

NHS Leadership Academy - Leading Anchor Organisations



Julia Slay
www.juliaslay.com

Welcome!

Welcome to this NHS Leadership Academy and HALN masterclass on leading anchor organisations! Today we are sharing the findings from a literature review commissioned by the NHS South East Leadership Academy to identify and explore the leadership skills required to support anchor organisations.

It included:

- A review of existing NHS Leadership Frameworks and identify where they are supportive of anchor work, and where there may be gaps
- A rapid review of the published and grey (informal) literature on anchor organisations to analyse what can be learnt about the leadership behaviours and competencies needed to effectively lead health anchor organisations.



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To start with - let's hear from you!

Head over to Mentimeter at www.mentimeter.com and enter the code 1586 0948

There are two questions to kick us off live and ready for you to add your thoughts on!

Once you've finished that, feel free to introduce yourself in the chat here, and share what perspective you are beginning today



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What is the challenge facing leaders of anchor organisations?

As with other new initiatives in large, complex organisations, leadership is required to:

- Set direction and vision for the organisation
- Secure resourcing and organisational commitment
- Give permission to others to lead and take action
- Mobilise staff and partners in pursuit of the desired outcomes.
- Hold the organisation to account for delivery and quality

At a Health Anchors Learning Network (HALN) event on the role of leadership in health anchor work, of over 150 participants, 60 per cent of those polled said they did not have sufficient leadership sponsorship for their anchor work. The same poll also asked what the biggest challenge was in securing leadership buy in for their anchor work. Answers included:

- Competing priorities
- A lack of executive headspace
- Operational and system pressures
- Risk averse organisational culture
- A lack of understanding of the concept
- Financial pressures and a lack of capacity and resource
- A high bar for evidence of impact
- A lack of shared vision and values.



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What is the challenge facing leaders of anchor organisations?

How can leaders support anchor work

At the same HALN event an activity explored with participants how stronger leadership would benefit their anchor work.

Respondents said that it would:

- Support with achieving outcomes
- Create sustained change
- Share expertise and resources
- Give staff permission to lead
- Secure resources
- Embed real change
- Remove hurdles
- Set clear priorities
- Generate meaningful long term commitment to the work
- Create organisational level buy in
- Facilitate culture change.



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www.juliaslay.com

What is unique (and not so unique!) about leading anchor work?

- **Leading across systems:** anchor organisations are increasingly working at place level with other partners, and leading anchor work requires strong external engagement across partnerships.
- **Intentionality:** leaders of anchor organisations need to make decisions about where and how to target the impact of their anchor efforts.
- **Facilitating culture change:** operating as an anchor organisation requires a fundamental shift in mindset and culture which requires role modelling and expectations set at all levels of leadership.
- **Visible and active sponsorship:** anchor work is still relatively new, and it isn't yet embedded in the nuts and bolts or many anchor organisations. Active leadership is required to maintain a focus on anchor priorities to sustain efforts in the absence of large scale funding, targets or policy priorities.
- **Distributed leadership:** sustained anchor action requires distributed leadership across different anchor functions (e.g. procurement, estates, workforce) and leadership from executive level as well as team managers and individual programme leads.



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www.juliaslay.com

What are we seeing in the literature about leading anchor work?

Expectations of leaders - an example from Rush

The Rush Anchor Mission Playbook does outline the role they expect senior leaders to play in delivering the anchor mission. Many of these functions are also behaviours and skills which have come out through the wider literature.

The role of senior leadership includes:

- *Serving as overall leaders of the Anchor Mission*
- *Supporting vision development and communicating to key stakeholders*
- *Developing strategy and approving measures and initiatives*
- *Acting as ambassadors of the mission with CBOs, business partners, etc.*
- *Holding the organization accountable for execution*
- *Senior leadership should designate a key leader to drive the engagement and act as the*
- *spokesperson for Anchor Mission strategy. The ideal key leader will have the following*
- *Characteristics:*
 - *Ability to dedicate 5–10% of his/her time to the cause to mobilize mission, attend and lead meetings, update organization leadership, etc.*
 - *Established relationships with senior leadership and credibility as a decision maker for the organization*
 - *Relevant background experience in community health, community engagement, community economic development, and/or with other community-based organizations working to solve similar issues*

Rush Anchor Mission Playbook - p.10



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Recommendations for leaders of Anchor organisations

- Review any existing leadership standards or competencies within your organisation and review whether these encompass the leadership behaviours needed to drive forward an anchor mission
- Consider whether an anchor focus is particularly relevant for some Job Descriptions, and adapt them where needed
- Build these anchor leadership behaviours into appraisals and 1:1 meetings to set expectations around this work
- Developing local Communities of Practice to engage and support leaders at all levels



Over to you to hear from each other

In break out rooms of six you'll have 20 minutes to introduce yourselves to each other and hear from each other about:

- What leadership behaviours or activities have you used to drive forward your local anchor work?
- What could leaders in your context do that would make the single biggest difference to your work as an anchor?

We will ask you to share some of the highlights from your conversation when you're back.



