



Leeds Anchor Network

Who are Leeds Anchors?

Leeds Anchor Network connects the city's largest organisations across health, education, local government, culture and utilities, who come together to explore how they can increase their local contribution as some of the largest employers, spenders, estate owners and service deliverers.

Anchor networks have catapulted in prominence in the UK in recent years, particularly since the pandemic accelerated local partnership working, and through a growing recognition of the role of large organisations in contributing to the development of the places in which they operate (as set out in Health Foundation's influential 2019 [report](#) on the role of the NHS as an anchor institution, and more recently, referenced in the national 10 Year Health Plan).

The classic definition of Anchors is that they are (typically) large, public-sector organisations, that employ many people, have considerable spending power, and are rooted in a place. They have a stake in their local area- a thriving economy and skilled local workforce is in their interest- and, by virtue of their size and scale, they have the potential to shape both through their organisational policies and practice.

Leeds Anchors have been working together since 2018, making it one of the earliest place-based anchor collaborations in the country. Since then, the network has grown from nine to 14 members, most recently welcoming Department of Health & Social Care, a move that complements the civil service's ambitions to bring policy making closer to citizen experience and local delivery partners.

Each organisation makes a commitment to benchmark their progress against the [Anchor Progression Framework](#), a practical tool that guides organisations through a change journey to increase their local contribution as an anchor. The framework was developed for Leeds but has been influential in the thinking of other place-based Anchor partnerships and was recently adapted for Public Health Scotland.

The latest data collection indicates the impact the Anchors have for the city: employing 62,000 people, the majority of whom live in Leeds, and 12,300 from the city's most disadvantaged wards. Collectively Anchors spent over £500m in Leeds in 2023/24 and have reduced their carbon emissions by 110,000 tonnes over four years.

Anchored in Community

Ultimately, the purpose of the network is to use the institutional levers of the city's largest organisations to increase the benefits that felt by local people, and, under the leadership of its Chair Peter Slee, VC of Leeds Beckett University, the network are clear that understanding the wishes and priorities of local communities is essential to ensure Anchors direct their influence towards the things that matter to people.

To this end the network partnered with [Leeds Community Anchor Network](#), a collaboration of rooted community organisations across Leeds who hold trusted relationships with local people, to create new ways to connect large Anchor organisations with local communities, particularly in the city's most disadvantaged wards.

This included understanding community perspectives on accessing good work and skills through conversations led and hosted by community anchor organisations. The discussions highlighted considerable appetite amongst communities for meaningful, good quality work, but that many feel excluded due to the challenges of navigating recruitment processes, finding roles that fit around caring responsibilities, or finding their way back to training or employment after gaps. Following this, members of the Anchor Network were invited to hear community voices directly and work with community partners to develop solutions, leading to new provision such as a pre-employment support offer at New Wortley Community Centre.

The Community Anchor Network has since evolved its listening approach further and delivered a large scale [listening project](#) across all wards of Leeds, hearing community perspectives about what people love about their local areas and what they'd change. The project adds to the rich creativity of ways in which community perspectives are heard, captured, and used to influence decision-making in Leeds- along with forums such as Leeds Poverty Truth Commission, the People's Voices Partnership hosted by Healthwatch Leeds, the Child Friendly Leeds 12 Wishes, and countless other groups and networks.

These initiatives were highlighted at an event in June that brought together Anchor partners from across the public sector, third sector and private sector at Slung Low Warehouse in Holbeck around a [shared commitment](#) to genuine listening and engagement with communities, and to explore the practical routes by which large city anchors and local community anchors bring their resources together to work with and alongside local communities on the things that matter to them.

Get in touch with [Amy Beswick](#), Economic Policy Project Manager at Leeds City Council, to find out more about the Anchor Network