

West Midlands Social Impact Statement



**West Midlands
Combined Authority**



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Foreword

The West Midlands has long had the ingredients for success: talent, creativity, productive businesses, and distinctive places. What has too often been missing is a system that connects those assets fully to opportunity. That is why our Growth Plan is focused not just on growth, but on how growth is created, where it lands, and who benefits.

As Chief Executive, my priority is to make sure that public investment delivers the biggest impact for the West Midlands. Infrastructure, skills, innovation, and regeneration matter—but only if they translate into higher living standards, stronger communities, and a more resilient region. Economic growth on its own is not enough. The real test is whether it improves people's lives and strengthens the places they call home. In our Growth Plan, we have committed to setting out clearly how we would maximise public value.

Our Social Impact Statement does exactly that. It describes how we will embed social and environmental impact into the everyday business of the Combined Authority—across strategy, programme design, procurement, and partnership working. This is not an additional layer of policy, nor a box ticking exercise. It is about using the tools we already have more intelligently and deliberately and listening to the voices and concerns of the citizens we serve.

Our approach is mission led and place based. It recognises that inclusive growth does not happen by chance, but through consistent choices: about what we invest in, who we work with, and how we measure success. Whether commissioning services, building infrastructure or supporting new forms of enterprise, we will focus on outcomes that matter—good work, lower emissions, healthier communities, and stronger local economies.

By aligning public spending, private investment, and civic effort behind shared missions, we can unlock the region's full potential and ensure growth is truly for everyone across the region.



Ed Cox

Chief Executive

Executive summary

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) is committed to placing inclusive growth and social impact at the heart of everything we do. This Statement sets out our strategic approach to embedding the mechanisms needed to do this across our programmes, procurement, partnerships, and internal operations.

Our vision for social impact is to embed mission-driven, meaningful, and measurable social, environmental, and economic impact at the heart of all our strategies, programmes, and procurement processes. This ensures that every investment and intervention contributes to our purpose: making the West Midlands the best place to live, work, and visit.

To realise this vision, we are taking bold yet pragmatic steps to ensure that social impact is not a tick-box exercise, but a transformative opportunity. We are aligning our efforts with the Inclusive Growth Framework¹, focusing on maximising our impact on creating a more inclusive economy, delivering climate and environmental improvements, building community wealth, and improving the health and wellbeing of our residents and communities. This will enable us to deliver our agreed strategic priorities for the region, to raise living standards for everyone.

Our approach is comprehensive and collaborative; engaging internal teams, suppliers, and partners to co-create place-based social impact. We are embedding these principles into commissioning, procurement, contract management, planning, and governance processes, supported by clear policies, training, and performance frameworks.

This Statement outlines our commitment to measuring and realising tangible benefits for communities across the West Midlands.

¹ <https://wmca.org.uk/inclusivegrowth>

Purpose

To embed mission-driven social impact into everything WMCA does, so that every pound spent delivers inclusive growth and improves lives across the West Midlands

- **Mission-driven** – aligned to shared regional priorities
- **Meaningful** – built in from the start, not added on
- **Measurable** – tracked, evaluated, and transparently reported

Approach

Social impact is embedded across four mutually reinforcing routes:

- How we operate (corporate social responsibility)
- How we spend (social value)
- How we leverage (place-based investment and philanthropy)
- How we convene (partnerships & collaboration)

How we operate (corporate social responsibility)

- Embedding equity, diversity, and inclusion in decision-making
- Fair work and good employment practices
- Environmental sustainability
- Ethical governance and accountability
- Staff wellbeing and positive organisational culture

How we spend (social value)

- Contractual social value through commissioning and delivery
- Organisational social value via inclusive supply chains
- Added social value beyond business-as-usual

How we leverage (place-based philanthropy)

- Testbed to double the size of the social impact economy
- Aligning private and charitable capital investment to public priorities
- Using WMCA's convening power to unlock additional investment regionally
- Supporting social innovation and long-term systems change to invest in prevention

How we convene (partnerships & collaboration)

