

SANDWELL ANCHOR NETWORK

STRENGTH IN COLLABORATION



Introduction

'Anchor institutions' are large organisations that have a strong tie to an area and are unlikely to relocate. For example: councils, NHS trusts, universities and colleges, housing groups and big established companies. Anchor institutions have a significant stake in a region, in terms of the jobs they sustain and the spaces they occupy. They have influence in the budgets they manage and the supply chains they use.

In 2020, the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) recommended that Sandwell form an 'anchor network' - in which Sandwell's anchor institutions use their collective assets and strengths to retain wealth in Sandwell, bringing economic, social, environmental and health benefits to people, communities and businesses in the borough.

And so, in 2021, the Sandwell Anchor Network was launched, comprising the following anchor institutions:

- Black Country Housing
- Black Country & West Birmingham CCG – now called Black Country Integrated Care Board (ICB)
- Department for Work and Pensions
- Sandwell College
- Sandwell Council
- Sandwell & West Birmingham NHS Trust
- Sandwell Business Ambassadors (representatives of the business sector in Sandwell)
- SCVO (representatives of the voluntary sector in Sandwell).

The Sandwell Anchor Network is supported regionally by the Black Country Chamber of Commerce, the West Midlands Combined Authority and the Black Country Economic Intelligence Unit. These are known as project champions.

Purpose

With combined budgets of over £1.5bn and a total workforce of more than 15,000 people, anchor institutions in the Sandwell Anchor Network are major economic agents. By collaborating on key areas of procurement, employment, economic recovery, health and the green agenda, and by achieving economies of scale together, they play a powerful role in building community wealth.

Through the Sandwell Anchor Network we seek to seize opportunities that include:

- Tackling unemployment challenges – for example, by prioritising jobs for local people, widening access to good-quality work, being inclusive employers, and seeking to pay the Real Living Wage
- Addressing skills gaps by offering training and sharing knowledge
- Retaining investment in the region by procuring goods and service from local suppliers
- Tackling climate change and delivering the transition to net zero by collectively reducing our carbon emissions, reducing waste, and using our decisions and influence to protect the natural environment
- Supporting the elimination of health inequalities by working together to reduce the physical, social and environmental factors that cause ill health (sometimes called 'social determinants of health').

Put together, the potential economic, health, social, and environmental benefits to the Sandwell Anchor Network are huge.

"Community wealth building is a new people-centred approach to local economic development, which redirects wealth back into the local economy, and places control and benefits into the hands of local people"

– Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES)

Black Country Anchor Network

The Sandwell Anchor Network is a partner to the Black Country Anchor Network, whose central remit is to work alongside major employers to deliver positive economic, health, social and environmental outcomes locally: principally through targeted procurement and employment practices and activities.

The Black Country Network adds value to and amplifies the work of the Sandwell Anchor Network. The two are not duplicating work.

Activities

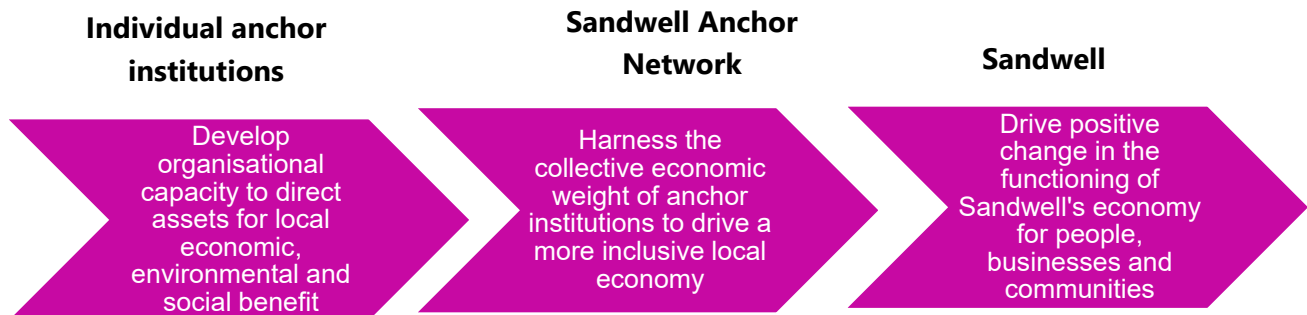
The Sandwell Anchor Network works to:

- Collaborate on shared priorities, amplifying the impact of each anchor institution's individual activities
- Provide advice, technical support and training* to anchor institutions, building their capacity to harness their spending power and their role as employers and asset owners to stimulate equitable local economic development
- Advocate for community wealth building approaches and extend their take-up among anchor institutions in Sandwell and the wider West Midlands
- Pioneer new forms of community wealth building in the UK, working alongside Sandwell Council and CLES in areas such as employment and procurement.

