



West Midlands
Combined Authority

Working Together to Create a Fairer, Greener, Healthier West Midlands

September 2021





Working Together to Create a Fairer, Greener, Healthier West Midlands

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Foreword

This report charts some of the activity that is taking place to build a fairer, greener, healthier West Midlands. In simple terms, it chronicles the work and impact of the Public Service Reform and Inclusive Growth directorate of the West Midlands Combined Authority but – in almost every case – this activity has to be understood as a partnership with local authority and other partners that we collaborate with along the way.

Public Service Reform was a key plank of the deals with central government that drew new powers and resources to the region. Unlike our work in transport, housing or skills though too often public service reform has been misunderstood as a by-word for mitigating austerity and misaligned with a preoccupation for bureaucratic, structural changes. In fact, the directorate has quietly achieved some significant impact. This impact has sometimes gone under the radar and so this report sets out to put this right.

First, it identifies the wide range of projects and programmes where relatively small amounts of investment have generated **significant bang for their buck**. Programmes like the Homelessness Taskforce where less than half-a-million pounds of investment has drawn down over £15m of external funding and transformed the lives of over 1500 people.

Secondly, it reasserts the importance of taking a fairer, greener, healthier approach to economic prosperity in the region. **As the pandemic has made all too clear**, the inequalities that beset our region require urgent and deliberate action. Simply hoping that economic growth will ‘trickle down’ to those who need it most will not shift the dial. We need concerted action to make sure that everybody benefits from investment in the region - for this generation and beyond.

And thirdly, it sets out a new approach. The approach to ‘public service reform’ is evolving with less focus on public services per se and a greater concern to address complex challenges by bringing together partners to tackle problems upstream, reduce demand and dependencies and unlock a wide range of resources for change. This approach is often described as ‘social innovation’.

This report reveals **impactful solutions to some of the region’s knottiest challenges** – from tackling homelessness to coalescing around violence reduction; from enabling physical activity among some of the region’s most inactive communities, to creating and expanding green spaces for everyone’s benefit.

As our directorate moves to a model of social innovation, as we move to new ways of working as we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic, we look forward to working with you to create the fairer, greener, healthier region our citizens all deserve.



Ed Cox
Director of Inclusive Growth and
Public Service Reform

From Public Service Reform to Social Innovation



Public Service Reform was a key plank of our 2017 Devolution Deal and how we support happier, healthier, more prosperous and better connected communities. However, the language of Public Service Reform has dwindled under subsequent governments and approaches are evolving.

The challenges have never changed. Demand on public services such as police, schools, health services and social care is not only rising but is becoming more complex. Addressing complex challenges and making better use of resources by reducing demand and costly dependencies is key. Persistent inequalities require collaborative, system-wide approaches with a clear focus on prevention.

The Covid pandemic has only exacerbated these challenges. The importance of transforming services to improve the life chances and wellbeing of our citizens and address the acute needs of those most in need of help has never been greater.

‘Social innovation’ represents an emerging suite of approaches that reduces the focus solely on ‘public services’ and instead seeks to achieve the intended outcomes of reform through a wider range of partners coming together to identify collaborative solutions to some of the most challenging social needs.

Where public service reform has been characterised by a focus on ‘best value’ and a narrow focus on improvements in service delivery outputs, social innovation has a broader concern for tackling complex challenges upstream, mobilising a wide range of resources and assets, and changing the way we approach complex problems.

We are increasingly seeing our directorate’s core activities **in this way**: growing our skills and competencies as a ‘social innovation agency’ at the heart of the region; building a ‘social innovation offer’ for local authorities, other public bodies, and the voluntary and community sector.

The solutions we can generate – together – will be better than ‘business as usual’, may cost less, and will have wider and deeper impacts for our citizens across the West Midlands. We’ve already started on that journey: making the intended outcomes from ‘public service reform’ a reality through ‘social innovation’.

“

Devolution provides the opportunity for public service transformation to improve how services are aligned around individuals, to remove the barriers to collaborative working and to bring together social and economic ambitions to support inclusive growth.

WMCA Devolution Deal 2017

”

Our Social Innovation Offer

There are many examples of good social innovation going on all over the region already, whether they carry the label or not. But there are a range of techniques and skills that support this approach. These include disciplines such as:

- Design thinking
- Systems thinking
- Asset mapping
- Appreciative inquiry
- Deliberative engagement
- Futures thinking

Working with partners such as The Young Foundation, Nesta and Koreo, we are building skills and capabilities within our directorate to be able to offer support to regional partners in a variety of ways. We are ready to combine our capabilities with the experience, expertise, responsibilities and commitment of our partners. And we are keen to bring a regional lens to complex challenges - understanding the complexities and interdependencies that cut across civic boundaries; sharing good practice between our constituent authorities.

To this end, we are developing a 'social innovation offer' – a range of opportunities and approaches that can be requested or

commissioned by our regional partners. The diagram below sets out some of the types of work where we believe we can add value to local initiatives.

As this document demonstrates, we are at our best when we:

- explore, inform and inspire;
- co-create and co-design;
- identify solutions and the routes to their delivery;
- collaborate in delivery – sourcing complementary funding or convened powers;
- assessing, measuring, improving, celebrating, and inspiring again.

Social innovation is a powerful approach that can deliver more bang for its bucks: tackling problems in ways that make best use of public money and leveraging new investment into the region.

We hope that this document serves as an invitation to work with us in building the fairer, greener, healthier region that all our citizens need and deserve.





Fairer

Introduction

A fairer West Midlands is one where all of our communities benefit from economic growth and have equal access to opportunities. As a directorate we are able to interweave all of these elements – health, wealth and our public services – to create fairness in society, through 3 key areas:



1

Shifting the collective focus from reactive problem-solving to prevention and **designing out inequalities** through co-creation. Our work with public services, and the voluntary, faith and community sectors sits in this space: designing out homelessness, collaboration with Police and fire services, and our ambition to become a trauma informed region.



2

Inclusive growth: creating a more **deliberate and socially purposeful model of economic growth** – measured not only by how fast or aggressive it is, but by how well it is shared across the whole population, and by its social and environmental outcomes; shifting strategy, policy and how we value investment.



3

Our inclusive communities work directly drives inclusive growth: **levelling up our communities** through: empowering young people; promoting opportunities to diversify the regions leadership; and the **Race Equalities Taskforce** which aims to ensure ethnic background is an asset not an obstacle to having **a fair start, a decent job and a flourishing life in the region.**

Inclusive Growth In Action

Embedding Inclusive Growth

Vision and values are vital to achieving inclusive growth, and the ways in which we make policy and decisions must match that. Notably, we have worked to embed inclusive growth ‘hooks’ in both the Single Commissioning Framework, which applies to housing investment, and the Single Assurance Framework, which applies to the wider investment programme. By applying the Inclusive Growth Framework, people writing investment cases are supported to push for transformational change.

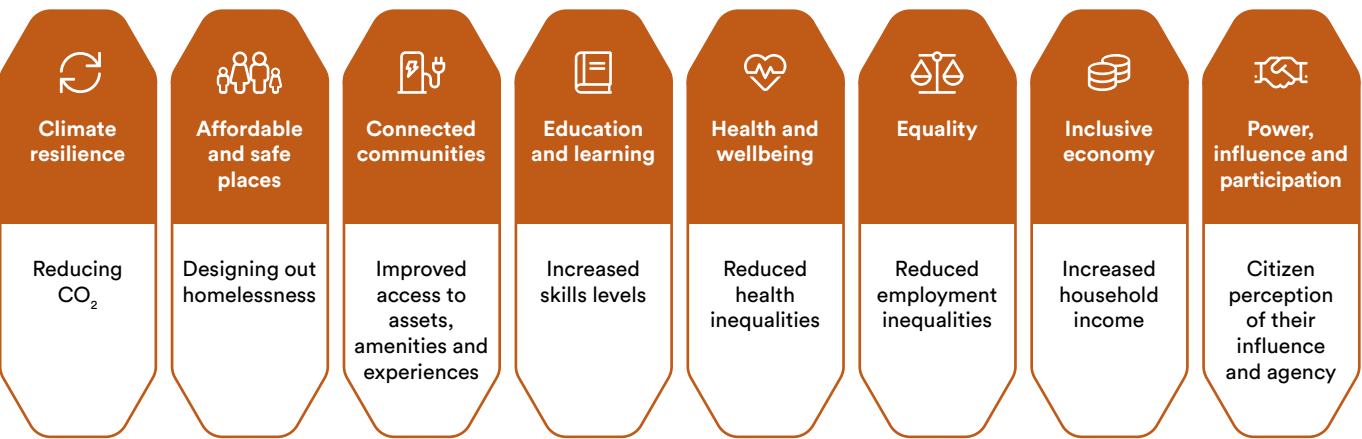
The Applied Inclusive Growth team is now creating a web tool which will allow anyone creating strategy, investment, service design and procurement to access the right tools and advice.

Inclusive Growth Business Partners

Embedding inclusive growth into process is important, but processes do not work without people. The Inclusive Growth Business Partners network addresses this, by investing into those people with a bespoke induction programme, followed by a peer and shared learning journey that applies inclusive growth principles to real projects, programmes and challenges. The network spans every part of the WMCA, and includes members from Black Country Consortium, GBSLEP, West Midlands Growth Company and the Sandwell Anchor Network.