- Co-design with communities and stakeholders
- Delivering regional missions with anchor institutions and clusters driving place-based impact
- Strengthening civil society and the regional social impact economy
- Strategic business engagement
- Building relationships with Office for the Impact Economy

Social Impact

From investment to impact —
inclusive growth by design,
not by chance

How we know that it is working (measuring success)

- We will publish an **Annual Social Impact Report** demonstrating progress towards our inclusive growth missions
- We will be evidence led, to ensure that we dedicate resources to people and communities in the West Midlands who are most in need
- Our strategic priorities including our Inclusive Growth Framework and Inclusive Communities approach and our evidence base including the West Midlands State of the Region help us to understand who, what and where we focus efforts

Purpose

This statement will help us to embed mission-driven social impact into everything the WMCA does, so that every decision made and pound spent delivers inclusive growth and improves lives across our region.

Social impact is central to the West Midlands Combined Authority's (WMCA) purpose, **"Together, we are making the West Midlands the best place to live, work and visit."** Social impact must not be a tick-box exercise or something that is left to chance. It is about creating positive social, environmental, and economic changes for our residents. It requires us to be intentional about our approach to growth, so that we deliver the 10-year regional priorities articulated in our West Midlands Growth Plan in line with the approach set out in our Inclusive Growth Framework. To do this, we are creating an inclusive economy across the region.

Three principles underpin this work:

- **Mission-driven:** Focusing all types of investment – public, private, capital, revenue, time, attention – on the same set of social and environmental missions – our Inclusive Growth framework.
- **Meaningful:** Social and environmental considerations must be embedded from the earliest stages of WMCA activity —not retrofitted or left to chance.
- **Measurable:** Intrinsic and added impact must be tracked through clear and proportionate quantitative and qualitative assessments and evaluations.

Our missions

The WMCA is committed to Inclusive Growth, which we define as “a more deliberate and socially purposeful model of economic growth - measured not only by how fast or aggressive it is; but also, by how well it is created and shared across the whole population and place, and by the social and environmental outcomes it realises for our people.” These missions contribute to achieving the regional priorities identified in the West Midlands Growth Plan.

This is illustrated in the ‘doughnut’ co-designed with West Midlands residents:



Our missions aligned to the eight fundamentals of Inclusive Growth are:

- **Climate and environment:** Carbon emissions decoupled from economic growth and reduced to net zero by 2041.
- **Inclusive economy:** People will experience an increase in their household incomes and a better standard of living.
- **Power and participation:** Residents will be able to fully participate in influencing and exercising agency in the things that matter to them.
- **Affordable and safe places:** Ensure that everyone in the West Midlands has affordable, safe, and secure housing which meets their needs and aspirations.

- **Connected communities:** Our communities will be better connected, enabling everyone to interact with the world around them, both physically and digitally.
- **Education and learning:** Improved levels of skills for residents to flourish and realise their potential.
- **Health and wellbeing:** Avoidable differences in health outcomes will be reduced so that everyone can live longer, healthier, and happier lives.
- **Equality:** Residents will be supported to thrive and flourish, regardless of their protected characteristics and backgrounds.

Through this Social Impact Statement, we commit to transforming social and environmental outcomes for the region in line with these missions. Our focus also includes the following priority groups:

- **people who are care-experienced**, reflecting our duties, and that of our constituent local authorities, as corporate parents;
- **young people 16-24 who are not in education, employment, or training**, recognising that we are one of the youngest city-regions in Europe;
- **disabled people**, in line with our ambition to be an exemplary region for disabled people;
- **future generations, by supporting children to have the best possible start in life**, in line with our statutory health duty; and
- **households living in temporary accommodation**, reflecting our commitment for homes for everyone.



Definitions

Social impact		
The life-changing effects that our actions have on people, place, and planet		
Corporate social responsibility	Social value	Place-based philanthropy
How we lead as a business	Wider benefits from public spending	Leveraging private resources for public good

Social impact is about creating positive social, environmental, and economic changes for our residents so that every pound spent delivers inclusive growth and improves lives across the West Midlands.

