

# Community Consultation Report

Anchor Institution Framework for Cheshire and Merseyside



**NHS**

Cheshire and Merseyside

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## Introduction

This report presents the findings of a community consultation project undertaken with citizens and wider stakeholders to ascertain their views and opinions about the seven priority areas detailed in an Anchor Institution Framework for Cheshire and Merseyside<sup>1</sup>.

It is commissioned by Cheshire and Merseyside Health & Care Partnership to ensure that the views and opinions of others helps to inform efforts to improve health outcomes, leverage social value and tackle health inequalities.

### The priority areas are:

- Employ local people
- Invest in prevention services
- Pay at least the real living wage to employees
- Provide access to public buildings and spaces for community benefit
- Purchase from local businesses
- Reduce the environmental impact of public sector activities
- Work in partnership with local organisations to improve the local area

# Aims and objectives

This report presents the views and opinions of citizens and wider stakeholders with regards to:

- ① The extent to which they agree or disagree that anchor institutions are already contributing to the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the local areas they operate in
- ② The proposed priority areas outlined in the Anchor Institution Framework, and specifically to what extent these priorities will have a positive impact on local communities, and also how they may be operationalised
- ③ What other ways anchor institutions may add value to the local areas they operate in

?

## What are anchor institutions?

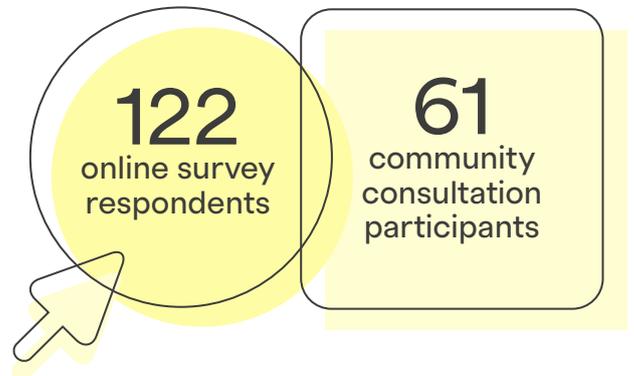
Anchor institutions are organisations **rooted in their community** that have a collective interest in improving **economic, social and environmental wellbeing** locally. They are typically not for profit organisations whose long-term sustainability is tied to the wellbeing of the populations they serve<sup>2</sup>.

# Methodology

This community consultation project consisted of two strands:

- 1 An online survey open to the general public
- 2 A series of community consultations with citizens and wider stakeholders. This included public sector and voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector professionals

The online survey consisted of a set of questions which participants were asked to answer. The data was collated and analysed and the findings are presented in this report. The community consultation sessions lasted approximately 1.5 hours and consisted of semi structured

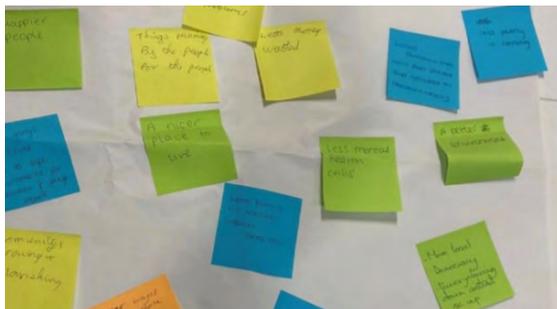


conversations with groups of participants. These sessions provided in depth qualitative data in relation to the priority areas. Discussions were audio recorded with the full consent of all participants, and subsequently transcribed.

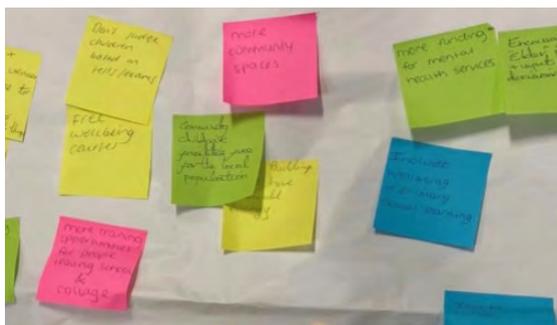
A thematic analysis was undertaken. Participant anonymity has been maintained throughout this project. Audio recordings were permanently deleted once data was analysed for the purposes of producing this report.

