

TITLE OF REPORT Learning from the City and Hackney Anchor Collaborative	
HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD - 21st July 2021	CLASSIFICATION: Open
WARD(S) AFFECTED ALL WARDS	
Group Director n/a	

1. QUESTIONS FOR HACKNEY HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to note this update.

Background

For the past three years, Renaisi has been working with anchor organisations in City and Hackney to explore how they can use their collective influence to achieve a more inclusive and flourishing local economy.

Anchor organisations are typically – though not exclusively – not for profit organisations that are based in a city or town and are unlikely to move location, usually because their purpose and mission is intrinsically bound up in that area.

Anchor organisations are major players in the local economy so can use this economic power to create wealth and improve opportunities for the people in that place. They can use many different strategies to benefit their local populations, including their: employment and HR practice, procurement and supply chain, investments, estates and community engagement¹. Anchor organisations are central to the 'community wealth building' agenda, an approach to economic development which aims to build and retain wealth and opportunities within the local community². The work that places across the UK such as Preston, Wigan and Birmingham have pioneered is now mainstream in policy dialogue on both sides of the political spectrum, with the recent Levelling Up White paper explicitly referring to the role of anchor organisations in economic development seven times³ and the Hackney Labour Manifesto committing to building community wealth as part of their pledge to "Step up support and help Hackney recover"⁴.

Renaisi initiated this work, and it explicitly builds on our social purpose as a Hackney-based social enterprise. We believe that working across a place-based system allows for learning, and projects that have greater impact than if organisations did this work on their own. We see our role as facilitator, coordination and system support.

Our work with the Anchors started in September 2019 when we presented an outline to the Accountable Officers Group for a City and Hackney anchor network. The paper was approved, and this has been followed with many one-to-one conversations with people across the City and Hackney health and care system representing HR, procurement and commercial services, strategy, policy, economy and public health teams.

In December we held a strategic design workshop with participants from East London NHS Foundation Trust, City and Hackney CCG, the Corporation of London, Homerton Hospital, the GP Confederation, Peabody, and Hackney Council to develop thinking on the existing strengths of the anchors; the opportunities to try new approaches, and 'moon-shots' (ambitious medium- to long-term strategic projects). Four themes emerged at this workshop: employment and skills, with a focus on apprenticeships; new infrastructure projects; childcare and serious youth violence. Since then, significant engagement with procurement and HR teams across the anchors has led to the development of two workstreams, reflecting two of the major levers that anchors have at their disposal to build community wealth:

- Procurement: how the purchasing of goods and services for the anchors could contribute towards community wealth building goals

¹ For further detail on the role of Anchor organisations in local economies see our articles <https://renaisi.com/2019/11/13/what-is-an-anchor-organisation/>

<https://renaisi.com/2020/07/22/city-hackney-anchor-procurement/>

² <https://cles.org.uk/what-is-community-wealth-building>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-the-united-kingdom>

⁴ <https://www.hackney-labour.org.uk/hackney-labour-2022-26-manifesto/>

- Workforce: how the recruitment and development of staff could also support these goals

Despite the extreme pressure on the health and care system during the pandemic, as a Collaborative we were able to make progress across both workstreams. This short report shares the learning so far on how to support system wide collaboration, and the barriers and successes that this programme has come across. In particular, we reflect on the importance of what Mark Moore calls “the authorising environment”, and how important this is in supporting collaboration across partners such as those we have worked with in City and Hackney. Moore introduced the idea of a strategic triangle, designed to enable managers in the public sector make sense of the complex environments they work within. One of the key elements of the triangle is the ‘authorising environment’ - in other words, that managers have the authority to deliver policies and programmes. This requires both legitimacy, and support from any individual or agency that could hold them to account, including legislative functions, the press, the public, or oversight bodies, for example.