* Working with partners

Objectives

The Sandwell Anchor Network seeks to deliver change at three levels:



Employment and skills

- Explore pathways/accessibility into our anchor institutions - particularly for the most disadvantaged groups of people
- Explore and identify current local support offerings and how we can develop them collectively
- Maximise the use of the apprenticeship levy in our anchor institutions for both workforce planning and recruitment purposes
- Support smaller employers by transferring unspent levy to businesses to generate apprenticeship opportunities or upskill existing workforces
- Champion the Real Living Wage throughout Sandwell.

Progressive procurement

- Ensure that the collective spend of the Sandwell Anchor Network is achieving maximum penetration into the local economy by sharing best practice and setting joint targets for localised spend
- Identify procurement practices and processes
- Develop a common approach to social value across all the anchor institutions
- Champion community wealth building and social value throughout the borough and among its employers
- Find opportunities to work with the voluntary and community sector, aiding them to increase their capability and capacity to support the local economy.

Supporting the economic recovery and future growth of businesses in Sandwell

- Understand and develop the local supply chain within large infrastructure projects to enable local companies to take advantage of resulting opportunities, and employ more local people
- Establish more business networking and support events, utilising the Sandwell Business Ambassadors and appropriate partners
- Explore the value of alternative business operating models such as social enterprises and community interest companies.

Priorities and actions

Employment and skills

- Review our own recruitment processes to ensure they are streamlined and accessible
- Lead joint recruitment fairs in targeted neighbourhoods
- Support the Black Country Anchor Network with local 'I Can' project (giving people a pathway into NHS careers)
- Work collaboratively to identify barriers to employment for certain groups of people
- Work collaboratively to identify skills gaps
- Work collaboratively to address identified gaps and training/learning needs
- Create talent pipelines (such as shared graduate schemes, apprenticeships and work experience placements) to fill gaps in our anchor institutions and to get our young people into employment.

Progressive procurement

- Identify the highest levels of spend within anchor institutions – especially with regards to food, office supply/equipment, workwear and maintenance – and where they are spent
- Collaboratively develop supply chain data and statistics and identify high social value Sandwell-based businesses
- Work collaboratively to understand whether we could redirect areas of high spend to Sandwell suppliers
- Continually track our social value – sharing best practice
- Carry out research to identify the local supply chain
- Support local companies to increase their supply and tendering capabilities.

Economic recovery and the green agenda

- Work collaboratively with specialist organisations to identify and offer support relating to the energy crisis, reducing carbon emissions and transitioning to net zero, and other related agendas
- Commit to achieving net zero collectively as anchor institutions and embed an 'environment in all policies' approach across our work
- Support the transition to net zero in other businesses
- Pursue projects that help to achieve our net zero goals and improve the lives and health inequalities of our communities
- Explore the retrofitting agenda - particularly how we can identify local businesses that could be retrained/diversify into retrofit
- Explore anchor institutions' land usage and how to better utilise this for the benefit of local businesses
- Explore ideas for rejuvenating our high streets – for example, how anchor institutions can make use of empty lots.

Delivery

The governance and delivery arrangements for the Sandwell Anchor Network are:

Sandwell Anchor Network Partnership

(formerly Strong & Inclusive Economy Board)

Made up of senior representatives from participating anchor institutions, this group will meet quarterly to coordinate activity between different workstreams, agree on actions for the Sandwell Anchor Network and steer its direction. It will also champion and advance the community wealth building and inclusive economy agendas across Sandwell.

Sandwell Anchor Network project groups

These are working groups to progress specific Sandwell Anchor Network activities, each with a lead officer from an anchor institutions. There are currently two project groups – one focusing on procurement and one for employment. They meet every six weeks/bi-monthly.

Sandwell Anchor Network Employment Group
Sandwell Anchor Network Procurement Group

The Sandwell Anchor Network Partnership will soon determine whether a third group should be formed, focusing on the green agenda.

5. Membership

Board

Organisation	Membership role
Black Country Housing	Anchor institution
Black Country ICB	Anchor institution
Department for Work and Pensions	Anchor institution
Sandwell College	Anchor institution
Sandwell Council	Anchor institution / lead project sponsor
Sandwell & West Birmingham NHS Trust	Anchor institution
Sandwell Children's Trust	Anchor institution
Sandwell Council of Voluntary Organisations (SCVO)	Anchor institution
Sandwell Business Ambassadors	Anchor institution partners
Centre for Local Economic Strategies	Project champion
Black Country Chamber of Commerce	Project champion
West Midlands Combined Authority	Project champion
Black Country Economic Intelligence Unit	Project champion

Project groups

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Black Country Chamber of Commerce 	Strategic businesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sandwell Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DPD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Black Country Housing Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enfinium
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sandwell Business Ambassadors 	New members TBA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SCVO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sandwell College 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other housing associations/providers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Black Country Economic Intelligence Unit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> YMCA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sandwell Children's Trust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doocey Group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Shaw Trust
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> West Midlands Combined Authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sandwell Community Caring Trust
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CLES 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other strategic businesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department for Work & Pensions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Black Country and West Birmingham ICB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">

The current membership is being expanded.