There were 122 respondents to the online survey and 61 participants in total in three community consultation workshops which took place in Halton, Sefton and Wirral. One workshop was delivered face-to-face, another was online and a third combined face to face and online participants. It is a noted limitation that participants from all boroughs across the Cheshire and Merseyside footprint were not consulted, however this was beyond the scope of this commission. The aim of this report is to provide an overview of general findings and not a detailed local analysis, which is a recommended next step noted in this report.

Participant feedback during consultation sessions:



What outcomes might we expect to see?

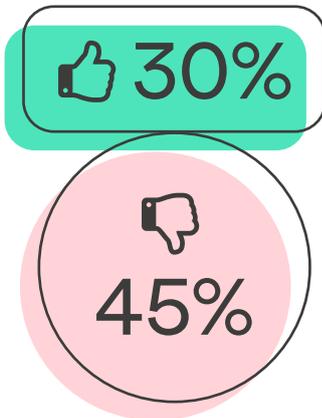
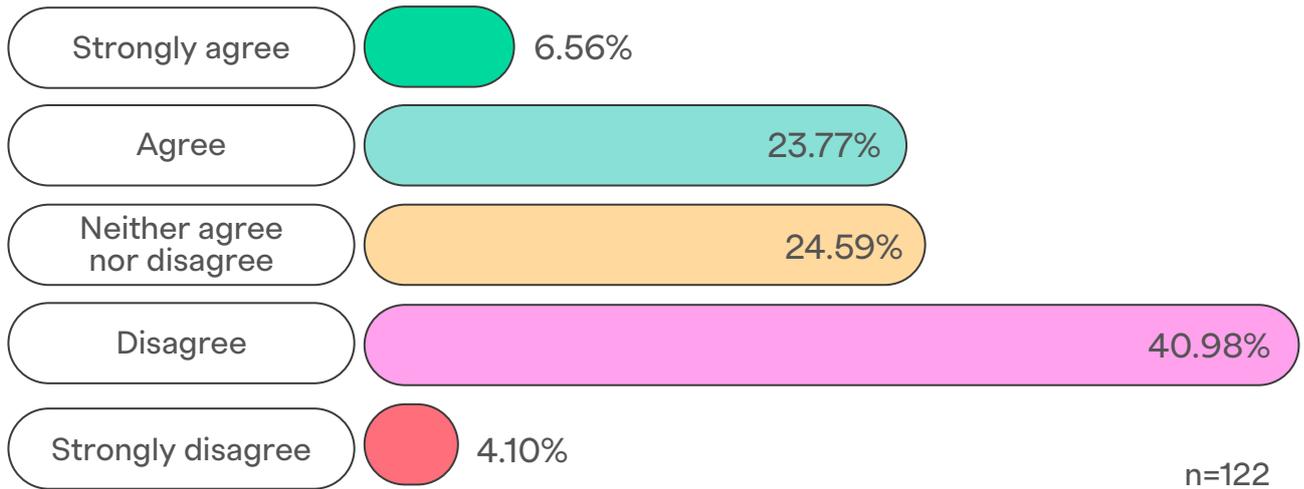


How can public sector organisations add value to the areas they operate?

# Results



To what extent do you agree that anchor institutions are doing all they can currently to improve the local areas in which they operate?