The network has recently examined the inclusive growth opportunities in the Commonwealth Games Business and Tourism programme, and ran a workshop on housing investment.

The 8 Fundamentals of Inclusive Growth



Kingshurst

The Applied Inclusive Growth team has been supporting Solihull MBC and Solihull Community Housing to unlock inclusive growth from the Kingshurst redevelopment. This partnership has been built over two years of sustained collaboration, and has focused on supporting Solihull to capture its vision for inclusive growth, and to apply that vision to its plans in a structured way. This has been deployed to supported master planning, business case development and community involvement.

This partnership has exemplified ways of working that are critical to achieving inclusive growth in practice, and have produced the following outcomes:

- Defining inclusive growth aspirations in a 'Kingshurst Outcomes Framework', which is now being developed into a borough-wide tool.
- Increasing the percentage of affordable housing from 40% to 100%, with at least 80% for social rent.
- Raising energy efficiency standards for new homes.
- Unlocking investment from the CCG for the health facility.
- Co-designing a community involvement plan.



East Birmingham

Supporting Birmingham City Council with its East Birmingham programme, we've introduced regional tools and new concepts and capacity to support the local leadership realise their vision.

Firstly, the focus was on providing the right insight to create the East Birmingham Inclusive Growth Strategy. The Applied Inclusive Growth team created an inclusive growth data 'baseline' of the entire East Birmingham area, broken down by ward. This featured in the final East Birmingham Inclusive Growth Strategy, but has also since been used as part of programme initialisation

Subsequently we focused on bringing together the right ideas, partnerships and processes to bring the programme to life. The team has worked closely with the East Birmingham Programme Manager to redesign the governance of the East Birmingham Board. By unlocking collaboration, notably through the new 'Rapid Policy Unit', this draws in officials from across the Council and its partners to enable responsive, collaborative policy-making.

Sandwell

Community wealth-building is a key mechanism of Sandwell's Inclusive Economy Deal, and the Applied Inclusive Growth team was keen to support the council in establishing its own anchor network, to ensure more commissioning and procurement could be invested locally in the six towns and their businesses.

A key element of the solution was recruiting extra, committed, capacity to bring the anchor network together. Sandwell MBC had already accessed funding to create an Anchor Network Coordinator post, and WMCA worked with them, CLES and Black Country Chamber of Commerce to design the post, advertise it, recruit and design the induction.

The Anchor Network Coordinator is now in post, and they have been inducted as a new Inclusive Growth Business Partner, enabling them to develop their knowledge and bring key challenges to a collaborative group of people committed to delivering inclusive growth in practice.





WMCA Homelessness Taskforce

Directly providing and delivering solutions to complex issues isn't always the role of the Combined Authority. In line with our devolution deals, the PSR directorate has encouraged collaboration to ensure greater effect.

A great example of this is the Homelessness Taskforce. Established in 2017, its aim is to design out homelessness: through its collaborative model – across the region, sectors and disciplines – tackling the troubled systems that contribute to homelessness and replacing them with preventative approaches.

Membership of the taskforce includes all seven constituent local authorities, representation from non-constituent local authorities, key public sector agencies, voluntary, private and charitable organisations; working together to prevent and relieve homelessness. It uses its collective resources to tackle homelessness, and recognises that homelessness can occur in many ways, including rough sleeping, sofa surfing, night-shelters, B&B, temporary accommodation, hostels and squatting.



Impact

**476
people**

accommodated and
supported through
Housing First

- 1211 individuals supported through WMCA Rough Sleeping Initiative programme – 14 organisations, 21 projects
- Change into Action alternative giving scheme rolled out in 6 local authority areas, supporting circa 500 individuals to move away from rough sleeping
- IAG resources for veterans, faith and community organisations, and businesses

Funding Successes

£9.6m

Housing First Pilot

- £1.2m Rough Sleeping Initiative funding
- 3 bids to Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme totalling £5.6m
- Over £177,000 raised by local businesses and citizens for Change into Action
- £91,000 Homeless Veterans funding
- £55,000 from the West Midlands Housing Officers Group to undertake research on the Housing first pilot and families in temporary accommodation - to capture learning and inform our approach going forwards

Policy Successes

**New regional
definition
of affordable
accommodation
linked to income**

- Removal of the freeze on Local Housing Allowances
- Free travel passes to enable travel to appointments for individuals in crisis
- Commitment to Collaborate framework with key public and private partners

Social Economy Growth Strategy

WMCA commissioned a consortium of local social enterprises to translate the recommendations from the Social Economy Taskforce into a practical work programme. This programme comprises four elements, and will be delivered by a virtual team which includes local authorities, LEPs, universities, funders and the social economy:

- **Developing social economy clusters:** WMCA and other funders will invest into four community organisations acting as ‘anchors’, over a 3-year period. In return, these organisations will create and deliver a plan to **strengthen the social economy** in those areas.
- **West Midlands Social Economy Development Fund:** WMCA will commission a specification for an investment fund that incorporates a principle of co-design between WMCA, local authorities, LEPs and the social economy. The extent of the fund will be determined through partnership.
- **Social economy growth and accelerator programme:** a learning programme based on peer group sessions and action learning, this will support both the leadership of social economy organisations and their boards.
- **Using WMCA regional investment programmes for social economy growth:** this will focus on **unlocking value** from housebuilding, retrofit and circular economy investments in the first instance – all areas in which the social economy has strength.

Social Economy Taskforce & Design
Charter event, January 2020



Community Recovery

In May 2020, the directorate convened a **citizens' panel** to tell us what the region needed to prioritise in its community recovery from Covid 19. Following a deliberative process, the panel identified 6 priorities:

- Living Safely with Coronavirus;
- Accessing Healthcare and Improving Physical Health;
- Mental Health Support and Awareness;
- Education and Young People; Jobs and Training;
- Local Businesses and High Streets

along with 4 cross cutting themes: Extra Help to the Most Affected; Environmental focus; Innovation and Creativity; and Transparency and Citizen Voice.

Working with partners, we were able to synthesise activity already commenced or planned, with the citizen's panel priorities and principles. In **levelling up the West Midlands** we highlighted

- 41 examples of good practice from across the region
- 27 shared ambitions for recovery
- 29 asks of government
- 14 areas of future collaboration
- Over £2.2bn of asks of government

Our **Community Recovery Innovation Challenge** recognised the creativity and innovation arising in response to the pandemic. Targeting voluntary and community sector organisations, as well as entrepreneurs and businesses, we received 136 applications for support across diverse themes. As well as providing a business development masterclass, we are working with 3 winners, each receiving £15,000 worth of support, coaching and advice, and 20 runners-up who received £500 each.

Our 'covid keeps' report captures learning from the pandemic, as well as reflecting on the enormity of the challenge. It also provides clear recommendations on how to harness and embed **Covid Keeps** to refocus collective service delivery and investment on the outcomes that matter most to local people.

Our work with the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner

There is a strong collaborative relationship between the OPCC and the WMCA.

Together we have:

- along with partners such as local authorities, public health and West Midlands Police, been an active member in the establishment of the Violence Reduction Unit – supporting the PCC, WMCA has shown a genuine commitment to working with partners across the region to tackle violence
- codesigned and delivered internationally recognised and unique research into the impact of abuse, loss, trauma, attachment and resilience in children in the West Midlands;
- built up active partnership working across or respective responsibilities, such as addressing mental health needs, criminal justice, homelessness, and reducing violence;
- worked together to support development of proposals for better provision for children in custody;
- further developed our partnerships that make public transport safer and improve road travel;
- agreed innovative transport related data-sharing agreements;
- collaborated to support police recruitment;

- responded to the government's devolution agenda;
- developed our preparedness to offer civic leadership and an appropriate response in the recovery phase for a major incident.



Signing the Violence Reduction Unit declaration

In recognition of that addressing the wider social determinants of violence, and offending, extends beyond policing and the criminal justice system, The Mayor, the WMCA and the PCC have developed a plan for their terms in office to build on this strong foundation, focusing on complex challenges by jointly tackling the root causes of crime and violence.

This will cover:

- the ongoing development of the Violence Reduction Unit, where the WMCA will continue to support the work of the unit at a strategic level, leading the sport partnership on behalf of the unit and leading the regions Trauma Informed Coalition including contributing to leadership on preventing school exclusions.
- working together to further address mental health needs, with the OPCC being a member of the Mental Health Commission;
- working together to further address racial inequalities, and disproportionality, with the OPCC feeding into the Race Equalities Taskforce;
- identifying and addressing the role policing and criminal justice can play in reducing homelessness via the Homelessness Taskforce;
- continued work to promote and implement the recommendations arising from the Punishing Abuse report
- safer public transport, particularly addressing the risks to women and girls;
- improved road travel, with fewer fatalities, better network resilience, a transition to greener travel and denying roads to criminal use;
- continued activity in support of police recruitment
- securing social value from the purchase of goods and services by WMCA and the OPCC;
- supporting activity to improve the provision of custody for children.
- Identifying opportunities to transfer power from Whitehall to the region.

Driving Digital Inclusion

WM5G

The PSR directorate led the bid to government for the WMCA to become their preferred partner for the implementation of their Urban Connected Communities to test 5G across a broad urban area and as key underpinning infrastructure for vital service transformation. Its aims were simple: increase the rate of adoption and deployment of new technologies; act as a large-scale prototype for 5G deployment and its associated market structures and business models; enable digital inclusion and accelerate the move towards inclusive digital services.