Progress to date

System collaboration in the procurement workstream

We have now had ten workshops with procurement and skills leads from across the City and Hackney anchor organisations. Particular organisations who have engaged with this workstream include: Hackney Council, East London NHS Foundation Trust, Peabody Housing Association, City of London Corporation and Homerton Hospital Trust.

Each workshop took a similar structure, beginning with updates from each of the anchor representatives on their current focus alongside any challenges they would like to share with the group. We would then often facilitate a discussion to dive into a theme suggested by the group, sometimes bringing in external speakers or other colleagues from the anchor organisations, such as net zero / sustainability leads; or skills and employment leads, where useful.

The range of topics covered was wide, and included:

- understanding labour market inequalities in City and Hackney;
- policy areas such as modern slavery, social value and net zero;
- engaging with local businesses and SMEs;
- sharing best practice on changing financial regulations;
- the links between procurement and employment;
- mapping the procurement pipeline to identify areas for collaboration;
- real living wage compliance;
- Scope 3 measurement, baselining and progress.

Amongst these topics individuals discussed common dilemmas, shared strategies and celebrated good practice in progressing their agendas. The group have shared resources and found support and challenge amongst their peers, which has been hugely valuable. The regular peer-to-peer engagement via the workshops demonstrated that anchor organisations can organically begin to improve practice by coming together to:

1. **Debate and challenge** each other in thinking around policy issues to co-develop strategies on cross-cutting themes (such as net zero, social value, modern slavery)

2. Engage in **practical sharing of resources** and commonly used documentation around processes and organisational policies

More specifically, mapping exercises in the procurement workshops identified the following opportunities for collaborative working, detailed in the table below.

Opportunity	Discussion
Collectively engaging suppliers	Almost all of the anchor organisations in the collaborative have a desire to diversify their supplier base and to remove some of the barriers that exist for small and medium sized organisations, and BAME-led organisations. As they work across a shared footprint, and commission similar types of services, the anchors would be seeking to remove these barriers for some of the same providers so there is an opportunity to do this once together, rather than several times separately.
Developing common social value metrics	Social Value policies and measurement have been a recurring theme with the procurement leads. Among the NHS anchor partners there have been some efforts to align social value objectives and metrics across the North East London footprint. To take this further across all the anchors would require political agreement from the local authorities, and some dedicated resource to work up an agreed set of social value objectives and metrics.
Developing thinking and practice on green jobs / circular economy	A more recent theme which has emerged as a priority for the local authority partners is developing their work on supporting green jobs and the circular economy. Most anchor partners are at an early stage of their thinking on this and there are opportunities for commissioning shared research as a first step.

Unfortunately, these opportunities were not progressed into tangible actions beyond discussion within the workshops. Barriers to progress included:

1. **A lack of alignment in timescales and processes** impeding pursuing joint tendering for suppliers
2. **Limited engagement from the senior decision makers** needed to alter strategies and reporting requirements: this lack of the 'authorising environment' meant that the imperative to collaborate slipped behind other organisational priorities.
3. **Little will to commit to resourcing collaborative work** (such as research and strategy development) and low accountability or capacity to engage in activity beyond the day job.

System collaboration in the workforce workstream

These barriers also prevented the progress of the workforce workstream, which included HR and apprenticeship leads, in developing collaborative work around apprenticeships. Apprenticeships were identified as an opportunity to collaborate via a 'rotating apprenticeships' pilot across the organisations. A small group of leads across City of London, Hackney Council and ELFT came together to develop the idea with Renaisi, who developed a short paper to outline the project. While the leads tried to engage their broader

organisations, ultimately, a lack of the senior sponsorship needed to bring accountability and resources to this initiative halted prevented its realisation.

This group was perhaps more successful than the procurement workstream Group in developing its thinking towards a tangible piece of work. The workforce workstream had a tighter focus from the outset, and a clear idea to focus collaboration on. However, the lack of an authorising environment for participants to progress the pilot has now led to this aspect of the collaboration being paused.

Learning and recommendations

Our work supporting place-based collaboration is informed by the principles of Collective Impact, articulate by Kania and Kramer (2011)⁵.