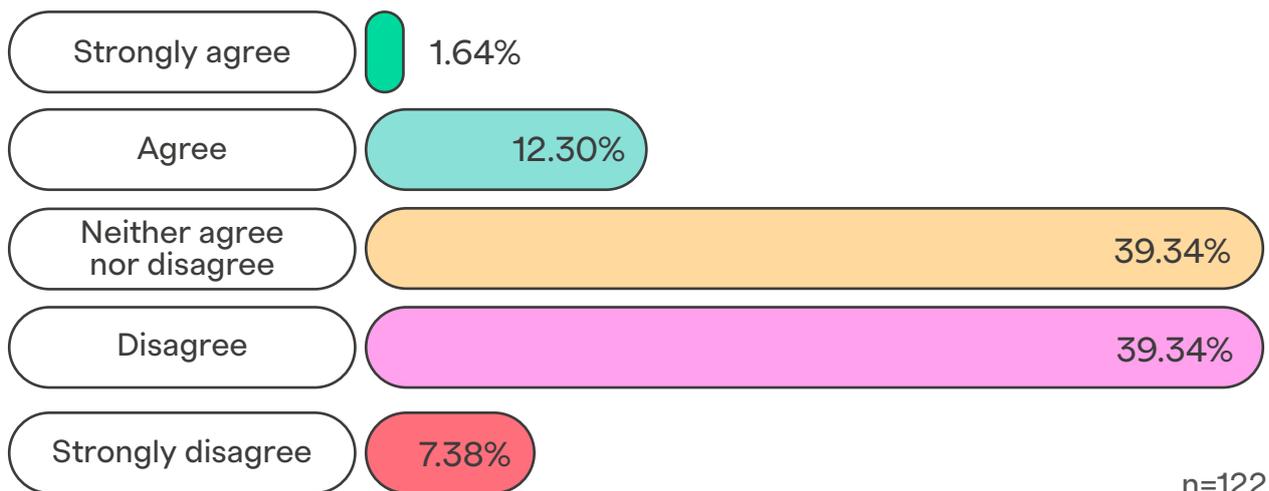
30.33% of survey respondents state that anchor institutions are doing all they can currently to improve the local areas they operate in.

A greater proportion of survey respondents (45.08%) disagree with this statement.





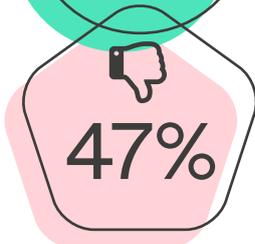
To what extent do you agree that anchor institutions are doing all they can currently to reduce their environmental impact?



