What are Anchor Institutions?

1. What are anchor institutions?

Anchor institutions are large organisations whose long-term sustainability is tied to the wellbeing of the populations they serve. They get the name 'anchors' because they are unlikely to relocate as they are 'rooted in place', meaning they are local to the communities and environment around them. They have significant assets and resources that can positively influence the health and wellbeing of their local community, enabling them to make a meaningful contribution, and create real local impact.

Anchors can reduce health inequalities by strategically and intentionally managing their resources and operations to address local social, economic, and environmental priorities, in addition to working collaboratively with local partners and stakeholders.

2. What are examples of anchor institutions?

Examples include:

- NHS Trusts
- Universities
- Local authorities
- Colleges
- Police Forces
- Housing associations
- Large local businesses.

3. What are some of the things the NHS can do to promote and enable better health in their place?

- **Widen access to quality work:** Being a good inclusive employer, paying people the real living wage, and creating opportunities for local communities to develop skills and access jobs in health and care, especially those experiencing inequalities.
- **Purchasing for social benefit:** purchasing supplies and services from organisations that embed social value to make positive environmental, social and economic impacts, which can be within their local place.
- **Use buildings and spaces to support communities:** widening access to community spaces, working with partners to support high-quality, affordable housing and supporting the local economy and regeneration.
- **Reducing environmental impact:** taking action to reduce carbon emissions and consumption, reduce waste and protect and enhance the natural environment.

- **Marmot Trust Approach:** Marmot NHS trusts aim to tackle health inequalities by improving social determinants, such as creating better employment for staff.
- **Work closely with communities and local partners:** collaboration with communities to help address local priorities, build on their energy and skills; and work with other anchors and partners to increase and scale impact.

4. What can universities do to promote and enable better health in their place?

- **Align work with the priorities of partners and communities:** including the NHS and the VCSE sector, or focus on advancing their own health and wellbeing priorities- either for students and staff alone, or extended to local communities.
- **Join the 'Healthy Universities Network':** led by the University of Central Lancashire, the network provides free support to higher education institutions aiming to adopt whole-system approaches to health, wellbeing, and sustainability.
- **Establish clear strategies, guidance, and policies:** to define what types of 'impact' should be measured and demonstrated.
- **Develop collaborative partnerships with the NHS:** to highlight health careers as attractive pathways, undertake joint health research and innovation, create Health Innovation Networks connecting universities with local authorities, the VCSE sector, and industry, and support ICSs in delivering integrated models of care.
- **Strengthen health literacy:** offer relevant educational opportunities and explore whether extra support is required for students with lower baseline health literacy- taking proactive steps to address known inequalities linked to gender, age, socio-economic status, and nationality.

5. What can local authorities do to promote and enable better health in their place?

- **Inclusive employment and skills:** acting as a 'real living wage' employer, creating training opportunities, and offering apprenticeships to local residents, especially in disadvantaged areas.
- **Social value in procurement:** purchasing goods and services from local suppliers to boost the local economy and reduce environmental impact.
- **Utilising assets and land:** opening up council-owned buildings and green spaces for community use, improving access to parks, and supporting affordable housing projects.
- **Environmental sustainability:** reducing waste, improving air quality, and promoting sustainable transport to create healthier environments.

- **Partnership working:** collaborating with local communities to co-design solutions for health challenges and working with other anchor institutions (e.g. NHS Trusts and universities) to increase impact.

6. **What can large organisations do to promote and enable better health in their place?**

- **Corporate social responsibility:** Create good, secure jobs, paying the Real Living Wage, and using inclusive recruitment to support people furthest from the labour market. They can also use their purchasing power and estates to invest in local suppliers, community wealth-building, and environmentally healthy neighbourhoods that benefit disadvantaged populations.
- **Sensitive procurement:** They can purchase from local small and medium sized businesses, work with social enterprises, charities, or minority-owned businesses.
- **Utilising assets and land:** they can offer unused meeting rooms or spaces for community groups, allow land to be used for local projects (e.g. community gardens, pop-ups, youth activities), and improve the look and safety of surrounding areas through environmental upgrades.
- **Partnership working:** Large companies have resources, networks, and expertise that can be shared. They could partner with community groups, schools and local organisations to offer work experience, sponsor local projects, sports teams, and events, work with charities to support vulnerable groups, and co-design programmes with community organisations.
- **Environmental sustainability:** Environmental issues often hit disadvantaged communities the hardest. Companies can cut carbon emissions and reduce pollution around workplaces, improve recycling and cut waste, and support greener travel options for staff.

Further reading:

- Anchors and social value, NHS England: https://www.england.nhs.uk/about/equality/equality-hub/national-healthcare-inequalities-improvement-programme/our-approach-to-reducing-healthcare-inequalities/anchors-and-social-value/
- Anchor institutions and how they can affect people's health, The King's Fund: https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/long-reads/anchor-institutions-and-peoples-health
- Healthy Universities, People, and Places, National Civic Impact Accelerator: Healthy Universities, People, and Places

- Want ideas on getting started as a health anchor? Health Anchors Learning Network: https://haln.org.uk/blog/want-ideas-on-getting-started-as-a-health-anchor
- Anchors in a storm, The Health Foundation: https://www.health.org.uk/reports-and-analysis/briefings/anchors-in-a-storm#:~:text=Key%20points,impact%2C%20and%20work%20in%20partnership.