The resulting multi-million pound investment led to the creation of WM5G and its 'barrier-busting' programme of innovation, and its staggering outcomes:

- The West Midlands has the best 5G coverage in the UK and the ability to transform systems;
- Transport innovations have the potential to reduce pollution by at least 2.5% and develop outcomes ranging from infrastructure monitoring and tram safety to support for the partially sighted;
- In health, 5G has already accelerated cancer diagnoses, and through remote diagnostics can breakdown healthcare accessibility inequalities;
- While in the world of work, 5G has already proven its potential to boost productivity by 3-5%, leading to 11000 new, skilled, jobs.

Crucially, WM5G is working closely with all seven of the constituent authorities, along with the WMCA, mobile operators, and government to help make 5G upgrades simpler and quicker – boosting connectivity and attracting new investment to those areas.

Coalition on Digital Inclusion

The Coalition is a voluntary association of over 30 different organisations across the West Midlands. Sharing good practice, developing collaborative activities, and speaking with a single voice to government and other key stakeholders, the group enables action at a regional scale, to tackle digital exclusion.

All activity of the Coalition contributes to the five 'missions' of the West Midlands' Digital Roadmap. Meeting monthly, the Coalition is able to share progress, and has established working groups around core areas of concern.



Impact

**WM Digital
Inclusion Charter**
building local
commitment with
regional partners

- We have mapped where people who are digitally excluded are likely to live and identified areas where there is little or no support available to them
- We have established a Data Poverty & Devices Working Group to share good practice

Funding Successes

**Secured
£25M**
to trial national
5G test-bed

- Secured 6-month secondment from Good Things Foundation which drove initial activities
- Developed Great Digital Catch-up funding proposal for £8m fund to be secured from government and private sector sources

Policy Focus

Building
confidence and
skills for individuals
to take first steps
online

- Provided access to devices and affordable data including a right to 'universal basic data'
- Supported the voluntary and community sector to provide accessible and inclusive support



Inclusive Communities

Equalities, diversity and inclusion and community engagement need to be at the heart of all the WMCA does if we are to realise our vision of a ‘more prosperous and better connected West Midlands that is fairer, greener and healthier.’ The Inclusive Communities Portfolio helps to make this happen by working across the WMCA to both challenge and enable the organisation to plan, decide and deliver in a more inclusive way.

Young Combined Authority

Around one third of people living in the West Midlands are aged under 25 years when, nationally, only 15% of councillors are aged below 45. The Young Combined Authority (YCA) was launched in 2019 to make sure the voices of young people are heard in regional decision-making. It brings together a diverse group of under-25's to guide and challenge the WMCA as it makes decisions about the future of the region – a future that will directly affect the younger generation.

The YCA has helped to strengthen WMCA policy development by improving our understanding of what our young population care about and need. Specific accomplishments include:

- Developed and published a YCA Vision report.
- Influenced 7 reports to the WMCA Board during 2020/21.
- Helped to inform the region's Covid-19 community recovery priorities.
- Shaped and supported the region's youth Covid-19 survey.
- Independently hosted a youth hustings for the mayoral election.
- Codesigned and launched a YCA Community for wider engagement.

Race Equalities Taskforce

Endorsed by the WMCA Board in July 2021, the Race Equalities Taskforce is a new, necessary and bold initiative to improve equality of opportunity and ensure that all communities are able to share in the region's success. The Taskforce will aim to make sure that in the West Midlands your ethnic background is an asset not an obstacle in having a fair start, a decent job and a flourishing life.

Key features include:

- Focus on race - the extent different ethnic groups experience different outcomes.
- Concentration on policy areas the WMCA has roles in delivering, enabling and influencing.
- Research-led, the Taskforce will commission an independent baseline report.
- Action-oriented, the Taskforce will be geared to deliver tangible change.
- Genuine accountability - led by an independent Chair and guided by an elected Members Advisory Group.
- Cross-sector membership and reach, mobilising the right people at the right time.

- Empowered and accountable for shaping and delivering its goals.
- Adds value to the region, supporting rather than duplicating existing work.
- Builds trust and credibility through a programme of community engagement.

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The West Midlands is one of the most diverse regions in the country. However structural inequalities create conflict and division in our society. We need to better understand the root causes of racial disadvantage and the adverse impact it has on our young people and underrepresented communities.

YCA Black Lives Matter Letter to WMCA Board - July 2020

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Leadership Commission

The West Midlands Leadership Commission investigated the significant ‘diversity gap’ between the makeup of the region’s population and that of our wider leadership. In 2020, two years after the Commission’s recommendations report and in light of the urgent and persistent inequalities highlighted by the coronavirus pandemic and Black Lives Matter, the WMCA Board endorsed a new phase of Leadership Commission activity.

The Leadership Commission is now focused on taking tangible action to improve leadership and workplace diversity across the West Midlands, including:

- Equipping people from underrepresented backgrounds to apply for board positions.
- Working with businesses to trial ways to improve inclusion in the workplace.
- A Health of the Region commitment to advance mobility in the health and care sector.

Other Inclusive Communities activities:

- Supported the ‘West Midlands Citizens Panel’ on Community Recovery to ensure the project had the widest, most inclusive and representative reach. Now working to ensure that citizen voice is an integral part of WMCA policy development.
- Supported the WMCA to become the first organisation in the UK to be awarded the RACE Equality Code kitemark. Now implementing our action plan for advancing race equality in our organisations workforce and leadership.
- Championed a series of Equality Impact Assessments across the WMCA’s key delivery areas and associated activities to promote equalities and inclusion. Now overseeing the development and delivery of the WMCA Equality Scheme.



Some examples of working with our partners to build a fairer, greener, healthier region.

Wolverhampton

- Social prescribing EOI - Bilston East & North; Bushbury S and Low Hill.
- Funding for improved cycling/walking Wednesfield Road.
- 2 organisations signed up to IncludeMeWM (WLV Sport, Wolves Foundation).
- 432 individuals supported through Thrive Into Work – 139 into employment

Walsall

- 89 individuals supported through Thrive Into Work – 18 into employment
- Social prescribing EOI – Town Centre, Birchill, Darlaston, Willenhall.
- £15k for Willenhall Park.
- Advice provided on parks accessibility.
- 2 organisations signed up to IncludeMeWM.

Sandwell

- Anchor Network Coordinator in place.
- Smethwick social economy cluster.
- Integrated Growth support for Friars Park.
- Community Recovery lead on health & physical activity.
- £15k for Gospel Oak public space pilot.
- 14 organisations signed up to IncludeMeWM.
- Funding for improved cycling/walking – A4123.
- Supporting GreenSCIES heat networks project.

Dudley

- Support to Dudley St Thomas Quarter social enterprise cluster.
- 815 individuals supported through Thrive Into Work – 218 into employment.
- Funding for improved cycling/walking – St Thomas, Brookmoor, Pensnett.
- Funding for improved cycling/walking – A4123.
- 3 organisations signed up to IncludeMeWM(Mind, Muscle Training, Function Fitness)



Birmingham

- Provided baseline and governance support to East Birmingham Inclusive Growth plans.
- Supported Birmingham Living Wage application.
- Multiple & complex needs pathfinder established in Kings Norton.
- £55k funding for prescribing walking and cycling in Erdington, Bordesley Green improving the health of over 50 people with health conditions.
- Social prescribing EOI – City Centre to Hospital.
- 20 organisations signed up to IncludeMeWM.
- 12 community sport organisations accessed emergency digital training.
- 751 individuals supported through Thrive Into Work – 126 into employment
- Supported the establishment of the Centre for the Decarbonisation of Heat, and Tyseley Energy Park Innovation Centre

Black Country

- 2298 individuals supported, with 599 into work through Thrive Into Work
- £70k Active Travel funding for social prescribing
- £150k Sport England funding secured for Black Country Moving
- £30k seed-funding for ‘Loving the Black Country ‘app’
- Support to Repowering the Black Country programme

Solihull

- Inclusive Growth Outcomes Framework and Kingshurst redevelopment supported.
- Advice to Think Active’s Tackling Inequalities Fund.
- Support to borough-wide EOI for social prescribing.
- 6 organisations signed up to IncludeMeWM.
- Funding for improved cycling/walking – Blossomfields & Knowle.
- Co-funded GoodGym Solihull – 62 people active, 635 good deeds.

Coventry

- Co-funded GoodGym Coventry – 135 people active with over 1000 good deeds.
- 8 organisations signed up to IncludeMeWM.
- £15k secured for new public space activity led by Positive Youth Foundation.
- Social prescribing EOI for Spon End, Bell Green, Foleshill.
- Co-funded ‘leadership expertise’ training
- £3M secured for RESO project

A man in a grey hoodie and light-colored trousers is riding a bicycle towards the camera on a paved path. The path is surrounded by lush green trees and foliage. In the foreground, the back of a person's head is visible, looking towards the cyclist. The word "Greener" is written in large white letters on the left side of the image.

Greener

Introduction

Climate change will affect not only the environment around us, but the health of our citizens and, through resultant economic impacts, their opportunities for a prosperous and equitable future. How we respond to that climate challenge requires building resilience across all communities in the West Midlands in a holistic way to reduce climate change but also to deliver significant co-benefits for the people that live here.