n=122



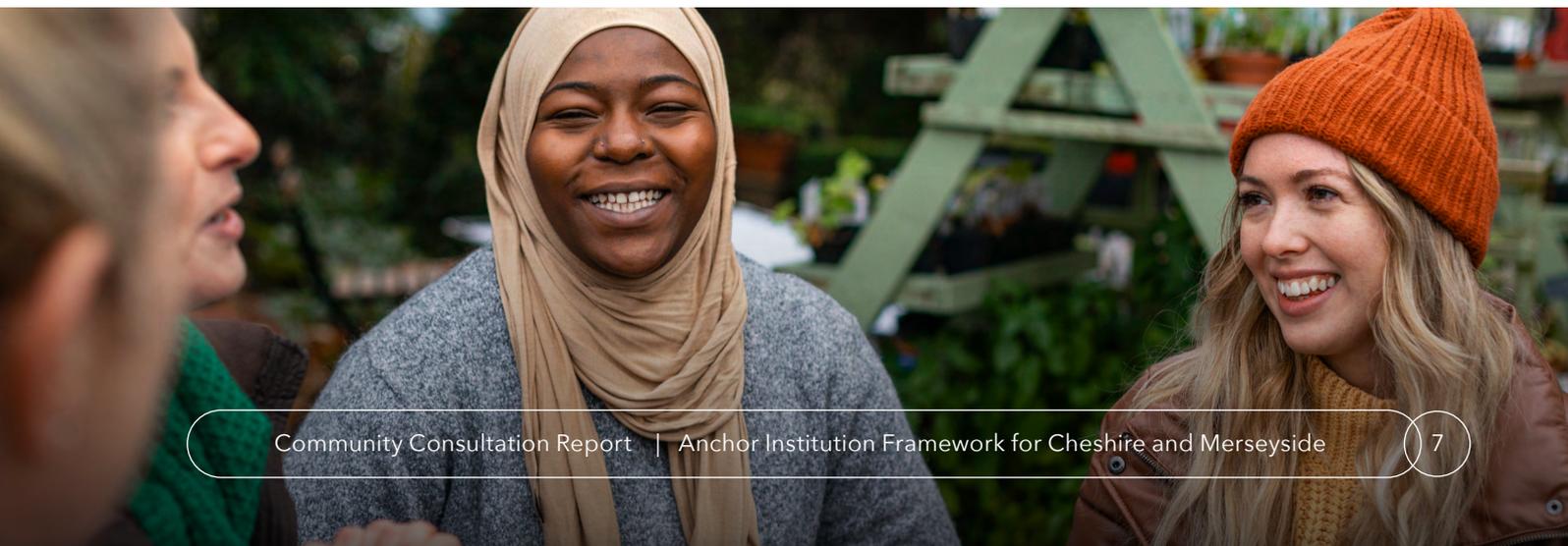
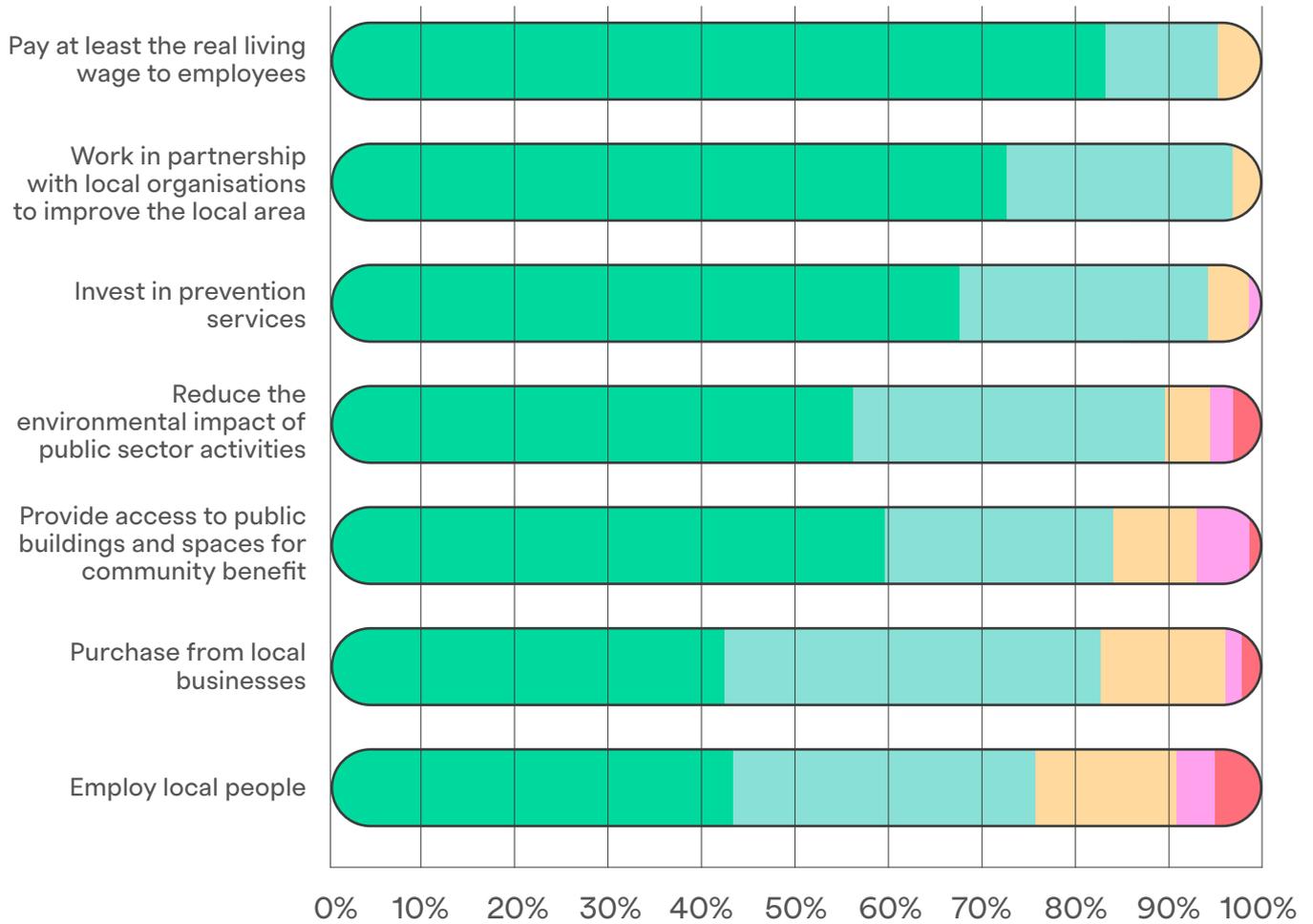
13.94% of survey respondents state that anchor institutions are doing all they can currently to reduce their environmental impact.



A greater proportion of survey respondents (46.72%) disagree with this statement.