Corporate social responsibility is about our operations as an ethical, responsible, and inclusive organisation. This is about how we work; not just what we fund and deliver, empowering employees to advance the wellbeing of the people and places of the West Midlands, through initiatives such as volunteering and community outreach.

Social value is about maximising the wider benefits that our procurement can deliver beyond the core goods or services being purchased. It encompasses economic, social, and environmental outcomes, meaning that we will align our tender requirements and bid evaluations explicitly to our inclusive growth fundamentals.

Place-based philanthropy is the voluntary mobilisation of private and charitable resources. It is about working with partners such as large corporates, foundations, and grant-making trusts to leverage greater investment, both public and private, to meet the social, environmental, and economic missions for our region.

Strategic alignment

Our Corporate Plan², published in June 2026, sets out our role as a strategic authority to work in partnership to address shared challenges and opportunities across the West Midlands region.

This Statement aligns with the areas of focus in the WMCA Corporate Plan as follows:

- **Seize the moment:** this Statement sets out a clear, region wide approach to embedding social impact across strategy, programme design, procurement, and partnerships, allowing WMCA to act more coherently and decisively rather than through fragmented or discretionary approaches.
- **Doubling the impact:** by embedding social impact “by design, not by chance,” this Statement reframes how WMCA uses its tools: commissioning, procurement, convening, and stewardship of resources. It shifts focus from activity and spend to outcomes and impact, supported by clear measurement, evaluation and an Annual Social Impact Report, strengthening accountability and value for money.
- **Make it for everyone:** this Statement is explicitly mission led and place based. It prioritises inclusive growth, good work, reduced inequalities, and improved life chances, ensuring benefits flow to communities often furthest from opportunity. Through targeted universalism, co-design and partnership working, it embeds equity, accessibility, and public benefit into how WMCA operates and invests.

Our Social Impact Statement will directly contribute to our strategic priorities including:

- the long-term regional priorities in the West Midlands Growth Plan;
- the considerations across the eight fundamentals of the Inclusive Growth Framework;
- our inclusive communities approach; and
- our legal requirements set out in the Public Sector Equality Duty.

² <https://wmca.org.uk/corporate-plan>

Approach

How we operate: corporate social responsibility

Our five pillars for corporate social responsibility are:

Pillar	Definition
Equity, diversity, and inclusion	Ensuring fair access, representation, and opportunity for all, removing systemic barriers so everyone can participate, contribute, and thrive regardless of background or protected characteristics.
Fair work and good employment practices	Promoting secure, fairly paid, and meaningful work, with inclusive recruitment, workforce progression, safe conditions, and respectful employment relationships that support long-term prosperity.
Environmental sustainability	Protecting and enhancing the natural environment by reducing carbon emissions, using resources responsibly, and supporting a just transition to a low carbon, climate resilient economy.
Ethical governance, transparency, and accountability	Making decisions with integrity and openness, using public resources responsibly, and being accountable to residents, partners and stakeholders for outcomes and impacts.
Staff wellbeing and organisational culture	Creating a supportive, inclusive, and high trust working environment that promotes health, wellbeing, professional development, and shared responsibility for positive impact.

Our approach is rooted in our values and behaviours and reinforced through our People and Culture Strategy. We recognise that a high-performing, values-driven organisation is pivotal to delivering authentic and thorough inclusive growth and social impact.

