

# The NHS as an anchor institution

## Information for Chairs and Non-executive Directors

Anchor institutions are large organisations whose long-term sustainability is tied to the wellbeing of the populations they serve. [The NHS as an anchor institution](#) is 'rooted in place' with significant assets and spending power, which can be strategically and intentionally managed to help address local social, economic and environmental priorities.

Working in partnership with communities, other anchors and organisations at a local, system and regional level is essential to achieving these ambitions.

The main function of the NHS is to provide a range of health services, however it can also play a more active role to tackle health inequalities by addressing the physical, social and environmental factors which can cause ill health, often referred to as the wider determinants of health. The NHS can maximise on its role as an anchor institution through:

- **Widening access to quality work:** Being an inclusive employer, paying all staff (whether employed directly or outsourced) 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 small, micro and diverse companies, and organisations that embed social value to make positive environmental, social and economic impacts.
- **Using 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 its environmental impact:** Taking action to reduce carbon emissions and consumption, reduce waste and protect and enhance the natural environment.
- **Working closely with communities and local partners:** Collaborating with communities to help tackle inequalities and address local priorities, build on their energy and skills, and work with other anchors and partners to increase and scale impact.

Further information on the NHS as an anchor institution is available at the [Health Anchors Learning Network](#), a new UK-wide network for professionals engaged in anchor approaches in health.