Below is a list of suggested ways that anchor institutions may want to improve the local areas they operate in. Please rate the importance of each of the following statements:





All seven of the priority areas detailed in the Anchor Institution Framework score high on level of importance.

### Priority area

### Weighted average importance score

1 = very important  
5 = not important

Pay at least the real living wage to employees	1.20
Work in partnership with local organisations to improve the local area	1.30
Invest in prevention services	1.37
Reduce the environmental impact of public sector activities	1.61
Provide access to public buildings and spaces for community benefit	1.63
Purchase from local businesses	1.79
Employ local people	1.93



The three priorities with the highest weighted average importance scores are 'pay at least the real living wage' (1.20), 'work in partnership with local organisations to improve the local area' (1.30) and 'invest in prevention services' (1.37).

# Stakeholder feedback

The following key themes were identified from workshop discussions and online survey responses

## Further work is needed to determine how the priorities will be delivered locally

Feedback from participants on the priorities was overall positive. However, it was noted that the priorities are essentially broad statements of intent. How they will be achieved in reality is unclear and is a key consideration moving forward. Further collaborative discussions and stakeholder engagement is required to ascertain this.

## Explore the interconnectivity between priorities and work with complexity

Anchor institutions should avoid viewing the priorities as standalone issues in isolation from one other. They should instead work in a whole system way with stakeholders to deliver initiatives that maximise returns simultaneously across as many priorities as possible. To achieve this, anchor institutions should foster strong partnerships, create learning spaces and work with the complexity of the challenges<sup>3</sup>.



“The devil is in the detail [ ]... What do these priorities actually mean to local people? [ ]...Work needs to be undertaken at local level with stakeholders to unpack these further”

“These [priorities] are a solid start but they don’t provide the detail. We need some big milestones and stretch targets...”

“They’re mutually reinforcing these priorities [ ]... When you think about reducing environmental impact for example, we’ll also improve air quality which will improve peoples’ health and prevent illness... We should think in a joined-up way about all of this”

“There’s connections between all of these [priorities] ... If we think in a holistic way about improving our area...”



## Build on the partnership working already underway

There are good examples of cross sector partnership working already underway with anchor institutions. This should be expanded upon. There is consensus that this new initiative is not starting from the beginning, but building on established work already underway.

Participants understood the necessity of developing a more systematic approach to leveraging social value by anchor institutions, but politely request that those responsible for leading this take time to discover and build on what is already working well and share these learnings more widely.



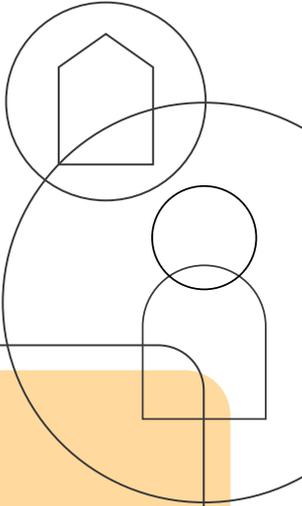
“We’ve been implementing a social value workstream for ten years now [ ]... Every borough has taken their own approach and a more consistent approach would be beneficial but let’s first consider what’s already working well locally, let’s share best practice [ ]... Don’t throw the baby out with the bath water...”

“We need the public sector to get behind what we’re already doing. We’re doing it well and need more support. We need them to knock on our door and discover some of this first”

“Discover what’s already out there and invest...”

# Citizens and communities ought to be the driving force of efforts to improve local areas.

Citizens and communities ought to be the driving force behind efforts of anchor institutions to improve local areas. This point was mentioned more than any other in discussions and survey responses. There was collective agreement that previous efforts to involve communities and citizens were of varying or limited success. System partners must hold each other to account with future efforts and there should be greater emphasis on sharing insights and best practice. Anchor institutions that invite citizens into design and delivery processes will enhance learning and accelerate social innovation<sup>4,5,6</sup>. Anchor institutions should support citizens and communities to articulate the change they want and need to live valued and dignified lives, and assume the critically important role of first follower<sup>7</sup>



“We need to ask people in the community what they want and need...”

“Everyone supports these priority statements however its making sure that they’re relevant to local communities [ ]... We have to involve them at every step”

“Let local people make decisions about how resources are allocated and money is spent. Participatory budgeting is a good example...”