1. Common agenda	Build a shared agenda around priorities owned at a senior level
2. Shared measurement	Track and understand progress in a similar way to allow for accountability
3. Mutually reinforcing activities and approaches	Build relationships and increase knowledge of what anchors and the wider system is doing
4. Continuous communication	Through sharing, improving and aligning practice towards common goals
4. Independent backbone support	Have a neutral, facilitating actor to hold the space, allowing learning, challenge, and system accountability

Progress in the procurement workstream has reflected elements of principles 3 and 4, supported by independent backbone support throughout. However, in absence of a common agenda and shared measurement systems agreed at a senior level, ongoing communication and mutually reinforcing approaches have remained operational, focused on incidental commonalities rather than strategic collective working.

Learning around effective collaboration

The challenges and successes encountered at different stage in this collaborative, alongside the instances of group reflection throughout, have highlighted a number of points of learning about how anchor organisations can effectively collaborate

- The importance of the **'authorising environment'**: for the delivery of public value. It is the active leadership that supports new ideas to take root and gives permission to staff to work in new ways, as well as setting expectations for delivery. Even within an environment that provides staff with a lot of autonomy, for genuinely new innovations or programmes, more active permission and sponsorship is often required to make progress.
- Collaboration should **start from a shared set of goals that reflect system priorities**. As efforts to enable collaboration have largely focused on trying to align different organisations workplans, the workstreams have felt slightly detached from the objectives and priorities of the wider health and care system.

⁵ Kania, J., & Kramer, M. (2011). Collective Impact. Stanford Social Innovation Review, 9(1), 36–41. <https://doi.org/10.48558/5900-KN19>

- Collaboration must be **embedded into local governance systems**. Without establishing a governance structure for the collaborative linked to systems level ambitions, individual organisational pressures have been prioritised over initiatives that emerged within the collaborative.
- Collaboration must be **resourced**. Organisations must be willing to commit staff time and financing to support and coordinate areas of shared interest, such as research, or large-scale provider engagement. This can both provide the capacity to pursue this work and build accountability and commitment into the collaborative.
- Collaboration requires **senior sponsorship and oversight**. Without the engagement of those individuals shaping strategic organisational priorities, conversations often became operational and it was challenging for those in the group to see the links between opportunities for collaborative work and the furthering of overall place-based agendas. A lack of clarity around the expectations and aspirations of senior staff for collaborative working also led to a reticence among participants to overcommit to any opportunities that emerged in the group.

Recommendations for the future

Throughout our work with the City and Hackney Anchor Collaborative, we have embedded reflection into our work via conversations with both individuals and the working groups. Reflecting on the instances of progress and primary sticking points along the way allow us to make a number of recommendations for others attempting to build collaboration across anchor organisations in the future

1. Begin by bringing senior leaders together to identify priority areas of work for collaboration and shared objectives
2. Develop a governance structure with regular ways for the collaborative workstreams to update progress and escalate any issues with clear visibility between working groups and senior leadership
3. Map out practical barriers to collaboration (such as tendering regulations, sign off processes, yearly timelines) within workshops at the beginning of the collaboration to discuss how they might be overcome and rule out activities where they will not be possible
4. Identify practical activities of value that can quickly demonstrate the benefits of collaboration, embed collaborative processes and begin to bring the anchors together to achieve the shared objectives: e.g. developing a set of common metrics or aligning action plans.
5. Identify areas of shared investment (e.g. pieces of research, supplier development funding) which could be improved via pooled resources and the input of multiple anchors in tendering processes.
6. Embed ongoing reflection and learning into the collaborative working groups to build a culture of challenge and drive which infiltrates practice outside the group
7. Engage senior leaders in ongoing evaluation to build accountability and ensure ownership of progress and challenges at all levels

BACKGROUND PAPERS

In accordance with The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) England Regulations 2012 publication of Background Papers used in the preparation of reports is required

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