.

It's the only way we're going to get the best return for the taxpayer on the longest and largest cash settlement in the history of the NHS – the £34 billion injection confirmed again yesterday.

It's our only hope of making the ambitions within the NHS Long Term Plan a reality.

Because one thing's for certain: the NHS can't afford to stand still.

So I just want to end by talking about the future.

None of us can know exactly what 2030 will look like in my profession – perhaps not even what next week will look like...

But here's what we do know:

As people are living longer, their health needs are becoming more complex, their expectations are growing.

New technology, like genomics, AI, robotics, personalised medicines, is going to transform healthcare systems around the world.

Some people say these new technologies will take away human jobs, but the truth is that the thing that can't be replicated by machines is the caring, compassion that's at the heart of your profession.

So we're going to need more people in caring jobs, even before we think about the ageing population, using the power of technology to take away the boring stuff, giving more time for the empathetic, because that simply can't be replicated.

And for those who worry about those technologies, it won't be a case of should we, or shouldn't we, have these technologies within the NHS: the NHS has always embraced the best technology.

The question is how we embrace these technologies within the NHS for patients and staff. And your role is crucial as leaders, shaping and influencing their development, so they adapt to the NHS, so they benefit everyone, so they stay true to the founding principles of the NHS.

Building that technology must be done in a way that frees up time to care.

And you know who I think is best placed to help the techies design the tech to work for you?

Yes, you guessed it: you.

The techies should be asking what your needs are and how we use the best technology to help you to care.

So let's bring the perception of nursing up to date.

Let's ensure leaders lead with compassion and conviction.

Let's embrace change.

Let's work together.

I fully recognise the challenges.

I will do my bit.

But I'm relying on you.

Without nurses there is no NHS, so we need you – to make it, to shape it, and lead it to the brighter future we all want to see.

---

## **Press release: New investment in European Bioinformatics Institute to tackle life threatening diseases**

- Life scientists around the world to access more genomics and molecular biology data that will improve diagnosis of disease and inform new life-saving treatments
- new funding to EMBL's European Bioinformatics Institute in Cambridge will analyse large and complex data sets and turn into digestible knowledge for scientists
- investment illustrates the government's Industrial Strategy in action to ensure the UK remains globally competitive in the life sciences, with UK science and innovation supported by the largest increase in public research and development investment on record

Drug discovery, research into cancer genetics, regenerative medicine and crop disease prevention will be strengthened following £45 million government investment to extend the largest biological open data facility hosted in the UK.

Life scientists around the world use [EMBL European Bioinformatics Institute's \(EMBL-EBI\)](#) infrastructure in Cambridge to store, share, access and analyse data to drive cutting-edge research in genomics and molecular biology. This £45 million investment from government will increase the centre's computing, storage and building capacity as it works to improve the world's understanding of genetics and molecular biology.

Through collaborations, the Institute is integral to fighting human diseases, and has supported initiatives including:

- the Human Cell Atlas which is the world's first data platform that maps every single cell in the human body. By doing so, it allows scientists to identify which genes associated with disease are active in our bodies and where
- UK Biobank which is a collection of health data from over 500,000 volunteers in the country, set to offer new insights to disease

prevention and treatment

Making the announcement, Science Minister Chris Skidmore said:

People around the world are affected by food security, diseases that could be prevented and access to effective medication. Through the vital datasets made available by EMBL-EBI many of these issues can – and are – being prevented.

That is why the government has invested £45 million to boost the work being undertaken at the Institute, and why boosting the UK's genomics sector is a key commitment in our Life Sciences Sector Deal, to avoid premature deaths and to ensure food security for years to come.

The new funding is delivered through UK Research and Innovation's (UKRI) [Strategic Priorities Fund](#) which supports high quality research and development priorities. UK science and innovation is supported by the largest increase in public research and development investment on record by committing to raising R&D funding to 2.4% of GDP by 2027.

UKRI Chief Executive, Professor Sir Mark Walport, said:

Our ability to process, access and interrogate large volumes of data is absolutely crucial to scientific discovery in the 21st Century, none more so than in health and life sciences where the fields of genomics and molecular biology are fuelling major advances.

This funding enables EMBL-EBI to continue to grow its global leadership in large biological datasets and bioinformatics, which are used by researchers all over the world, every day of the week.

This investment will expand EMBL-EBI's technical IT and building infrastructure which will support the growing demand for scientists to access biological data sets more quickly and simply than has previously been the case. It will also support the emerging use of machine learning across the life sciences, which requires quality-controlled datasets that EMBL-EBI.