Embedding the Combined Authority's environment and energy work within the Public Service Reform and Inclusive Growth directorate ensures that integration, and makes best use of the Combined Authority's wider strengths:

- The ability to take an at-scale perspective – energy infrastructure, natural environment and business interactions, such as the circular economy, rarely take account of authority boundaries and can generate greater benefits across a wider geography;
- Applying the levers of devolved funding and powers in an integrated way to tackle complex, cross-cutting challenges;
- Coalescing on opportunities to present a unified voice to government on powers and resources to tackle climate change.

This collaborative approach, within the team, across the Combined Authority and with a wide range of partners, including our constituent local authorities, has manifested itself in ground-breaking work:

- The development of our WM2041 vision and a comprehensive Five Year Plan that ensures we stay **on track to meet that target** and puts the building blocks in place for subsequent phases up to 2041.
- Our Home of the Green Industrial Revolution campaign, that capitalises on **our economic and industrial strengths**, building confidence within the region and among potential investors.
- Leading discussions with central government on the role of regional and local authorities in **accelerating UK net zero targets**, and providing the practical routes for delivery, such as the unrivalled Energy Capital and local energy systems initiative.
- The launch of plans for the natural environment and the circular economy, focusing on the increased impact we can have by working together for **a fairer, greener and healthier future**.

With the commitment shown by the Combined Authority through its recent budget approval, we are growing the team to make these ambitions and plans a reality.

Net Zero Five Year Plan

Our Five Year Plan, launched in 2021, provides a comprehensive overview of what the region needs to do over the next five years to be on track for delivering our net zero target by 2041. Building on the consultation process from the original #WM2041 strategy, the Plan breaks down the longer-term targets into measurable actions and provides the information base for subsequent five year plans, up to 2041.

There are 15 areas of priority activity within the plan:

Impact area	Accelerated targets for 2026
Domestic	
● Energy efficiency	294,000 homes
● Heating retrofit	292,000 homes
● Solar PV	415 MWp
<hr/>	
Commercial	
● Energy efficiency	37,000 buildings
● Heating retrofit	18,400 buildings
● Solar PV	96MWp
<hr/>	
Transport	
● Avoiding carbon-based use	9% of people telecommuting; 625% reduction in trips
● Improve transport systems	100% electrification (by 2030)
● Modal shift	Reduce to only 59% trips made by car
<hr/>	
Natural Environment	
● Renewables	30MW wind power; 274 MWp solar
● Nature	13% forest cover (20% for peri-urban)
<hr/>	

#WM2041 – goals and principles

The original WM2041 plan (published in January 2020) suggested that becoming zero carbon needed to take account of wider social, economic and environmental principles. These are:





Green Jobs

The Plan also describes the opportunities for the region that will come from the delivery of net zero including potentially 21,000 jobs by 20206, and 92,000 by 2041.

283,000 jobs will also be affected:

- 140,000 jobs need to re-skill as result of transition (11.1%)
- 43,500 jobs are aligned to net zero transition (11.5%)

Finance

To achieve the plan's goals, we will need significant investment from a combination of sources, some of which will have a commercial return, and must ensure we target the most impactful investment. In total, the Five Year Plan has been costed at £4.3bn, and a range of funding and investment models will be explored to ensure delivery.

However, finance is not the only answer to achieving net zero, and the Five Year Plan also highlights the 'enabling' actions necessary to support delivery – including citizen engagement, citizen behaviour change and working with business in their transition.

Home of the Green Industrial Revolution

The West Midlands was the birthplace of the first industrial revolution, which powered global growth touching every part of our lives. But it also led to major global challenges as we began to over-exploit the earth's scarce and precious resources.

Now, the West Midlands, as the 'home of the green industrial revolution', is providing the solutions that will both protect and restore the planet. The PSR directorate is coordinating the strengths of the low carbon sector to play a vital role in tackling climate change.

Maximising the following sector strengths will ensure that we not only protect our planet but also deliver **a fair transition where nobody is left behind:**

Future Mobility - providing the transport manufacturing solutions that will power new modes of transport.

Energy Systems - establishing smarter management and distribution of vital infrastructure systems.

Storage & Resource Management - innovating solutions that will maximise energy storage and optimise our scarce resources.



97,000 people currently employed in the low carbon and environmental goods sector



Low carbon and environmental goods – the fastest growing sector in WM (**7% growth in 2019-20**) – **worth £12bn to the regional economy with 5100 companies**



All 6 of the region's higher education institutions have **cutting edge research and innovation in low carbon solutions**

Environment

Circular Economy Routemap

A linear economy is extractive, inefficient, and wasteful. By contrast a circular economy encourages repair, reuse, and regeneration of the natural environment. As resource streams are made more efficient, waste streams are redirected and reused, creating a closed-loop, zero waste system. Adopting a circular economy approach, limits our demands on energy intensive natural resources and raw materials, supporting our zero carbon ambitions.

To help kickstart the West Midlands' transition to a circular economy, the WMCA has created a Circular Economy Routemap, developed in collaboration with regional stakeholders, world leading examples of best practise, and academic experts in circularity and manufacturing processes.

The routemap takes a focused approach to the region's economy, encouraging circularity by initially focusing on three key sectors:

- **Circular manufacturing** – as the sector with the largest carbon footprint of those analysed.
- **Circular construction** – as the largest consumer of non-renewable materials, and largest producer of waste, in the region.
- **Circular food** – as the region is home to international best practise in food processes, as well as a significant network of social groups.

Repowering the Black Country and industrial decarbonisation

In supporting the Repowering the Black Country, one of seven industrial cluster decarbonisation projects funded by BEIS and UKRI, more than 3000 energy-intensive manufacturing businesses will strive to become more resource efficient.

The project provides cost-efficient energy infrastructure across the Black Country; helping companies benefit from new supply chain opportunities in the circular economy; and supporting resource efficiency initiatives in manufacturing operations.

As well as presenting the opportunity to significantly reduce the region's carbon emissions, the circular economy also offers an excellent opportunity to create lasting value for communities in the West Midlands. Research has shown that introducing more circularity to our economy will increase the average household income by £2,500 by 2030, as well as creating a jobs lift of 15%.

WM Net Zero Business Pledge

Delivering on the aim of the Five Year Plan to engage more strongly with business, the West Midlands Net Zero Business Pledge was launched in March 2021 - building vital collaboration with the private sector and other organisations, around our net zero work.

The aim of the pledge is to:

- Encourage every business in the region to get involved in tackling climate change and benefit from the opportunities that the net zero transition brings.
- Signpost to the region's networks and useful resources relating to net zero for all sectors and business types.
- Celebrate business efforts and encourage collaboration in tackling climate change.

34 businesses have currently signed the Net Zero Business Pledge, ranging from SMEs to businesses with an international reach.



Net Zero Leadership

Capitalising on the Combined Authority's position with government and the extensive work done by the directorate around net zero, the Five Year Plan, and pioneering energy systems, the region was invited to co-host the international Net Zero Leaders Summit in July 2021. The event, delivered by the Combined Authority and its colleagues in UK100 – the UK's only net zero network for local leaders – included representation from central government ministers, authorities across the UK and internationally, research and academia, and industry.

As the first of its kind, it demonstrated the power that regional, city and local authorities have in delivering net zero ambitions and registered this strongly with central government colleagues. It also established the West Midlands as a key contributor to the national drive towards net zero and at the forefront of the collaborative models required to tackle climate change.

The summit was part of the West Midlands build-up to, and legacy from, COP26: ensuring that the region - the 'home of the green industrial revolution' - plays a full part in the national and global Race to Zero.



Natural Environment Plan

We have launched our first Natural Environment Plan, with a vision of a West Midlands where everybody can enjoy the benefits of the natural environment and that, through careful planning and collaboration, we protect, restore and enhance the region's natural environment to address both the climate and ecological emergencies.

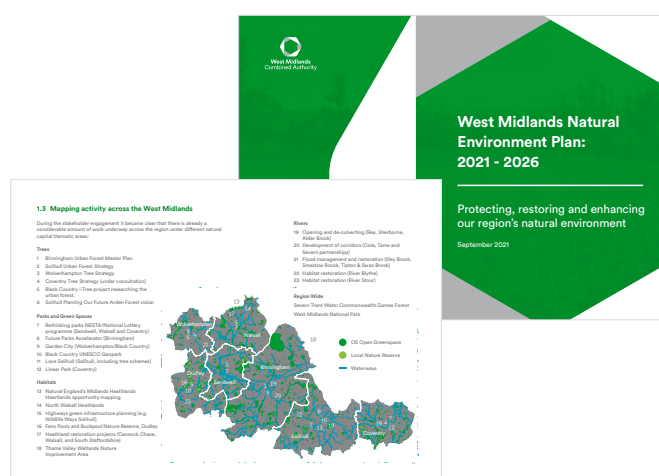
Our Plan's aims:

- Everybody can access high quality green space within a 300m walk of their home.
- Forestry cover should be increased from approximately 1.5% today to 13%, aligning as much as possible with the long-term aims for England (this equates to planting an additional 5.7m trees by 2026 and 19m by 2041).
- Creation or restoration of 6 wildlife corridors along the Rivers Cole, Rea, Sherbourne, Stour and Blythe, and HS2 development in line with our key stakeholders' priorities. We will also support work on the region's canals as important wildlife corridors.
- All rivers to be restored to good condition by 2030, targeting 5 by 2025.
- Support the creation of 200 jobs in natural capital by 2026 (and 700 by 2041), in line with the evidence in the Five Year Plan.