## Local context matters

Implementing the anchor institution priorities will help to tackle inequalities and promote social justice. To deliver these effectively however, stakeholders at local level should be involved throughout. Anchor institutions should commit to undertaking deep learning at a local level with stakeholders to map needs, assets, strengths and capabilities to determine how best to maximise value<sup>8,9</sup>.

## We must take action now and be bold and ambitious

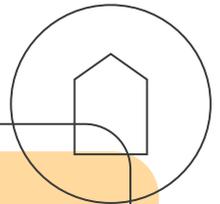
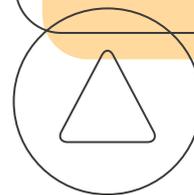
Participants forewarned of the risks of consultation fatigue. Taking action is the critical next step if anchor institutions are to win the trust and support of communities. Anchor institutions should deliver what they say they will. Robust processes to monitor and appraise the work streams and outcomes that flow directly from the Anchor Institution Framework is vital. Progress should be communicated widely to stakeholders.

Anchor institutions should be ambitious in the scale and scope of the initiatives they will undertake to achieve the priorities. Participants said more imaginative and creative ways of tackling longstanding social challenges are needed.



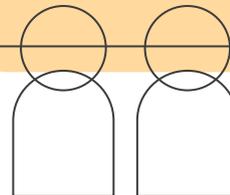
“There won’t be a one size fits all for delivering on all these priorities [ ]... We have to keep this local...”

“Every area has its strengths and its needs. We have to respond to these locally”



“Let’s shoot for the moon! We need more excitement and energy”

“We need to be a bit more ambitious for our community. We have lots to work with...”





## Nurture relationships and champion interdisciplinary working

Participants described a need for strong relationships and healthy dialogue with citizens and different sector professionals. One way to do this is to create interfaces or ‘bumping spaces’ where different professionals and citizens can interact, learn together and from each other.

Co-production and interdisciplinary working can stimulate new ideas and innovations. By breaking down the barriers that separate institutions from each other, and from the community, we will become more adept at thinking and acting like a system.<sup>10</sup>



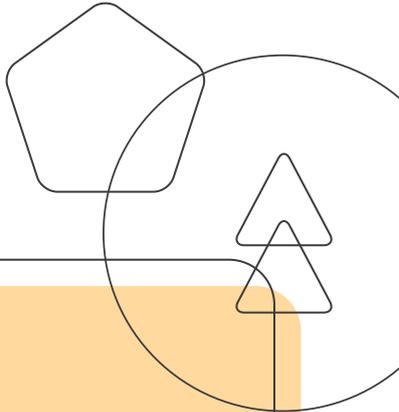
“We have to learn about each other and support one another.... look for common ground and shared purpose..”

“It takes so long to build relationships with the public sector. Key contacts often move on and we have to start again”

“I’d like to see a [VCFSE] sector engagement programme for public sector staff... They can come and learn first-hand about what we do. This will help make connections...”

# Anchor institutions can help others in their supply chains to achieve the priorities

The reach of anchor institutions extends beyond its own workforce. They also contract other organisations to deliver goods and services on their behalf, for example the VCFSE sector. This provides another avenue for leveraging social value. For example, if they were to factor into contract envelopes the uplifts necessary for VCFSE organisations to pay their employees the real living wage. This directly benefits VCFSE employees who often live in the communities’ anchor institutions serve. Financial pressures may be a limiting factor, but the potential returns on such investments may be considerable. Anchor institutions that create additional value through the supply chain will likely achieve additional impact.



“We can’t play our part as a voluntary sector provider if our contractual envelopes are insufficient to deliver on the priorities that the system is advocating”

“Costs are rising, the financial pressures on the system are immense [ ]... It creates a race to the bottom. There will be difficult conversations ahead about how we finance these priorities..”



# Focusing on the priority areas

This section of the report details recommended actions for each of the priority areas. Table 1 summarises these recommendations.

## Employ local people

- Provide flexible, local employment, volunteering and apprenticeship opportunities. Provide tailored support for those who have been out of work longer term.
- Build the skills and competencies of the local workforce. Strong partnerships between anchor institutions and educational organisations are required.