Dr Ewan Birney, Director of EMBL-EBI, said:

EMBL-EBI websites receive over 38 million requests for data or analysis every day. The demand for our data resources has risen dramatically in the last decade and we expect this trend to continue, so we need to be ready for when it happens. Building a robust and accessible data infrastructure is crucial for the life science discoveries of the next decades.



Bioinformatics – the science of analysing, storing and sharing large biological datasets – is essential to discovering how genes affect the health of humans, plants and animals.

The UK is a founding member of EMBL, a not-for-profit intergovernmental organisation established in 1974 and now funded by 26 member states, including much of Europe and Israel, and two associate members, Argentina and Australia. EMBL-EBI is one of the 6 sites of EMBL.

EMBL-EBI, based on the Wellcome Genome Campus in Cambridgeshire, is a global leader in bioinformatics. Researchers today depend on access to large data sets of many different types, spanning genes, proteins and the behaviour of small molecules. Bioinformatics makes it possible to collect, store and add value to these data so that life science researchers can retrieve and analyse them efficiently. EMBL-EBI is one of very few places in the world that has the capacity and expertise to fulfil this important task. They develop databases, tools and software that make it possible to align, verify and visualise the diverse data produced in publicly funded research, and make that information freely available to all.

EMBL-EBI supports large-scale science programmes, for example:

- [UK Biobank's](#) genomic and health data collected from 500,000 volunteers
- the [Human Cell Atlas](#), a global endeavour to map every single cell type in the human body
- the [Earth BioGenome](#), which aims to characterise the genomes of all of Earth's eukaryotic biodiversity

In the last 5 years, approximately 20 petabytes of new biological data has been deposited to EMBL-EBI resources. This is equivalent to the capacity of 20,000 laptops with one terabyte of storage each. This data growth is likely to intensify due to the diverse use of genomic data in biotechnology, medicine and agriculture.

But the amount of data produced is doubling twice as quickly as computer storage and processing power, and this rate is increasing. This is partly due to the rise of new technologies, such as single-cell sequencing, and [cryo-electron microscopy](#).

The [Strategic Priorities Fund](#) is being delivered by UKRI to drive an increase in high quality multi- and interdisciplinary research and innovation; ensure that UKRI's investment links up effectively with government research priorities and opportunities; and ensure the system responds to strategic priorities and opportunities.

---

# Press release: Universities asked to do more to support care leavers

Universities across the country are being called on to do more for young people leaving care by giving them personal support, helping them pay for accommodation and providing money to buy books and join social clubs.

Currently just 6 per cent of care leavers aged 19-21 go into higher education, and those that do are nearly twice as likely to drop out than their peers. This is why Universities Minister Chris Skidmore and Children and Families Minister Nadhim Zahawi are calling for a shift in culture at universities to welcome care leavers and provide wraparound support to help them thrive.

The new Higher Education Principles published today (14 March) set out how universities – especially the most selective and best-resourced – should do more for young people leaving care by providing them with personal support through buddy systems as well as giving them money for course materials and to fully experience student life.

Children and Families Minister Nadhim Zahawi said:

Far too many young people leaving care are missing out on opportunities that their peers take for granted. Many universities are already improving their offers to care leavers, through our Care Leaver Covenant and beyond, but I want this to become the norm – not the exception.

These principles are important in creating a culture shift for all universities. They set out clearly what we expect from them in helping young people leaving care to start higher education, and call on them to extend the kinds of practical and personal support that will make a challenging transition less overwhelming.

Under the principles, the most selective universities are being asked to go further and set a high bar for the sector, providing free accommodation and bursaries to cover study and student experience costs, such as laptops and books as well as access to social groups.

Admissions teams should provide outreach to councils and schools to encourage looked after children to apply for higher education. Support could also include subsidised and year-round accommodation, as those leaving care to start university may not have the same family networks or a place to stay during the holidays. The new guidance sets an expectation on the level of support universities should offer to care leavers, putting them on track to succeed as soon as they arrive.

Universities Minister Chris Skidmore said:

Everyone, including young people leaving care, should have the opportunity and the support to thrive in university and go on to succeed. Care leavers taking up a place at university face different pressures to their peers, but we are determined to stop them from dropping out due to challenges beyond their control.

The access and participation work done by universities must ensure all parts of society have fair access, especially for care leavers. But a place at university is only the start and universities must also focus on supporting young people to make the most out of their course and ultimately secure employment in the future.

This builds on the launch of the Care Leaver Covenant, which sets out pledges made by the Government, businesses, charities, and voluntary sector groups to provide work and education-based opportunities to young people leaving the care system. So far 73 organisations have signed up to the Covenant, including 13 universities.