The Plan covers four priority areas:

- 1 Widening access to green and blue spaces** for all communities across the West Midlands, initially focusing on places where there is a deficit of access.
- 2 Increasing tree and hedgerow planting**, but with an emphasis on ‘right tree, right place’, to support climate mitigation and adaptation.
- 3 Promoting wildlife corridors** and working with natural corridors (both green and blue) as well as those linked to infrastructure projects, e.g. along cycle-ways.
- 4 Recognising the importance of the enablers of change** and supporting activity around financing and behaviour change that will enable the roll out, impact and scalability of the initiatives in this plan.

We will work with local authorities and regional stakeholders to deliver the plan.



The Virtual Forest

The aim of the Virtual Forest is to provide an online platform that brings together tree planting organisations across the region to champion and support ambitious plans for tree planting as part of the net zero transition and broader natural environment outcomes.

WMCA launched the Virtual Forest website in November 2020 and a wide range of regional stakeholders have joined us as partners. Although Covid-19 restrictions have postponed some tree planting opportunities, over 18,000 trees have already been planted through the site.

We're also working with Severn Trent Water as part of the Commonwealth Forest initiative to identify suitable locations for 2022 acres of legacy woodland and 72 miniature forests.

Community Green Grants Programme

Research undertaken by the WMCA with the New Economics Foundation revealed poor access to green space in some parts of the West Midlands. This supported data from Fields in Trust (2020 Green Space Index) which showed that whilst the national average of accessible green space per person was 32.94 square metres, in the West Midlands there were massive disparities: from as much as 151 sq m per person in some areas, to as little as 16 sq m in others.

Our Community Green Grants programme seeks to address this imbalance by providing grants to regional organisations to support Natural Environment Plan outcomes on the ground. The programme, which is due to launch in Autumn 2021 following engagement with regional partners, will last for two years, and is funded to the tune of £750,000 as part of the WMCA's Five Year Plan budget.

Net Zero Behaviour Change

At a national level, the UK's Climate Change Committee has highlighted the importance of behaviour change in achieving national net zero ambitions, and a behaviour change programme is a key plank of our Five Year Plan here in the West Midlands

In March 2021, we commissioned the internationally recognised Behavioural Insights Team to help develop our behaviour change programme, and incorporating our work in the build-up to Birmingham hosting the Commonwealth Games.

We have brought 54 regional stakeholders together over 3 workshops to support the prioritisation of these campaigns and ensure regional buy-in. Nearly 2,000 people across the region have also been engaged in activity to understand the best messaging and communication tools for us to use in encouraging behaviour change.

The initial three campaigns we will be running are:

- Building retrofit support among homeowners with disposable income.
- Sustainable food and diet – plant-based and healthy eating with a link to Commonwealth Games activity.
- Urban greening and engaging people in home and street scale initiatives with the opportunity to link to our Community Green Grants.



Five Year Plan
for practical delivery of
WM2041 targets

Circular Economy
Taskforce & Routemap
for reducing resource
consumption

Region's first
Natural Environment
Plan

Air Quality

The forthcoming Environment Bill will introduce new standards for air quality. Local authorities are already doing a considerable amount of work on NOx emissions, but the Bill is likely to require tightened standards around particulates. The Local Transport Plan will address air quality and transport, but reducing particulates will also include a consideration of solid fuel burning in domestic properties, emissions from industry and reducing emissions from construction sites. Tackling these challenges may benefit from a regional focus as emissions don't recognise civic boundaries, with impacts being felt further from the source than with NOx emissions. We are working with the University of Birmingham's WM-Air project and local authorities to develop an options paper exploring the role the CA could have in addressing air quality impacts.



Energy

Energy Capital

Launched by the Mayor to maximise the Combined Authority's political leadership, Energy Capital is the West Midlands' smart energy innovation partnership exploring new models of regional energy governance and delivery.

With aims to support net zero ambitions and make the West Midlands one of the most attractive locations to develop and deliver innovative clean energy systems, the partnership, empowered by the WMCA, combines energy infrastructure providers, ambitious local authorities, world-leading academic expertise and leading businesses and energy entrepreneurs.

Energy Capital operates as a specialist, independent, first point of contact for government, energy companies, Distribution Network Operators, regulators, funders and investors on energy and decarbonisation across the West Midlands, and is responsible for delivering the Regional Energy Strategy and the energy aspects of the WM2041 5 year action plan.

Retrofit

The UK has some of the least energy efficiency housing in Europe and the scale of domestic retrofit in the West Midlands is vast. Our Five Year Plan indicates that the net zero benefits are equally significant, setting a regional target of delivering energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures into 280,000 homes by 2026, and up to 1.1million homes by 2041.

SMART Hub

With funding from the WMCA, Energy Capital has established the 'SMART Hub' to develop a Sustainable Market for Affordable Retrofit Technologies in the West Midlands. Supporting supply chain growth and skills investment to tackle the retrofit challenge, the Hub will also support local authorities across the region to access a variety of funding sources around retrofit goals.

Local Authority Delivery funding

Support to local authorities in tackling fuel poverty and retrofit scale-up, led to initial funding of £3m coming into the region, and a commitment from the WMCA Board to deliver £3.3 million retrofit and energy activity as part of the #WM2041 Climate Change Five-Year Delivery Plan.

Working closely with the Midlands Energy Hub (BEIS), Energy Capital has since helped local authorities in the West Midlands secure £32m of LAD2 funding for domestic retrofit in low income, low energy performance homes, and provided direct support and advice to 30 local authorities and 6 LEPs.

This engagement will continue while the team also supports local authorities access Sustainable Warmth (LAD3 and HUG1) and Social Housing Decarbonisation Funding – maximising the convening power of the Combined Authority to develop a consortium to target SHDF Waves 1 and 2 funding, and investing additional funds to improve stock data to underpin applications.

Net Zero Neighbourhoods

The Net Zero Neighbourhood Demonstrator programme has been established by the West Midlands Combined Authority as one part of its strategy to cut regional carbon emissions to net zero by 2041. To date, initiatives designed to encourage individual households to take up deep retrofit and cleaner heating technologies have not generated change at a scale or pace necessary to shift the dial.

A different approach is needed.

The programme will demonstrate:

- Low carbon energy communities that offer residents an attractive, sustainable place to live, work and play.
- Replicable blended finance models that generate long-term returns through energy savings and wider socio-economic benefits.
- Scalable approaches to delivery which stimulate local supply chains, generate economies of scale, and unlock local employment opportunities.
- Tailored approaches to community engagement which address householder concerns by co-designing a range of improvements and benefits for households and communities across tenure types.

Working with each neighbourhood in turn, we will co-invest in retrofit and low carbon heating measures on a street-by-street or small area basis while also enabling other wider measures to make the neighbourhood a more sustainable place to live.



Smart Local Energy Systems Projects

The West Midlands is a leading region in developing new smart local energy systems, attracting significant funding from central government attracting £3M from central government.

Rugeley

Zero Carbon Rugeley (ZCR) aims to produce an innovative design for a town-wide Smart Local Energy System (SLES) which will take full advantage of the latest renewable energy technologies and smart control systems. Zero Carbon Rugeley has embedded within the project “user-centric design” to ensure the wants and needs of the community are addressed, providing a bespoke energy system to boost the local economy and benefit social integration.

TEP

Tyseley Energy Park (TEP) is a multi-disciplinary site home to the Birmingham Energy Innovation Centre (research and innovation), as well as an operating hydrogen refuelling site. TEP also have additional office, lab and industrial space which is available for use by businesses focusing on low carbon transport, heat, and power technologies

Coventry RESO

The Coventry RESO project has explored the advantages of a regional energy system operating from a place-based approach, as opposed to a national approach. RESO has produced a wealth of information that is further informing the development and implementation of the Coventry Smart Local Energy System to be the most efficient of its kind.

The project has received high praise from Innovate UK:

“

The panel have assessed the stage gate as being a Category 1 PASS. This is the first Category 1 Pass that has been awarded to any project throughout the full duration of the PFER programme. It reflects the professionalism with which you have all been delivering the project, the standard of the outputs produced across all the work packages, and the leadership that RESO has shown across the portfolio of projects (as well as externally with industry). Please extend our thanks to all the team that have contributed to your achievements.

UK Research & Innovation

”

Net Zero Pathfinder

Building on our energy systems work, we have positioned the West Midlands as a ‘net zero pathfinder’ on energy. Working with government and other partners, we will adopt new approaches to energy system management, and its integration with wider infrastructure investment.

Currently, a lack of planning in energy infrastructure, coordination and innovation, constrains delivery of net zero and levelling-up ambitions. Our approach will seek to redress this by:

- Undertaking Local Area Energy Planning through a Net Zero Infrastructure Delivery Board;
- Improving market conditions by adopting an investment coordination role with the energy regulator and providers;
- Scaling and expanding our Energy Innovation Zones.

IZEV Strategy

We’ve developed the Infrastructure for Zero Emission Vehicles (IZEV) strategy recognising that successful transition to zero emissions vehicles must be underpinned by a coordinated approach across both transport and industry.