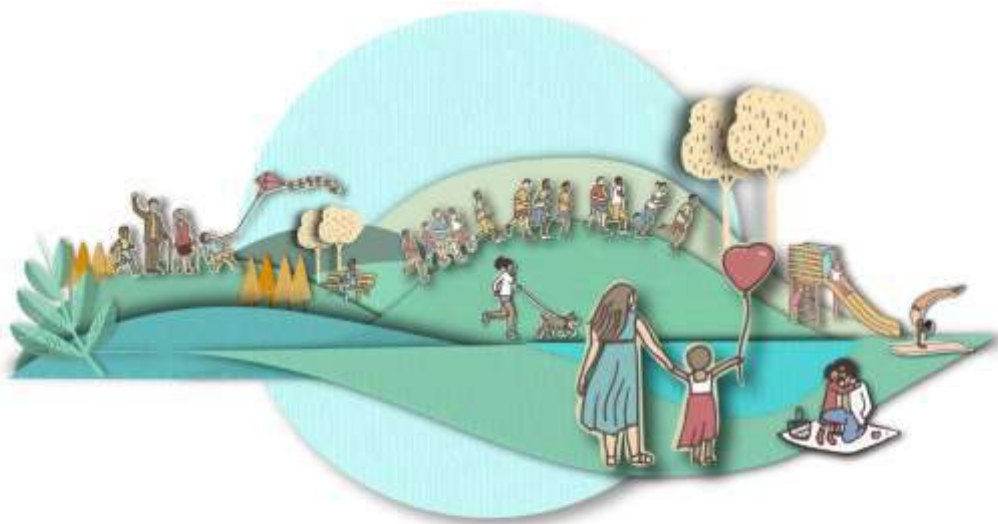
We are also strengthening leadership capability across the organisation through our People and Culture Strategy, investing in inspirational, values driven leadership at all levels to build confidence, accountability and inclusive decision-making that directly supports delivery of our social impact ambitions.

Case study: Volunteering policy

Our employer supported volunteering policy demonstrates how corporate social responsibility is embedded into the employee experience, extending beyond our operational activities.

Providing three paid volunteering days per annum enables colleagues to live our values and behaviours in action, utilising their time, skills, and expertise to contribute positively to our communities across the WMCA region.

Volunteering provides a practical way for our workforce to contribute to the wider social impact of WMCA; strengthening the organisational culture and encouraging a sense of belonging.





How we spend: social value

The approach by which we deliver social value is set out in our **Social Value Policy**. The three elements of social value are:

- **Contractual social value:** The social, economic, and environmental benefits delivered directly through the goods, services or works being procured, as part of core contract delivery, such as a transport infrastructure project that improves regional connectivity and access to employment.
- **Organisational social value:** The benefits created through how the organisation operates and spends its money, including who we employ, who we buy from, and how we support local and inclusive supply chains, such as by increasing our spend with Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprises (VCFSEs) and with Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).
- **Added social value:** Additional benefits delivered beyond core contractual requirements or business as usual activity, voluntarily committed to improve outcomes for people, places, and the environment, such as creating apprenticeships and local jobs, reducing carbon emissions, volunteer days or supporting local charities.

Case study: Local Nature Investment Hub

The Local Nature Investment Hub demonstrates how WMCA is embedding social value into environmental delivery by mobilising private and public investment to restore and enhance natural capital across the West Midlands. Acting as a platform to develop investable nature projects, the Hub brings together local authorities, landowners, investors, and environmental partners to structure projects that deliver measurable outcomes such as biodiversity net gain, carbon sequestration, improved water quality, and increased climate resilience. By standardising pipelines and reducing barriers to investment, the Hub is unlocking new funding flows into nature recovery while creating green jobs, supporting local supply chains, and improving access to high-quality green space for communities. This approach exemplifies how innovative financial models can align environmental priorities with inclusive growth, ensuring that investment in nature delivers tangible economic, social, and environmental benefits for the region.

How we leverage: place-based philanthropy

In 2019, WMCA committed to doubling the size of the Social Impact Economy. Its Social Economy Growth strategy has created a thriving cluster of Social Impact Districts across the region. By harnessing the relationship with the Office for Impact Economy and refreshing the Social Economy Growth Strategy that shifts the region's impact economy from predominantly grant-led activity to market anchored growth, there is an opportunity to position the West Midlands as a leading place-based testbed for the impact economy.

Aligned with this, WMCA has a growing role in shaping how philanthropic and other place-based investments are better aligned to deliver long-term, place-based social impact across the West Midlands. We seek to create the conditions for public, philanthropic, and third-sector funding to work together in ways that support sustainable change and deliver better value for money for our people and places.

Private, philanthropic, and social impact investment are already important drivers of our activity: over £20 million of place-based investment is being leveraged over 4 years to support the Cradle to Career programme, unlocking new ways of working and improving outcomes for children and young people. These activities demonstrate how we use our convening power to align investment into regional priorities, accelerating solutions to complex social and economic challenges across the West Midlands.

