

Anchor Institutions



This **Population Health** series explores the concept of population health and the role a hospital can play in producing population health. The series also offers local and international examples of health systems that have reached beyond their walls to improve the health of their communities.

It is broadly recognized that over 60 percent of the factors which contribute to good health are related to the social determinants of health (SDH). These are the conditions within the environments where people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life^{1,2}. Health care institutions around the world are **moving upstream** to address these socioeconomic factors. By adopting an anchor mission, these institutions are moving beyond their traditional role of providing medical care and recognizing the potential to influence the health and well-being of their local communities by **creating shared value**.

What are Anchor Institutions?

Anchor institutions are large, typically non-profit institutions that are unlikely to relocate. They have a large stake in a geographical area because they are “anchored” in their communities^{3,4}. Examples include universities, health centers, or local government entities⁴. Anchor institutions have substantial assets that can be used for **community wealth building** as well as an economic self-interest in ensuring their communities are safe and healthy^{3,4}.

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There are over 65 healthcare institutions in the United States (U.S.) that have adopted an **anchor mission** including, Intermountain Healthcare, Geisinger, Boston Medical, Boston Children’s Hospital, Kaiser Permanente, and Henry Ford Health System. Table 1 illustrates what these health systems have committed to as part of their anchor mission and the impact of those commitments on improving institutional and community outcomes.

Table 1: Examples of the impact anchor mission activities are having on healthcare institutions and local community outcomes


Inclusive, local hiring ⁵	Inclusive, local sourcing ⁶	Place-based investing ⁷
<p>Inclusive, local hiring contributes to better institutional and community outcomes by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing turnover and improving employee morale • Realizing efficiencies in recruitment process, training and on-boarding • Addressing issues of health equity and community health needs • Decreasing carbon footprint by increasing the number of employees who live close to work • Increasing community impact by targeting under-represented neighbourhoods, etc. 	<p>Inclusive, local sourcing contributes to improved institutional and community outcomes by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a more efficient and resilient supply chain • Creating a thriving local business community • Improving the quality of local jobs • Increasing community impact by targeting under-represented neighbourhoods, etc. 	<p>Place-based investing contributes to creating a healthy and flourishing community by increasing the capital available for positive social, economic, or environmental impact across many areas, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable and supportive housing • Minority-, women-, and employee-owned business creation, growth, and retention • Community and childcare services • Stable, well-paying jobs • Transit-oriented development • Economic growth around arts and culture, etc. • Renewable energy and clean air

In its [long-term plan](#), NHS England made a commitment to work with the [Health Foundation](#) to develop the role of local NHS organizations as anchor institutions in their communities³. Similar to the anchor mission activities of


healthcare institutions in the U.S., NHS organizations are also cognizant of their impact on the environment and local communities (see image below).

What makes the NHS an anchor institution?


NHS organisations are rooted in their communities. Through its size and scale, the NHS can positively contribute to local areas in many ways beyond providing health care. The NHS can make a difference to local people by:




Purchasing more locally and for social benefit
In England alone, the NHS spends £27bn every year on goods and services.




Using buildings and spaces to support communities
The NHS occupies 8,253 sites across England on 6,500 hectares of land.



Working more closely with local partners
The NHS can learn from others, spread good ideas and model civic responsibility.




Reducing its environmental impact
The NHS is responsible for 40% of the public sector's carbon footprint.



Widening access to quality work
The NHS is the UK's biggest employer, with 1.6 million staff.

As an anchor institution, the NHS influences the health and wellbeing of communities simply by being there. But by choosing to invest in and work with others locally and responsibly, the NHS can have an even greater impact on the wider factors that make us healthy.

 References available at www.health.org.uk/anchor-institutions
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The Health Foundation: [The NHS as an anchor institution](#)

Additional Resources

The information above provides a high-level overview of the concept of anchor institutions. The following resources may be helpful for exploring this topic in more depth.

- The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, Medicine report: [Community based solutions to promote health equity in the United States \(2017\)](#).
- [Communities in Action: Pathways to Health Equity](#), which offers resources and examples of health systems that have adopted an anchor mission.
- [The Healthcare Anchor Network](#) is a national collaboration of over 65 healthcare systems in the U.S. that have committed to an anchor mission.
- [Healthcare Anchor Network: Anchor Mission Communications Toolkit](#)
- The Democracy Collaborative offers various reports and resources including:
 - [Anchor Collaboratives: Building bridges with place-based partnerships and anchor institutions \(2019\)](#).
 - [Embracing an Anchor Mission: ProMedica's all-in strategy \(2018\)](#).
 - [The Anchor Mission Playbook \(2017\)](#).

- Analytic Essay by Koh et al: *Anchor Institutions: Best Practices to Address Social Needs and Social Determinants of Health* (2020).
- Initiative for a Competitive Inner City (ICIC): *Anchor Institutions Strategic Framework* (2011).
- The Health Foundation Report: *Building healthier communities: the role of the NHS as an anchor institution* (2019).
- The Health Foundation Video (2:19) with Ted Howard, President and Co-founder of the Democracy Collaborative: *The role of hospitals as anchor institutions in improving population health.*
- The Health Foundation article (22 June 2020): *How the NHS can use anchor strategies to build a healthy and sustainable post-COVID-19 recovery.*
- The Health Foundation article (10 November 2021): *An anchor approach to sustainability.*
- UK Health Alliance on Climate Change (October 2018): *Why NHS anchor institutions should prioritise environmental sustainability.*
- Centre for Sustainable Healthcare (UK) offers courses, resources, and events on achieving net zero carbon and wider sustainability.
 - Blog Series: *Why focus on sustainability in healthcare.*
- Centre for Sustainable Health Systems at the University of Toronto conducts research and offers a Community of Practice, courses, and events on sustainable health systems.
 - Sustainable Health System Community of Practice.

References

- 1 World Health Organization (WHO). Social determinants of health. Accessed November 1, 2021. https://www.who.int/health-topics/social-determinants-of-health#tab=tab_1
- 2 Choi E, Sonin J. Determinants of Health Visualized. GoInvo. Published February 2018. Accessed November 1, 2021. <https://www.goinvo.com/vision/determinants-of-health/#methodology>
- 3 Reed S, Wood S, Dominique A, Warburton W. Building Healthier Communities: The Role of the NHS as an Anchor Institution - The Health Foundation. Accessed November 1, 2021. <https://www.health.org.uk/publications/reports/building-healthier-communities-role-of-nhs-as-anchor-institution>
- 4 Communities in Action: Pathways to Health Equity--Anchor Institutions. Accessed November 3, 2021. <https://www.nap.edu/resource/24624/anchor-institutions/>
- 5 Inclusive, local hiring - Hospitals Aligned for Healthy Communities: A toolkit to help hospitals and health systems build community wealth through inclusive hiring, investment, and purchasing. Accessed November 3, 2021. <https://hospitaltoolkits.org/workforce/inclusive-local-hiring/>
- 6 Inclusive, local sourcing - Hospitals Aligned for Healthy Communities: A toolkit to help hospitals and health systems build community wealth through inclusive hiring, investment, and purchasing. Accessed November 3, 2021. <https://hospitaltoolkits.org/purchasing/inclusive-local-sourcing/>
- 7 Place-based Investing - Hospitals Aligned for Healthy Communities: A toolkit to help hospitals and health systems build community wealth through inclusive hiring, investment, and purchasing. Accessed November 3, 2021. <https://hospitaltoolkits.org/investment/place-based-investing/>