Early insights from consultation on the strategy with industry stakeholders on the provision of electrical and alternative fuel infrastructure, and the role of the public sector, indicate strong support for a leadership role by the public sector in bringing forward the infrastructure to enable this transition. Through this work, several risks were also identified, including guaranteeing sufficient grid capacity, and the potential for companies to “land-bank” key locations identified to house this infrastructure.

Industry and other partner input will be incorporated into a final version of the strategy to inform the regional approach to this key infrastructure and associated investment opportunities.

Secured £3M
initial, external, funding
for housing retrofit.

Supported winning
£32M under Local
Authority Delivery
(LAD2) funding

Secured £3M
for pioneering local
energy system
initiative

A photograph of a park setting. In the foreground, the handlebars and frames of several bicycles are visible, including a red one and a blue one. In the background, several people are walking or standing on a path, some wearing teal shirts. The scene is outdoors with trees and greenery in the background.

Healthier

Introduction

WMCA's role in the health and care landscape has been led primarily by the work of the Wellbeing and Prevention team of the PSR Directorate. The team has mainly focused on delivering grant funded programmes within the areas of physical activity and mental health. This has changed, however, since the Covid-19 pandemic and the publication of the Health of the Region Report, which has given the Combined Authority a greater role in working with health-system partners particularly around the report's second challenge: 'reducing health inequalities through tackling the wider determinants of health'. With Public Health England recognising that these wider determinants have a greater influence on health than health care, behaviours or genetics, it is right that they are the focus of our work.

Health and wealth are two sides of the same coin: the impact of socioeconomic deprivation on health has long been recognised, but equally prosperity cannot be achieved without good health. Recent data from the Health Foundation shows that 32% of people in the lowest income category (poorest) report less than good health. In the fifth decile of income distribution this figure is 25% and at the top decile of income distribution (richest) the figure is 11%.

Whilst the WMCA doesn't have any devolved or statutory responsibilities for health, combining this with its role around the economy, skills, transport and housing, enables a whole system and shared vision approach to drive significant progress. Aligning these statutory and non-statutory functions has allowed the Combined Authority to play a more innovative, as well as strategic, role than might otherwise have been possible.

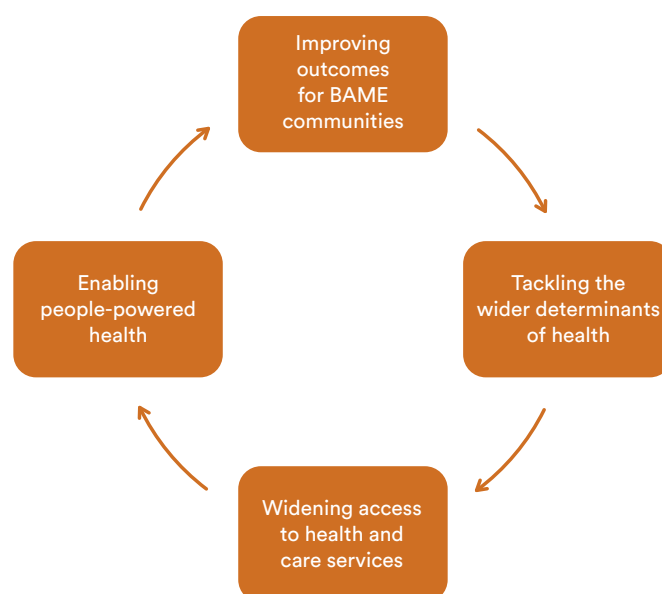


Health of the Region Report

The Health of the Region report presented a comprehensive analysis of the health of the West Midlands population. In particular, it highlighted national and regional evidence of the impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic which showed that long-standing inequalities in physical and mental health had widened as a consequence of the pandemic; both through direct effects of the virus, and through indirect effects of the control measures taken – and particularly among our ethnic minority and vulnerable groups.

In the report, 4 key challenges arising from this work were identified and as such:

- We must begin with the urgent task of **improving outcomes for ethnic minorities and vulnerable groups**. Targeted and immediate action to tackle racism is an urgent and immediate priority.
- But lasting change will only happen when we take a systemic approach to **tackling the wider determinants of health** and dealing with the structural inequalities we find in our economy, housing market, education and transport systems.
- Similarly, we must tackle inequalities in the health and care system and **widen access to health and care services**. This requires a fundamental rebalancing of funding and focus on primary and preventative care.
- These challenges, in turn, will create the conditions in which **people-powered health** can flourish and healthy lifestyles can become the norm.



For each of these challenges, the WMCA and its partners have made over 50 commitments to action and set out a series of 12 recommendations to government. An independently led Health of the Region roundtable has been formed to follow through the actions from the report and is providing a regular forum for community members to interact and influence healthcare and political leaders around the challenges from the report.



Active and Resilient Communities

A key aspect of tackling health inequalities is to take community centred approaches that utilise key assets within the community, enable people-powered initiatives - ultimately creating socially, physically active and resilient communities. Evidence suggests that physical activity is the key lever creating active and resilient communities.

Our work has directly enabled a range of physical activity initiatives:

- £150k Sport England funding awarded to the Black Country Consortium's 'Black Country Moving' initiative to tackle some of the highest physical inactivity levels across 8 key areas.
- £45k has been used to create new active spaces at Foleshill 2 canal bridge, Gospel Oak parklet and Willenhall Park – a collaborative approach between local authorities and communities in co-designing spaces that is informing B2022 legacy plans.
- £30k funding to the 'Love Exploring the Black Country' programme, leading to 8,000 people since November 2020 now using 8 parks across the Black Country.
- Working with the NHS, local authorities and other partners, and with £125k secured from WMATF, we've led a programme of social prescribing of walking and cycling by medical practices. With 74% of those prescribed now physically active, this is underpinning our submission to government for further funding.
- Funding 265 runners with Solihull, Coventry and Warwick, to collect prescriptions for those unable to do so.
- Co-funded 'Goodgyms' with partner authorities.
- Leading work with Sustrans to get more people using cycling routes.

£569,000

secured from
Sport England

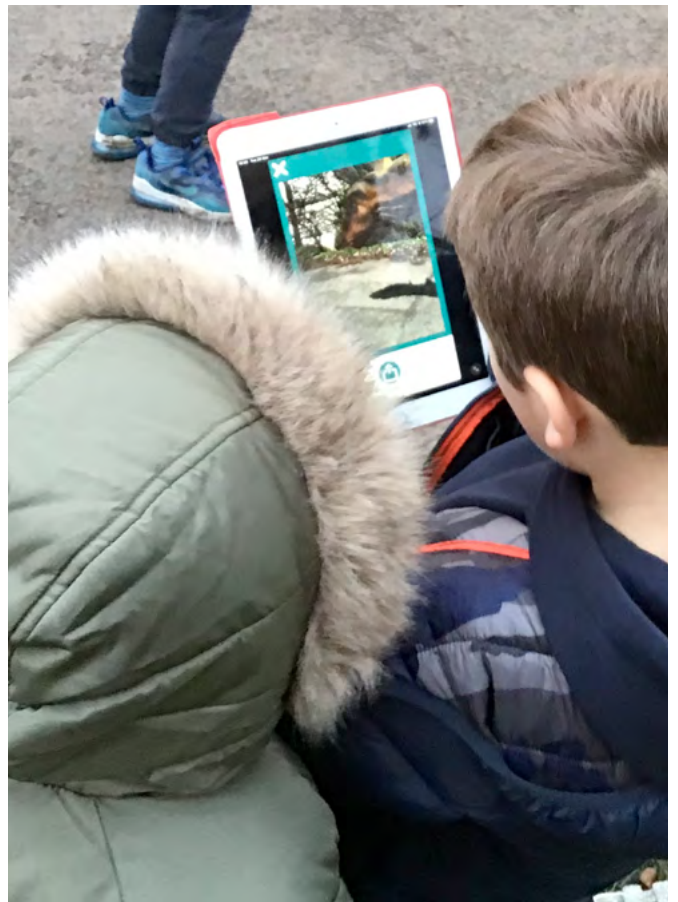
£419,000

funding secured from
West Midlands Active
Travel Fund

Led collaborative
Expression of Interest
for Social Prescribing
across the region



Active Black Country





B2022

The Commonwealth Games represents a perfect catalyst for organisations to collaborate in getting people more physically active. With the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, and Birmingham City Council, we've developed the Games' legacy vision, mission and principles, and with Sport England, the Physical Activity and Wellbeing Legacy framework and Commonwealth Active Communities (CAC) Prospectus.

As part of our collaboration with Sport England, we've also been working with local authorities on their Commonwealth Active Communities plans, and we're funding Birmingham University Leadership to bring their expertise to bear on supporting those authorities to ensure long-lasting legacy among our communities.

Include Me WM

The West Midlands is an exemplar region in getting more disabled people active. Working with Sport England, local citizens and organisations, Include Me WM (IMWM) is unblocking issues that prevent disabled citizens getting active:

- 89 organisations have committed to making this change, including five local authorities, with embedded IWMM policies.
- 55% of these organisations have improved their training programmes, and over 620 staff have accessed free training via a Sport England grant.
- 58% are now more inclusive in their marketing and communications, and our new IMWM Citizen Champions will support this further
- The West Midlands is now a national pilot for inclusive community clubs, such as Pat Benson Boxing, Wolverhampton Wrestling and Coventry's Aptitude CIC (Sport England & WMCA funded).
- Over 500 disabled people have got cycling through WM's "Ride Ahead Together" – a scheme delivered by and supported through the West Midlands Active Travel Fund.