Case study: Big Issue Invest

Big Issue Invest plays a key role in strengthening the West Midlands' social impact ecosystem by providing flexible, mission aligned finance to social enterprises, charities, and purpose driven businesses. Working in partnership with the combined authority, it helps social impact economy organisation access the capital they need to grow—whether that is investing in staff, infrastructure, digital tools, or new services—particularly where traditional finance is not suitable. Its approach combines investment with practical support, often through low interest and blended finance, enabling organisations to build financial resilience while increasing their social impact. This work directly supports the region's ambition to double the size and the impact of the social impact economy and aligns with WMCA's broader goal of leveraging public, private, and social investment to deliver inclusive growth and improved outcomes for communities.

We are guided by a clear set of principles:

- **Stewardship over control:** acting as a convenor and steward of resources, aligning funding around shared outcomes while respecting the independence of philanthropic, third-sector and community decision-making.
- **Place-based innovation and learning:** building partnerships that support experimentation, learning and adaptation in specific places, with a focus on embedding what works into public service delivery.
- **Targeting resources where they can add greatest value:** improving the targeting and alignment of funding, particularly in places and communities that have historically attracted less philanthropic or social investment.



How we convene: partnerships and collaboration

Through the convening powers of the WMCA, we aim to actively support and work with arms-length organisations and partners who share our ambitions to deliver meaningful social, environmental, and economic impact for the West Midlands. This approach will be guided by the following principles:

- **Co-design:** Working with communities and stakeholders to shape priorities.
- **Transparency:** Publishing success stories and impact reports, such as an Annual Social Impact Report.

The WMCA defines the Social Impact Economy as a collective term for all ‘not for personal profit’ organisations that exist to improve disadvantaged communities, support disadvantaged people, and address social or environmental issues, but do so using a trading (business) model to generate the majority or all the funds they need. This includes social enterprise, co-operatives, mutual benefit societies, community owned businesses, charity trading arms and more.³

We will bring together anchor networks, anchor organisations, and cluster leadership organisations around our approach to social impact. This will include co-designing cluster-specific social value priorities; tailoring supplier expectations to local industry strengths (e.g. advanced manufacturing, creative industries) and place-based strategies; and improve our approach towards driving up standards (e.g., towards a Good Work Charter).

We will use our strategic relationship management (SRM) delivered by our economic delivery vehicle (EDV), the West Midlands Growth Company, to:

- engage system partners in co-delivering social impact and social value;
- encourage anchor institutions to support local employment, skills, health, and environmental initiatives; and
- strengthen place-based collaboration in line with Local Government Association (LGA) emphasis.

Through our Public Service Innovation work, we will test, learn, and grow new place-based approaches, focusing on prevention and embedding what works into mainstream public service delivery and improving outcomes over time. By working

³ <https://www.wmca.org.uk/what-we-do/economy-and-innovation/social-economy/>

alongside residents and civil society groups to ensure that lived experience informs decision-making and that solutions are tailored to local strengths and needs.

We will embed the Inclusive Communities Approach across all WMCA activity by:

- focusing on the four social outcomes (social capital, social inclusion, social mobility, and social infrastructure)
- applying a resident-centred design approach
- prioritising trust, relational approaches, participation, and collaboration

Case study: Reclaiming Our Regional Economies

The Reclaiming Our Regional Economies (RORE) partnership demonstrates WMCA's role in convening diverse partners to drive systemic, place-based change. Bringing together national organisations—including the New Economics Foundation, Centre for Local Economic Strategies, Centre for Thriving Places, and Cooperatives UK—RORE is a five-year programme working with the West Midlands and other combined authorities to test new approaches to inclusive economic development. In the West Midlands, the partnership developed an Ownership Hub to support co-operatives and employee-owned businesses in the creative sector; trialled community led employment support in priority areas; and exploring how anchor institutions can use their spending, land, and influence to maximise social impact. By bringing together communities, policymakers, and institutions, RORE exemplifies how WMCA uses its convening power to foster collaboration, test innovative models, and embed long-term, inclusive economic growth.



