

Birmingham Anchor Network: leadership report 2023



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University Hospitals Birmingham
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Introduction

The Birmingham Anchor Network was established in September 2019, following an eighteen-month project - led by the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) and funded by the Barrow Cadbury Trust - to understand the role that anchor institutions play in the Birmingham economy.

The Network supports the six participating organisations to maximise the benefit they bring to the Birmingham economy. With combined budgets of approximately £4bn and a workforce of over 40,000, these anchor institutions are major economic agents in the city. By collaborating on work in key areas of procurement, employment and the management of land and assets, they have the potential to play a powerful role in shaping the Birmingham economy.

The Network:

- Provides advice, technical support and training to anchor institutions to build their capacity in harnessing their spending power and to utilise their role as employers and asset owners to stimulate local economic development.
- Brings anchor institutions together to collaborate on shared priorities, amplifying the impact of their individual activity.
- Provides a streamlined mechanism for other Birmingham-based economic initiatives to engage with the members.

What is an anchor institution?

Anchor institutions are central to the concept of community wealth building as a result of the scale of the jobs they provide, the scale of their spend through procurement, their land and assets, and the fact that they are unlikely to leave that place.

- Extends the take-up of community wealth building approaches among anchor institutions in Birmingham and the West Midlands through advocacy activities.

To date over 40 local authorities, NHS trusts, locality partnerships, cities and county councils have requested and received presentations on how the Birmingham Anchor Network operates and the work it has done.

The Birmingham Anchor Network has now been operating for over three years and at last year's Community Wealth Building Summit, held in Birmingham, the Network members announced a further eight year commitment to this shared endeavour.



About the Network

Every year, members of the Birmingham Anchor Network advertise approximately 5,000 vacancies, raise an apprenticeship levy of £6m and spend £1.4bn on goods and services.

The diversity of its members - from the largest local authority in Europe to neighbourhood-level housing associations - enables the Network to mobilise these resources collectively and to direct them to where they will make the biggest difference.

For example:

- Modelling by CLES indicates that if Network members were to increase the proportion of their procurement spending to Birmingham-based businesses by just 1.8% per year, this would add £23.4m annually to the city economy and create nearly 800 new jobs.
- Across the Network we estimate that there are approx. 1,250 entry level vacancies per year which, if directed to unemployed residents from traditionally low-income communities, could mean £28.9m per year for the Birmingham economy (based on the financial benefit to the individual, increased spend in the local economy and healthcare cost savings).

The Network's leadership group meets once per year to receive an annual report, oversee the progress of the Network and agree priorities for the coming year. A co-ordination group meets every two months to guide the work of the Network's Co-ordinator, who then:

- Facilitates working groups on the key themes and for specific projects.
- Engages other key partners that can assist in the pursuit of theme and project objectives.
- Acts as a link between the Network and other key economic strategies affecting the city.

The Network's Co-ordinator is a post that has been joint funded by the Network partners since March 2020 and is managed by CLES.



Our work: employment

To date, the employment work of the Birmingham Anchor Network has focused on using entry level vacancies to support those in greatest economic need.

This has meant learning how to support and encourage those furthest from the job market - often without the usually required qualifications or experience - into jobs that could be the start of sustainable, secure, well-rewarded careers.

The Network's employment work is currently being delivered through two projects, I Can and Partnerships for People & Place (PfPP).

I Can, led by the Birmingham & Solihull Integrated Care System, has been designed, managed and delivered by a partnership of stakeholders including three Network members – University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust, Pioneer Housing and Birmingham City Council. The initiative aims to support unemployed Birmingham residents into entry level NHS vacancies.

Aston University has supported this work by linking up through its Pathways to Enterprising Futures (PEF) project with Citizens UK and Ashley Community Housing. The PEF project has worked with over 175 participants who are now starting to settle into work or getting ready to start their own businesses.

Based on learning from the first Network employment project, "Hospitality 2 Health", I Can

has now resulted in 254 job offers for unemployed Birmingham residents with a further 254 either in, of awaiting, pre-employment training.

I Can has helped achieve a change in recruitment patterns to more disadvantaged wards in Birmingham and Solihull and an increase in recruitment from BAME communities and of people with self-reported disabilities.

Partnerships for People & Place is a Birmingham City Council-led initiative aimed at better understanding the career aspirations of young people in East Birmingham and how this matches the career support and guidance they are receiving. The Network was invited to be a key partner in designing and delivering the programme.

To date the programme has provided 220 pupils with support from the Pioneer Housing mentor/coaching team, delivered a work place visit programme and organised the "Be Bold, Be Your Future" event at Millennium Point for 120 pupils and a range of employers. The event trialled a reverse mentoring approach, using pupils' agency to help employers re-think their recruitment pathways.

Once complete, the Network will examine learnings from the project and consider how they can be applied to improve the work experience, careers advice, apprenticeships and career start offer from Network partners to young people.



*Be Bold, Be Your Future,
held at Millennium Point in
January 2023.*

Our work: procurement

Since June 2020, the procurement leads from the six Birmingham Anchor Network partners have been discussing and sharing ideas as to how they can use procurement opportunities to increase their contribution to the Birmingham economy.