## Invest in prevention services

- Build an ecosystem of social support in communities. Invest in grassroots community organisations, self help groups and the VCFSE sector
- Broaden evaluation frameworks to assess the wider impact of investing in the prevention agenda, not just fiscal measures.
- Invest in the wellbeing of children and young people to support the best start in life



### Pay at least the living wage to employees

- Mitigate the increasing costs of living by paying the real living wage. Resource others in the supply chain to do similar, for example the VCFSE sector.
- Provide job security for employees. Do not implement zero hours contracting.

### Provide access to public buildings and spaces for community benefit

- Increase community asset transfers to VCFSE organisations to support their sustainability. Make sure that transferred assets do not carry undisclosed financial burdens.
- Open anchor institution buildings for free for extended hours for community based activities.

## Purchase from local businesses

- Purchase from local socially trading organisations and independent businesses where possible to maximise social value, grow the local economy and support families and communities.
- Purchase from socially and ethically responsible businesses.

## Work in partnership with local organisations to improve the local area

- Include citizens alongside local organisations as active partners.
- Further consultation work with local communities is required to implement the priorities.
- Use co-production approaches to involve everyone in the delivery of priorities.
- Launch a VCFSE sector engagement/work experience programme for anchor institution professionals.

## Reduce the environmental impact of public sector activities

- Anchor institutions should proactively reduce the negative environmental impact of their activities rather than offsetting them. The latter does not address the root of the problem.
- Anchor institutions should aim to have a positive impact on the environment.



## Table 1 summarises recommended actions for each of the priority areas

Priority area	Feedback
Employ local people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide flexible, local employment, volunteering and apprenticeship opportunities</li> <li>• Provide tailored support for those out of work longer term</li> <li>• Build the skills and competencies of the local workforce</li> </ul>
Invest in prevention services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build an ecosystem of social support in communities. Invest in grassroots community organisations, self help groups and the VCFSE sector</li> <li>• Broaden evaluation frameworks to assess wider benefits of investing in prevention</li> <li>• Invest in the wellbeing of children and young people to support the best start in life</li> </ul>
Pay at least the real living wage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pay employees the real living wage</li> <li>• Resource others in the supply chain to pay the real living wage to employees</li> </ul>
Provide access to public buildings and spaces for community benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open anchor institution buildings for free for extended hours for community based activities</li> <li>• Support community asset transfers to VCFSE organisations and self help groups</li> </ul>
Purchase from local businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchase from local socially trading organisations and independent businesses where possible</li> <li>• Purchase from socially and ethically responsible businesses</li> </ul>
Reduce the environmental impact of public sector activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anchor institutions should proactively reduce the negative environmental impact of their activities</li> <li>• Anchor institutions should consider how they can contribute to a positive impact on the environment</li> </ul>
Work in partnership with local organisations to improve the local area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further consultation work with local communities is required to implement the priorities</li> <li>• Include citizens alongside local organisations as active partners</li> <li>• Utilise co-production, deliberative and participatory approaches to implement the priorities</li> <li>• Launch a VCFSE sector engagement/work experience programme for anchor institution professionals</li> </ul>

# Other ways anchor institutions can create value

Below is a list of other ways those canvassed believed local areas can be enhanced:

Invest in children and young people

More health promotion initiatives

Improve transport networks and reduce transport costs

Involve everyone in public service design

Mandate cross sectoral collaboration

Attract more regional and local investment

Involve the private sector

Champion deliberative and participatory approaches

More recycling facilities

Take action to reduce the impact of the cost-of-living crisis

Greater support for the most vulnerable e.g. the homeless community

Utilise the skills and talents of older generations

Invest in arts and culture

Anchor institution buildings should use renewable energy sources

# Concluding remarks

There is support for the anchor institution priorities and general agreement that these are worthy goals. How these priorities are realised in practice should be determined at a local level in collaboration with citizens and wider stakeholders and should complement existing activity already underway.



## Acknowledgements

Thanks to everyone who took the time to complete the online survey and attended consultation sessions. Thanks to Karen Livesey, The Orchard Surgery and Rachel Jones, Sefton Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) for their help organising community consultations. Thanks also to Becky Jones, GB Partnerships Group and Dave Sweeney, Cheshire and Merseyside Health and Care Partnership for helpful discussions and feedback throughout.

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