Wider Determinants and Health Inequalities

Wider determinants, also known as social determinants, are a diverse range of social, economic and environmental factors which impact on people's health. Variation in the experience of wider determinants (i.e. social inequalities) is considered the fundamental cause (the 'causes of the causes') of health outcomes, and as such health inequalities are likely to persist through changes in disease patterns and behavioural risks so long as social inequalities persist. Addressing the wider determinants of health therefore is critical in reducing health inequalities, so much so that Public Health England suggests that **these wider determinants have a greater influence on health than health care, behaviours or genetics.**

Public Health England outline six of the main determinants as follows:

- Income
- Work and the labour market
- The built and natural environment
- Education
- Crime
- Vulnerability

Ultimately, where people are already marginalised and excluded, they are likely to be left further behind as we respond to and recover from COVID-19 unless we actively work to address this. As such, the impact of health inequalities can be reduced by recognising wellbeing as being a critical element of economic policy.

To address that, we will work with partners to **develop programmes of activity that will address health inequalities by tackling some of the wider determinants of poor health in the region.**

We will focus on four main priorities:

- Starting with the WMCA's core functions, to galvanise action to ensure all economic investment in the region supports better health outcomes.
- To work with partners to attract funding from government and provide a regional voice on health inequalities.
- To work with partners to maximise the economic opportunities created by the West Midlands health and care economy.
- To champion specific issues and deliver grant-funded programmes where there is the clear support of the Combined Authority and its partners to do so.

In addition, we will leverage the activities of the Combined Authority in Housing, Environment, Skills, Transport and Productivity/Economy to improve health outcomes.

Radical Health Prevention Fund

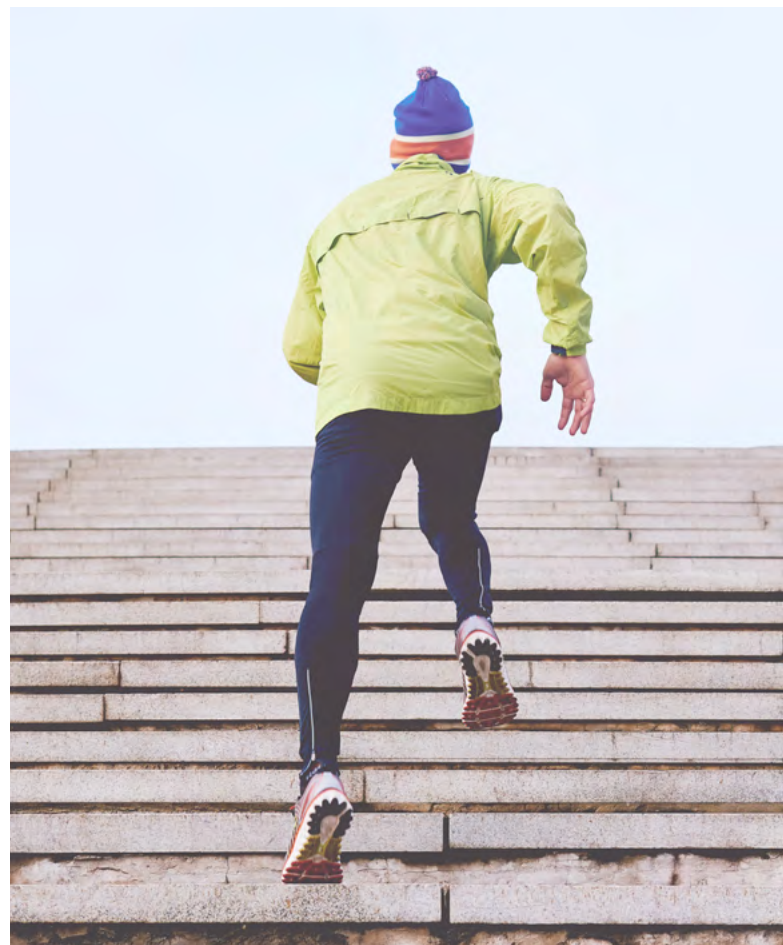
The PSR directorate has led a submission to government to establish a **£15M ‘Radical Health Prevention Fund’** using £10m seed-funding from the Dept of Health and Social Care, a proposal for which is in its final stages. The fund would catalyse digital innovation and support preventative delivery models that can be scaled across the West Midlands. Projects supported by the fund will evolve and develop over time, based on emerging evidence and the quality of partner proposals, but will primarily focus on digital and innovative interventions targeted on a number of preventative health outcomes designed to reduce obesity, physical inactivity, diabetes, mental health issues and social isolation.

Some examples of potential grantees and types of innovative prevention programmes that could benefit from the fund include:

- Social prescribing platforms, such as Elemental, could benefit from ‘Discovery’ or ‘Scale-up’ grants.
- Remote diagnostics providers, such as Telemedicine, could enable care home staff to access specialised support and prevent unnecessary hospital admissions.
- Partnership-focused prevention routes, such as Redthread, who reduce youth violence through health-setting interventions.

The Radical Health Prevention Fund will be a distinct and new operating model which brings together existing structures in a way to maximise cross-agency and place-based working. The RHFP will follow an impact investment approach to assess, test, incubate and scale successful new ventures, and attract emergent providers to the region.

Ultimately, this will make the West Midlands an exemplar region on prevention and addressing upstream factors in health outcomes - a key promise of the NHS Long Term Plan and a key recommendation of various reports addressing health inequalities exacerbated by the pandemic.



Population Health Intelligence

With partners in Public Health England Midland Region (soon to be Office of Health Improvement and Disparities), we have established a programme to inform evidence-based decision-making through population health intelligence (including the Health of the Region report). This will include enhancing the usability of the evidence by creating a dynamic online platform, consistently updated with statistics from the in-house developed wellbeing dashboards and from each of the seven constituent authority's locally commissioned services. This online hub will be complemented by a virtual hub of analysts across the Combined Authority and partner organisations, who will be able to enrich the platform with specialised analyses from different sectors, and learn directly from each other.

The early work from this collaboration has yielded the baseline reports and narratives to support development of the Growth Corridors and Logic Models to inform a 'Health in all Policies' approach across the CA.

M10 Cities Inequalities Project

The project aims to support all 10 Combined Authorities to accelerate their efforts to address Health Inequalities through a focus on the opportunities offered by devolution, particularly in relation to addressing the determinants of health. The policy team is hosted by the WMCA, Greater London Authority and Greater Manchester City Region partners. It is due to end in March 2022, with scope for a further 6 month extension. So far, the project has focused on the following:

- Understanding regional priorities, contexts, challenges and approaches to tackling health inequalities and identifying the levers for change, power and influence at our disposal.
- Championing improvements to accelerate activity in tackling health inequalities through developing guidance, toolkits, networking, expertise and support.
- Facilitating conversations to build the foundations for a sustainable community of practice across the ten Mayoral city regions.

A further extension will seek to enhance capacity for increased research outputs in other city regions and outputs targets at Mayoral policy teams.

Mental Health Commission

The first Mental Health Commission (2016/17) brought together key senior leaders to consider evidence on mental health needs and responses. It made 18 key recommendations to strengthen pursuit of a mentally healthier region. The Commission particularly bolstered pursuit of the Thrive programme - enabling broader mental support in workplaces and providing routes into work for key vulnerable groups. Other recommendations included:

- better understanding mental health conceptions & outcomes associated with population diversity;
- targeted approaches for those at risk of poorer mental health outcomes;
- improving the availability of intelligence;
- a strategic focus on the public mental health needs of children, young people and young adults;
- clarifying a good practice model for Primary Care;
- reducing inappropriate levels of use of out of area placements;
- developing a strategic approach to housing and associated support for people with mental illnesses.

Work is in progress to reconvene a new mental health Commission, involving representation from different sectors and those with lived experience. It aims to:

- examine the pandemic's impact on mental health and wellbeing across the region, particularly in terms of its effect on health inequalities.
- celebrate innovation and good practice in supporting mental health and wellbeing during the pandemic.
- identify learning points from a number of key issue areas (e.g. the impact on children, young people & their families) and set out a series of recommendations to support the ongoing pursuit of a mentally healthier region.



Thrive At Work

- **Poor health has been calculated to cost the UK economy over £40bn a year** – and that was before Covid19. Thrive at Work addresses this challenge head-on by offering comprehensive, structured support to employers committed to making a difference.
- Our team supports organisations to build solid foundations, and employers' efforts in implementing the highest standards of workforce wellbeing are rewarded with our esteemed Thrive at Work accreditation – endorsed by Health Education England.
- Nearly 500 organisations across the region – and wider – have signed up, reaching approximately 250,000 employees.
- Recognising the impact of the pandemic, the Thrive at Work Foundation Level was introduced to support employers take those critical first steps. Already 19 organisations have been accredited at Foundation Level, joining the now 28 employers fully accredited at Bronze Level.
- Initially funded by the Work and Health Unit, Thrive at Work is now funded through the Midlands Engine's £6.8mn Midlands Health and Productivity Pilot.
- The Thrive at Work programme is completely free for employers in the region to undertake.