From these discussions a focus on contract opportunities in the £5k-£25k range has emerged. Small contracts have greater flexibility in the tendering process and, while they may be considered “low value” for large spending institutions, can nevertheless be of great value to a small business and act as a stepping-stone to winning larger contracts.

The Network’s achievements in this area include:

- Providing specialist support for each procurement lead in working with the social enterprise sector, culminating in a “meet the buyer” event. A further event is being planned for June 2023.
- Following the first meet the buyer event Bournville Village Trust is now working with two social enterprises. They have also successfully broken down a large contract for timber windows into smaller lots so part of it could be won by a local micro business.

- Birmingham City Council has now implemented a new procurement policy for small contracts that will encourage devolved budget holders to consider Birmingham-based businesses.
- Aston University is looking to implement a similar procurement policy to enable local, small contract spend in the near future.
- Birmingham City Council has funded the Birmingham-based organisation Initiative for Social Entrepreneurs to deliver an action research project working with local businesses to better understand the barriers they face tendering for public sector contracts. The outcomes of the project will be reported in March 2023.

Based on the findings from the Network’s procurement working group, work is now being done to organise a public sector supply chain roundtable event. The event will bring together procurement leads from the Network with organisations that could help bridge the gap with business (including the Chamber of Commerce, Local Enterprise Partnership, Growth Hub and Initiative for Social Entrepreneurs) and will aim to uncover collective approaches to unlocking public sector small contract spend.

Meet the buyer event
for Birmingham-based
social enterprises



Strategic engagement



The Community Wealth Building Summit 2022 - held in Birmingham in response to the work of the Network

One of the growing advantages of the Network is that the members are able to share strategic thinking and to work together on wider strategic initiatives.

Achievements in this approach include:

- The Network's membership of the Birmingham's Living Wage Action Group, with Birmingham City Council and Aston University now both accredited as Living Wage Employers. The ambition that all Network members should eventually receive accreditation.
- Inclusion in Birmingham City Council's equality and cohesion action plan. The Council is now ready to launch a Birmingham Employment Charter, aimed at improving equity in employment for all groups in the city and a request has been made to use the Network as an opportunity to trial its use with a range of institutions.
- Membership of the Birmingham & Solihull Social Economy Consortium as part of West Midlands Combined Authority's Social Economy Growth Strategy.
- Support to the East Birmingham Inclusive Growth Strategy (EBIGS). EBIGS is a major BCC led initiative to economically regenerate the eastern part of the city. There is significant overlap between the goals of EBIGS and the aims of the Network in terms of:
 - EBIGS benefiting from the insight and good practice being developed by the Network in terms of local procurement and employment.
 - The Network benefiting from the EBIGS resources that have the potential to create a permanent community wealth building infrastructure for the eastern part of the city which the Network partners can then utilise.
- The Network has also supported the growth of anchor networks elsewhere. This work has so far included passing on our developing knowledge to over 40 different cities in the UK and internationally.

Goals for next year

To ratify the agreement made in 2022 for a further eight-year commitment to the Network by agreeing and signing a Memorandum of Understanding. This will formalise the Network's future governance, membership and funding and will also include a commitment to:

- Agree standardised datasets for procurement and employment, adopted by all Network partners, to aid the tracking of progress.
- Agree named institution representatives for each of the Network's main work strands.

To expand the influence and impact of the Network by:

- Agreeing on the expansion of the Network to bring in more Birmingham institutions.
- Embedding the learning of the Network within each of the existing member institutions.
- Continuing to champion the Network and the work being done with wider audiences both in the UK and internationally.

To continue to deliver and grow employment projects by:

- Increasing the target figure for I Can employment outcomes to 300 in 2023 and 500 in 2024.
- Developing the role fulfilled by Pioneer Housing in I Can into "Work First", a proposed employment hub for East Birmingham. As well as continuing to support I Can, Work First will use the same methodology to support East Birmingham residents into other local career opportunities such as with other Network partners, HS2 and the East Birmingham Inclusive Growth Strategy.
- Taking the findings from Partnerships for People & Place and developing an improved offer from Network partners to young people in terms of work experience, careers advice, apprenticeships and career starts.
- Supporting more Network partners to seek Living Wage accreditation.

To continue to deliver and grow procurement projects by:

- Organising a public sector supply chain roundtable event with organisations that could help bridge the gap with business (including the Chamber of Commerce, Local Enterprise

Partnership, Growth Hub and Initiative for Social Entrepreneurs).

- Continuing to work with the East Birmingham Inclusive Growth Team to set up a procurement hub for East Birmingham.
- Working with Initiative for Social Entrepreneurs to deliver more social enterprise meet the buyer events.
- Implementing the recommendations from the Birmingham City Council/Initiative for Social Entrepreneurs public sector supply chain research (due to be published March 2023).
- Supporting other Network partners to follow the lead of Birmingham City Council and Aston University in revising procurement policy to enable greater local spend.

To develop the Network's ambitions for unlocking land and assets by:

- Continuing to be a key partner for the East Birmingham Inclusive Growth Strategy.
- Supporting the local economic outcomes for the University of Birmingham's Birmingham Health Technology Campus and the University Hospitals Birmingham Capital Developments Programme.





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