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Upcoming events

Upcoming events led by CLES - the national organisation for local economies:

[Leading Anchor Organisations Masterclass 2: The power of procurement – the NHS as a driver of local industrial strategy – Thursday 26 October 12:30 pm – 1:30 pm](#)

[Leading Anchor Organisations Masterclass 3: The best job for the person – inclusive workforce and employment interventions – Thursday 16 November 12:30 pm – 1:30 pm](#)

[Leading Anchor Organisations Masterclass 4: Public land public values – progressive NHS estates strategies? – Thursday 30 November 12:30 pm – 1:30 pm](#)



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Upcoming HALN events and more resources

- 16th October: [Creating Collective Impact: exploring approaches to anchor networks](#)
 - Webinar and opportunity to network with colleagues in your region
- Free downloadable tools: <https://haln.org.uk/tools-to-get-started>
 - Including 'Building Blocks of Anchor Leadership' (below)
- Webinar recordings on [YouTube](#)
 - Including [At The Helm: Leadership in Anchor Work](#)
- Browse the website (haln.org.uk) for case studies, blogs and other inspiration

To stay up to date, register for our newsletter at haln.org.uk/newsletter, join our FutureNHS page and follow us on Twitter / X and LinkedIn

What could encourage anchor work and how important is leadership?

Senior buy-in and leadership action is vital to the success of anchor work - but what exactly does it mean to lead an anchor mission effectively?

Over the last year we have hosted public HALN events and closed Learning Sets, listening to and learning from colleagues across the UK working to implement their anchor strategy, either seeking leadership support or leading the work themselves. From this we have drawn out four key themes around the leadership required to implement an anchor strategy. This tool can help anchors organisations break down what is needed from those in leadership positions and reflect on points of strength and areas of need / development within their own leadership structures. HALN participants have spoken about the importance of getting a range of people on board, at various levels and through different job roles, including non-Executive and Executive Directors, CEOs, middle level and frontline managers and across all areas of the organisation, such as the Head of Laundry, to develop a joined-up approach which will produce the most impact.

Many HALN participants kickstarted their anchor work through capitalising on a specific opportunity garnering support around this, such as Covid-19 recovery, a local infrastructure / investment project, a partnership with another anchor such as a Housing Association or a national initiative such as reducing health inequalities. Many then used these entry points to shift from a single initiative to a more considered, joined-up, sustainable programme of work, embedded in organisational structure and ways of working. Progress is often accelerated if activity is linked to wider organisational issues so that other priorities do not trump the anchor work. For instance, workforce is often a hook for organisations to instigate their anchor strategy due to a focus on improving retention and understaffing.



What are the building blocks of anchor leadership?

Intentionality



Consciously adopting an anchor mission.

Buy-in amongst senior sponsors and Executive and Non-Executive Directors is vital - to signal the beginning of a change but also to give permission to staff to invest time into anchor work.

Although we have seen anchor work emerge organically becoming embedded in existing structures without explicit leadership, changes are often implemented at greater speed when a structural approach is taken with a designated anchor programme manager.

Intentionality requires real clarity about intended benefits and outcomes, from senior staff downwards.



Shepherding Culture Change



Explaining and encouraging a 'think anchor' mindset at every level of the organisation.

Leaders need to embed anchor approaches into day-to-day operations and decision making processes. Changes can be communicated retrospectively - for instance [Suffolk & North East Essex's 'Can Do health and care' approach in partnership with their Integrated Care System](#) - or prospectively. For example, the Northern Care Alliance developed a clear mission to maximise its influence on the underlying cause of ill health, poverty, before implementing initiatives such as [WorkSTART](#). You can watch Donna McLaughlin speak about the Northern Care Alliance's anchor approach [here](#) and [here](#).

Strong communication to staff is vital, as their day-to-day work inspires a broader culture; participants told us about using tools such as Lunch and Learn, conversation clubs and newsletters to spread the message.

System Leadership



Coming together with other anchors and giving up power in order to align to shared goals.

This can be through charters, ICS level work or collaboration with partners who are further on such as universities, councils and Housing Associations. For example, health anchors have teamed up with Housing Associations to design accessible, value-based job descriptions and run targeted recruitment campaigns with local institutions who have trusted relationships in the community. You can access HALN's Learning from Housing Associations resource [here](#).

Regional and ICS networks have started to emerge and drive local work, particularly for issues that would benefit from an approach at scale. These are still nascent and early in their work. HALN's resource on the unique role of ICS is available [here](#).

Facilitating Culture Change



Embedding a 'do anchor' approach at every level of the organisation.

Leaders can work with employees across all levels of the organisation - such as mid-level leaders, frontline and maintenance staff - granting permission and support to embed the anchor mission into their job. Some anchors assign champions amongst staff and give them opportunities to lead change initiatives that tie in with their interests, for instance around energy saving. Culture change is not a set of individual projects, but requires building an anchor mindset into all policies and strategies.

Leaders should promote sustainable behaviours and raise the profile of your anchor mission through practical support such as cycle to work schemes, accommodating caring responsibilities and making healthy food choices easier in the workplace. Access HALN's Engaging the Workforce resource [here](#).