

# What could encourage anchor work and how important is leadership?

Senior buy-in and leadership action is vital to the success of anchor work -but **what exactly does it mean to lead an anchor mission effectively?**

Over the last year we have hosted public HALN events and closed [Learning Sets](#), listening to and learning from **colleagues across the UK working to implement their anchor strategy**, either seeking leadership support or leading the work themselves. From this we have drawn out **four key themes around the leadership required to implement an anchor strategy**. This tool can help anchors organisations break down what is needed from those in leadership positions and reflect on points of strength and areas of need / development within their own leadership structures. HALN participants have spoken about the importance of getting a range of people on board, at various levels and through different job roles, including non-Executive and Executive Directors, CEOs, middle level and frontline managers and across all areas of the organisation, such as the Head of Laundry, to develop a joined-up approach which will produce the most impact.



Many HALN participants kickstarted their anchor work through capitalising on a specific opportunity garnering support around this, such as Covid-19 recovery, a local infrastructure / investment project, a partnership with another anchor such as a Housing Association or a national initiative such as reducing health inequalities. Many then used these entry points to **shift from a single initiative to a more considered, joined-up, sustainable programme of work**, embedded in organisational structure and ways of working. Progress is often accelerated if activity is linked to wider organisational issues so that other priorities do not trump the anchor work. For instance, workforce is often a hook for organisations to instigate their anchor strategy due to a focus on improving retention and understaffing.

## What are the building blocks of anchor leadership?

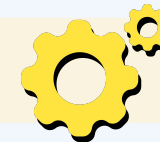
### Intentionality



### Shepherding Culture Change



### System Leadership



### Facilitating Culture Change



#### Consciously adopting an anchor mission.

Buy-in amongst senior sponsors and Executive and Non-Executive Directors is vital -to signal the beginning of a change but also to give permission to staff to invest time into anchor work.

Although we have seen anchor work emerge organically becoming embedded in existing structures without explicit leadership, changes are often implemented at greater speed when a structural approach is taken with a designated anchor programme manager.

Intentionality requires real clarity about intended benefits and outcomes, from senior staff downwards.

#### Explaining and encouraging a 'think anchor' mindset at every level of the organisation.

Leaders need to embed anchor approaches into day-to-day operations and decision making processes. Changes can be communicated retrospectively -for instance [Suffolk & North East Essex's 'Can Do health and care' approach in partnership with their Integrated Care System](#) -or prospectively. For example, the Northern Care Alliance developed a clear mission to maximise its influence on the underlying cause of ill health, poverty, before implementing initiatives such as [WorkSTART](#). You can watch Donna McLaughlin speak about the Northern Care Alliance's anchor approach [here](#) and [here](#).

Strong communication to staff is vital, as their day-to-day work inspires a broader culture; participants told us about using tools such as Lunch and Learns, conversation clubs and newsletters to spread the message.

#### Coming together with other anchors and giving up power in order to align to shared goals.

This can be through charters, ICS level work or collaboration with partners who are further on such as universities, councils and Housing Associations. For example, health anchors have teamed up with Housing Associations to design accessible, value-based job descriptions and run targeted recruitment campaigns with local institutions who have trusted relationships in the community.

You can access HALN's Learning from Housing Associations resource [here](#).

Regional and ICS networks have started to emerge and drive local work, particularly for issues that would benefit from an approach at scale. These are still nascent and early in their work. HALN's resource on the unique role of ICS's is available [here](#).

#### Embedding a 'do anchor' approach at every level of the organisation.

Leaders can work with employees across all levels of the organisation -such as mid-level leaders, frontline and maintenance staff -granting permission and support to embed the anchor mission into their job. Some anchors assign champions amongst staff and give them opportunities to lead change initiatives that tie in with their interests, for instance around energy saving. Culture change is not a set of individual projects, but requires building an anchor mindset into all policies and strategies.

Leaders should promote sustainable behaviours and raise the profile of your anchor mission through practical support such as cycle to work schemes, accommodating caring responsibilities and making healthy food choices easier in the workplace. Access HALN's Engaging the Workforce resource [here](#).