Poet and care leaver Lemn Sissay, who is also Chancellor of the University of Manchester and a champion of the Care Leaver Covenant, said:

Leaving care without qualifications or direction is seriously hard. I know. I was that person. It's critical that we come together to make sure that all young people, including those who have left the care system, have every opportunity, which is why these principles are so important, so vital.

It's truly great to see the Department for Education working so closely with universities in the interests of vulnerable young people leaving care. For me it is a historic moment. It's never happened before. One day I hope all universities will be able to say we are signed to The Care Leaver Covenant.

By encouraging universities to think more about the offer they make to care leavers, the guidance aims to reduce the number who are deemed as 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET) – almost 40 per cent of care leavers aged 19 to 21, compared to 13 per cent for this age group overall.

The new guidance builds on wider government support available to care leavers. The Department for Education has already extended the offer of support from a Personal Adviser to all leavers to the age of 25, while all care leavers who go to university are entitled to a £2,000 bursary from their local council, £1,200 from the college if they go into further education and £1,000 for the first year of an apprenticeship.

The principles also come after the Office for Students (OfS) published new guidance, under which universities that charge higher fees must have access and participation plans for implementation in 2020/21. The OfS will scrutinise these plans and hold universities to account on how they are improving outcomes for underrepresented students, including care leavers.

Anne Longfield, Children's Commissioner for England, said:

I want to see more young people in care going to University and the Department for Education is right to promote ways that universities can support those in care to apply for degrees and to flourish while they are studying. I am calling for universities to compete to offer the best support to children in care as we should all have the highest aspirations for these young people.

I was pleased to provide our input into the development of the Department for Education Principles based on the issues about which care leavers are increasingly calling my office for advice.

Alistair Jarvis, Chief Executive of Universities UK, said:

Universities are committed to working closely with schools and local authorities to increase the number of care leavers attending university and provide them with appropriate support to thrive at university.

These principles will help universities to build on existing work to provide personal support for care leavers to realise their full potential.

---

## **News story: £2.2 billion of new UK investment opportunities launched**

- New £1.19 billion property investment portfolio launched in Wales
- Additional £1.01bn of investment projects launched in Durham, Harrogate, Swindon, Bournemouth, North Essex, Oxford and Bicester
- UK Government will showcase the projects at the world's largest property exhibition MIPIM Cannes

£2.2bn worth of new investment opportunities, which will create new homes and jobs, have been launched today (Thursday 14 March) by the Department for International Trade.

Launched at international property event MIPIM, the new projects include an array of development opportunities in England and the government's first Wales property investment portfolio.

Among the new investment opportunities on offer to international investors is a 444-acre 'experiential' resort in Oxfordshire and 3 new garden communities

in North Essex, set to create more than 43,000 new homes over the next 50 years.

**International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox MP said:**

The portfolios we are showcasing at MIPIM represent the wide array of real estate investment opportunities the UK has to offer that can satisfy the needs of every type of international investor.

These developments will create more jobs and homes for our residents, delivering essential infrastructure and I am incredibly pleased my department, in conjunction with Homes England and MHCLG, have supported their launch.

**Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:**

This first Welsh portfolio presents a real opportunity for international investors to capitalise on our nation's innovation and expertise.

I'm delighted to present a broad range of projects across all parts of Wales which demonstrate our strengths in sectors ranging from tourism to business and clean energy generation. Each opportunity showcases what makes our beautiful, resourceful country such an attractive destination for investment and business and I look forward to discussing them further with potential investors.

DIT will lead the government's presence at MIPIM, where over 23,000 people are expected to attend, including investment representatives from over 100 countries.

The UK government will host a number of panel sessions at the UK pavilion throughout the week, discussing topics including the opportunities for investing in the Northern Powerhouse and devolved nations, and the impact technology will have on the real estate sector in the future.

The portfolios showcased at the UK pavilion have been put together by the DIT's Capital Investment team which aligns with the greater governmental initiative to attract and support both local and foreign investment into infrastructure, property developments and energy projects throughout the UK.

**Wales Portfolio**

- Cardiff: a mixed office and multi-storey car park development in Cardiff Central Quay
- Milford Waterfront: a leisure-focused development in Milford Haven
- Barry Island: Nells Point; a beachside tourism development on Barry Island
- Swansea: Phase 2 of a mixed development in Swansea Central The four new

projects will be combined with two existing projects in Anglesey North Wales.