Our action plan

Corporate social responsibility

- We will clearly define CSR outcomes and measures relating to the five pillars, supporting officers to maximise their impact to deliver our Corporate Priorities for people, place, and planet.
- We are enhancing the Inclusive Growth Business Partners model, evolving this cross-organisational network to create Inclusive Growth and Social Impact Champions. Champions will provide expert support and constructive challenge across all thematic pillars in the organisation, using proven tools such as the Impact Toolkit and community informed approaches.

Social value

- We will mobilise the launch of our new Social Value Policy, supporting WMCA officers with training and guidance to seize the moment for social value delivery
- We will launch the WMCA's Community Investment Fund, ensuring that we can maximise the amount of social value delivered by WMCA procurements.

Place-based philanthropy

- We are building our relationship with the Office for the Impact Economy to position the WMCA as a leading place-based testbed for the impact economy and influence national government and investment priorities to support regional impact partnerships and delivery.
- We will improve the targeting and alignment of funding, particularly in communities that have historically attracted less investment, aligning resources with equity priorities to reduce inequalities and improve outcomes across the region.

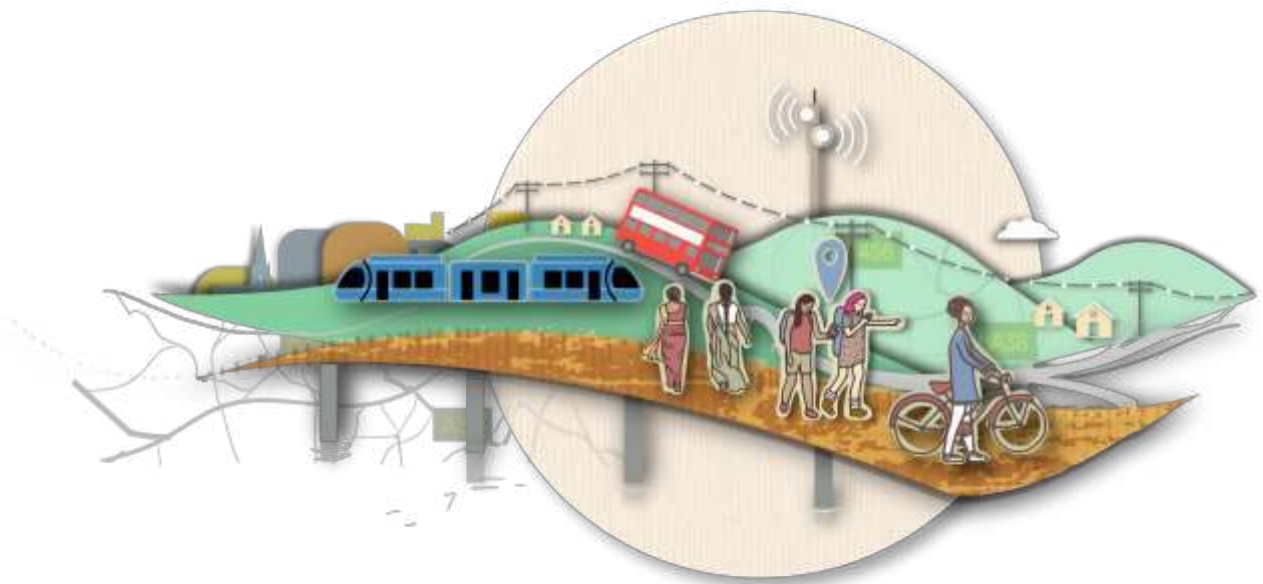
Partnerships and collaboration

- We are developing a West Midlands Good Work Charter, to define what 'good work' means for the region. This collaborative process with employers and residents builds on strong work already undertaken as part of WMCA's Thrive



Programmes, improving job quality, workforce wellbeing, and employer practices

- We will ensure that insights from the Residents Assembly shape decision-making, strengthening resident influence, improving transparency, and delivering better outcomes for communities.







wmca.org.uk/social-impact-statement



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