500

organisations
signed up

**48
organisations**

already
accredited

£2.5M

funding secured

“

Thrive at Work has been a huge success for us. Staff turnover and absence levels have reduced. Our employees are talking more, and we are confident that we can offer support to them if they need it.

Thrive lead at Moor Hall Hotel, Birmingham

”

“

People are now more willing and comfortable to be their true selves. Employees feel comfortable speaking about their mental health, knowing that we offer a range of support to suit their individual needs.

Thrive lead at Garden Organic, Coventry

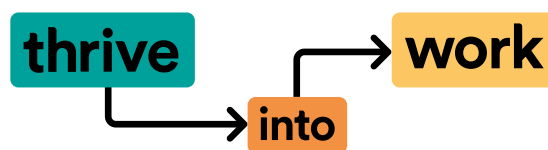
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Thrive into Work

A large number of people with health challenges and disabilities in the West Midlands are out of work. Unemployment, particularly in this group, has significant social and economic costs for the region. The CA, has a commitment to tackle these high unemployment rates and prevent a widening gap in health inequalities. This ambition was recognised in 2017 by central government with an award of £10.2m to lead a novel and large-scale work and health Randomised Control Trial (RCT), to be led by our Thrive into Work Programme. It was designed to test whether placing Individualised Placement Support (IPS) – a model of supported employment – into primary and community care settings would improve health outcomes for people living with a long-term condition or mild to moderate mental health condition or disability.



Impact

During trial stage
(up till Oct 2020)
delivered services
across Birmingham and
the Black Country to
3,700 participants

- 710 participants in the treatment group entered into employment
- achieving a 30% job conversion rate
- Developed an evidence base for innovative employment interventions to facilitate a national roll out of proven approaches
- Developed a framework for effective locally driven employment support that can be sustained organically

Funding Successes

£13.9M
secured
from central
government

- Awarded initial £10.2M for 'RCT' and £3.7M for expansion across the region
- Moving people from worklessness into employment has a considerable impact on the public purse (£12,035 per person per year)
- Work and Health Unit are supporting the WMCA with a bid into the next CSR for additional funding, extending and expanding the programme

Policy Successes

NHS Long Term
Plan commits to
pursuing an IPS roll-
out for a range of
potential recipients

- Cultural shifts – employment recognised as contributor to health outcomes among health professionals and features in Annual Health Checks.
- Offering the NHS tangible solutions to health inequalities through IPS.
- Integrating Employment Specialists into primary and community health teams.
- Exploring IPS impact in Homelessness, Neuro-Diversity and Arrest and Divert pathways.
- Digital and electronic referral pathways for GP's direct into the IPS Service.

Case Study of Impact

The most significant achievement is the difference the service has made to many people's lives as showcased by Matt's story:

1

Matt became unemployed from his job as a grocery delivery driver due to exacerbation of arthritis in his wrists and feet. He has a young family and quickly spiralled into financial and health crisis developing anxiety and depression of which he required medication.

2

Recognising that Matt's unemployment status was significant in helping him to recover, his GP made a referral to the IPS Service. Matt worked with his Employment Specialist to understand what Matt's "dream job" would be in the context of managing his health condition. During initial meetings he couldn't stop crying so his Employment Specialist referred him, with the support from his GP for counselling. They explored his hobbies, skills and interests (DIY) and looked at the number of hours he could manage and work adjustments Matt would require.

3

Matt gained new employment as a Caretaker at a local school. Working for a few hours in the morning and later in the day allowed Matt to rest during the day and manage his arthritis. He was also able to utilise his love of DIY. Matt reports that he no longer takes medication for depression, his financial position has improved, and he rarely needs to see his GP.

“

I was spiralling down and didn't know how to make it stop. I was nervous about meeting the Employment Specialist but she was great, she gave me loads of confidence and had faith in me. I now have the best job and my health and financial circumstances have improved.... we have also welcomed a new addition to the family, life couldn't be better.

”

Conclusion: Moving forwards together

This report has presented the wide variety of ways in which the WMCA PSR Directorate has worked with partners across the region to build a fairer, greener, healthier West Midlands. In crude financial terms, for an investment of less than £2M each year, the directorate has leveraged **over £70M** into the region. But perhaps more significantly than that, it is working to make sure that every pound invested by the combined authority helps transform lives and communities and ‘levels up’ the region.

But there is so much more we can do together.

There are 5 ‘gear-changes’ that will shape our future direction as a directorate:

- We will double-down on our work to tackle climate change and maximise the opportunities to make the region the **home of the green industrial revolution** with clear action plans and a big focus on securing new investment to drive change.
- We will move away from historical approaches to public service reform and **build the skills and capacity across the region** to tackle some of our most complex challenges through new forms of social innovation.
- We will **sharpen the scope of our work** on wellbeing to have a relentless focus on tackling health inequalities by working with partners to address the wider determinants of poor health in the region.
- We will **galvanise our efforts to challenge and support partners** to ensure all investment in the region supports the 8 fundamentals of inclusive growth and that no person or community is left behind as we emerge from the Covid pandemic.
- We will **streamline our governance structures** and align all our work to the new corporate strategy to maximise the added value that the directorate brings to the collective work of the combined authority.

These gear-changes build on past success, they learn from past experience and they represent a renewed focus on how we add value to the work of our partners.

Our commitment to collaborative action is unstinting, not simply is it the best way to achieve change, it is the only way any of us will create a fairer, greener, healthier West Midlands.



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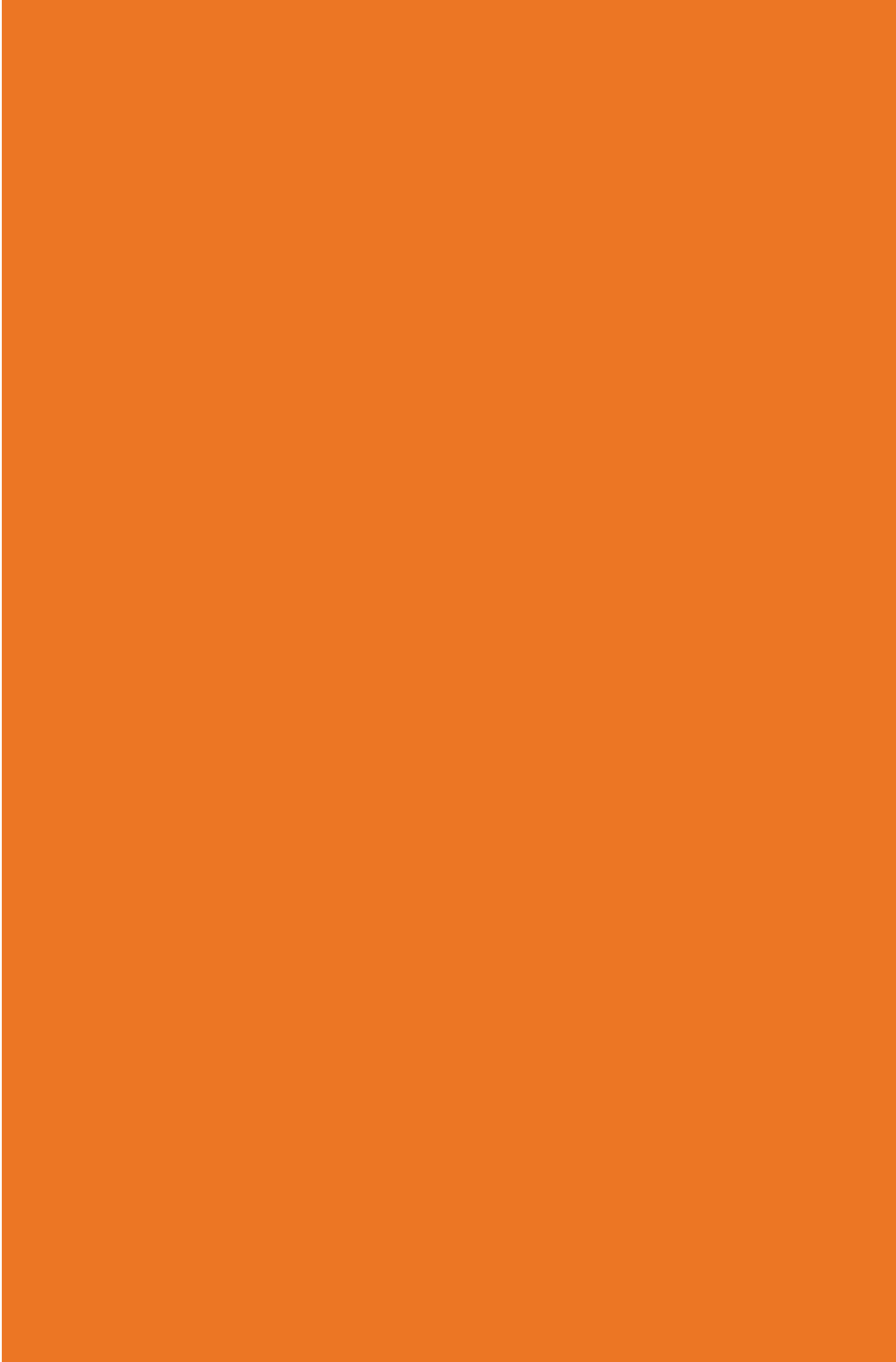
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