## And

- Durham: Forrest Park; a logistics and light manufacturing business park on a 52-hectare site in Newton Aycliffe
- Harrogate: Future Park; a mixed manufacturing, leisure, retail, and technology development
- Swindon: Kimmerfields; a residential and commercial development with a hotel in Swindon's business district
- Bournemouth: Winter Gardens; a residential development with restaurants, supermarkets and leisure space
- Oxford: a commercial development on the existing Culham Science Centre site on the outskirts of Oxford
- Bicester: Bicester Motion; a 444-acre 'experiential resort' comprising a hotel, conference centre and technology hub
- North Essex Garden Communities: three new garden communities across North Essex, providing up to 43,000 homes over the next 50 years

---

## Press release: Government drive to boost attainment in North East schools

Thousands of children across the North East will benefit from a £24million investment to improve school standards and boost their career prospects.

The Education Secretary Damian Hinds will today (Thursday 14 March) set out plans to support up to thirty schools through the Opportunity North East (ONE) initiative – a multi-million pound Government-led programme to improve social mobility and raise aspirations for children. These schools include:

- Duke's Secondary School, Northumberland
- Trinity Catholic College, Middlesbrough
- Berwick Academy, Northumberland
- St Aidan's Church of England Academy, Darlington
- Haughton Academy, Darlington
- Unity Academy, Middlesbrough
- Hetton School, Sunderland

These ONE Vision schools, as they will be known, will be partnered with high-performing institutions and given bespoke support to raise standards and help up to 25,000 young people learn the skills and knowledge that will help unlock their potential.

At a summit of schools, education experts, head teachers, business and

university leaders hosted at Middlesbrough Football Club today, Schools Minister Lord Agnew will set out more detail on Mr Hinds' plans – first announced in October – to help give young people in the North East more support and help as they transition from education to work or further education.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

"These thirty schools will be at the forefront of our plans to drive up academic standards, boost social mobility and raise aspirations for children in the north-east.

"They will receive more support to boost their performance and tackle the issues holding young people back – delivering on my determination to do something about the fact that, while talent and potential are evenly spread, opportunities sometimes are not.

"While there has rightly been focus on differential rates of attending a top university according to ethnicities, actually a young person from the North East is around half as likely to go to Oxford as a young person from an ethnic minority.

"I want everyone to feel that this is a country that works for them and want every child to have access to a world class education – and I'm looking forward to seeing these schools flourish."

The 30 'ONE Vision Schools' will receive:

- Expert guidance from education leaders, bespoke to the needs of each individual school, to improve standards; and
- A high-performing partner school, which has a track record in turning around underperforming schools with similar characteristics to those, to provide support and share best practice.

The Education Secretary launched Opportunity North East in October last year, pledging £24 million to tackle issues holding back young people from the region.

Young people in the North East are the least likely to apply to higher education of any region in the country. In fact, 18-years olds from London are 50% more likely to apply to university than 18-year olds from the North East.

The region also has:

- some of the best performing primary schools in the country, but secondary school performance is below other regions; and
- one of the highest proportions of young people not in education, employment or training after year 11. Opportunity North East aims to tackle these issues by:
- Investing £12 million in targeted approaches to improve the transition from primary to secondary school, drive up standards – particularly at secondary level – and improve outcomes for pupils post 16;

- Working with secondary schools and colleges to encourage young people to consider university, degree apprenticeships and other high quality technical education options;
- Partnering with local businesses to improve job prospects for young people across the region; and
- Investing a further £12 million to boost early career training for new teachers and help improve the quality of teaching and raise standards in the region's schools, ahead of roll-out in other regions.

CEO of Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust Hugh Hegarty said:

"This Government initiative is very welcome and will bring significant benefits for young people across the region.

"As a Multi-Academy Trust, we have a strong reputation for knowing our schools and ensuring resources are accurately deployed. We will benefit from partnering with schools from outside the North East as this adds to our capacity to improve life opportunities for all our young people."

CEO of Northumberland Church of England Academy Trust Alan Hardie said:

"Northumberland Church of England Academy Trust is committed to ensuring that all of our pupils have an excellent education and gain the best possible outcomes.

"We are delighted that Duke's Secondary School has been offered support from the ONE Vision programme as it is completely aligned with our focus on continuously improving the quality of teaching and learning. We believe that the tailored support from ONE Vision will accelerate our progress towards achieving the high aspirations we have for our students.

CEO of North East Learning Trust Lesley Powell CBE said:

"The Opportunity North East initiative is a welcome opportunity to raise educational achievement, aspirations and expectations for children across our region.

"Our research school at Shotton Hall can play an important part in realising some of the aims of the initiative by helping schools and teachers to better use research-based evidence in their classrooms to improve teaching and learning. This is an exciting opportunity to further make a difference, and I'm delighted that we are in the position to support more schools to raise standards."

Today's announcement is part of a government drive to improve education and boost productivity in the North of England, and follows on from investment in the Northern Powerhouse strategy.