

Creating neighbourhood health: strengthening our system connections and building on integration

Health & Wellbeing Board

25th March 2026

National Direction

National requirements and timelines:

- From 2026/27, the Integrated Care Funding Framework (ICFF) will **not imminently** replace BCF – BCF framework 2026/7 now published
- Health and Wellbeing Boards requirement to produce an Interim Neighbourhood Strategic Plan **now delayed, national guidance awaited**

Interim expectations set out:

- Neighbourhood Health Plans should be drawn up by local government, the NHS and its partners under the leadership of the Health and Wellbeing Board, incorporating public health, social care, and the Better Care Fund.
- The plan should set out how the NHS, local authority and other organisations, including social care providers and VCSE, will work together to design and deliver neighbourhood health services.
- The plans are expected to be:
 - Outcomes focussed
 - Accountable and transparent
 - Evidence-based
 - Multi-disciplinary
 - Credible and deliverable

10 year plan will drive this work forward further and faster

Neighbourhood planning guidance key lever for this



Guidance for Neighbourhood Health Plans

Neighbourhood Health encompasses NHS, Local Government and wider partnership (including VCSE) roles and responsibilities in improving the health and wellbeing for their local communities

Neighbourhood Health plans will be overseen by Health and Wellbeing Boards in two parts:

A strategic plan covering:

- Agreement on neighbourhood footprints based on natural communities
- Priority outcomes for place and neighbourhoods (including NHS mandated, BCF and locally agreed measures)
- Transparency on scope of services
- Agreement on the development of INTs
- Clarity on leadership and accountability arrangements for delivery

An operational plan covering:

- Working partnership arrangements for delivery
- Timetable for addressing service alignment to neighbourhoods where needed (eg: PCNs)
- Timetable for implementation of INTs
- An audit of resources that apply to neighbourhood health and how they are organised
- Plans for the development of sustainable Neighbourhood Health leadership

BCF & Neighbourhood Health – HWB role

- Better Care Fund Framework 2026–2027 explicitly strengthens expectations around aligning BCF planning with Neighbourhood Health development
- 2026/27 framework introduces new requirement for Health & Wellbeing Boards (HWBs), ICBs and Local Authorities, to ensure BCF plans are more closely aligned to the development of neighbourhood health services, with specific reference to services such as intermediate care
- BCF outcomes map directly onto neighbourhood-level multidisciplinary team (MDT) work, community services, and integrated care functions
- ICBs and Local Authorities must agree with their HWBs localised goals linked to system-wide neighbourhood care priorities, rather than limiting their ambitions to pooled budgets only

NHS Planning for the next 3 years: 2026/27 – 2028/29

Medium Term
Planning
Framework –

delivering change together
2026/27 to 2028/29

In implementing neighbourhood health, the immediate focus must be on:

- improving and tackling **unwarranted variation** in GP access for the whole population
- reducing **unnecessary non-elective admissions and bed days** from high priority cohorts – people who have moderate to severe frailty, people living in a care home, people who are housebound or at the end of life
- enabling patients requiring planned care to receive **specialised support closer to home**

Plans should also include establishing integrated neighbourhood teams, ideally contract-based, working with local authorities and starting in areas of highest need.

From April 2026, ICBs and relevant NHS providers should:

1. identify **GP practices where demand is above capacity** and create a plan to help decompress or support to improve access and reduce unwarranted variation
2. ensure an understanding of current and projected total service utilisation and costs
3. **create an overall plan to more effectively manage the needs** of these high priority cohorts and significantly reduce avoidable unplanned admissions. These plans should be consistent with national standards for urgent community response services, which require 7-day availability and rapid response. Systems should ensure funding and commissioning covers a minimum 12 hour “community urgent care” offer, supervised by senior clinical decision-makers and operating at a multi-neighbourhood level.

Local ICBs must confirm how this will be resourced and delivered

This is not expected to be an NHS plan. This is a **neighbourhood plan that focuses on a person-centred approach, delivered by a multi-agency team**. Therefore, work should still commence on an interim neighbourhood plan through the HWB to enable planning of models and service commissioning, in-line with local strategies and wider national guidance.

Foundation steps required for Neighbourhood Health – 6 Core Components

Population Health Management: Using data to identify local health needs and risks to target interventions effectively.

Modern General Practice: Strengthening primary care services, including GP practices, as the foundation of the local health system.

Local Standardized Community Health Services: Ensuring consistent, high-quality community-based services such as district nursing and health visiting.

Neighbourhood Multidisciplinary Teams (INTs): Integrating professionals from health, social care, and the voluntary sector to work together.

Integrated Intermediate Care: Providing services that prevent unnecessary hospital admissions and facilitate timely discharge (e.g., "home first" approach).

Urgent Neighbourhood Services: Offering prompt, local care to manage acute needs and reduce pressure on emergency departments.

All designed to shift care closer to home, focusing on prevention, tackling health inequalities, and connecting people to broader social support systems.

Strategic alignment

- National guidance – neighbourhood health
- Health & Wellbeing Strategy
- NHS 10 Year Plan
- BCF framework 2026/7
- Tees Hospitals Trust – Clinical Strategy

Close links to direction across partners, towards neighbourhood and local place-based working.



Key Messages

Opportunity to strengthen our connections as a system and build on integration- neighbourhood delivery by all partner services to a clear set of outcomes

This will require some detailed collaborative planning to deliver

All partners expected to have clear accountability and roles in delivering integrated neighbourhood teams that focus on person centred care

Clear commitment from the respective leadership teams

Fundamental shift in making a material positive impact for our residents by working together, on the ground, in a coordinated way

Challenges & Opportunities

Challenges

- Ongoing organisational change
- Potential partnership-wide capacity challenges at neighbourhood level
- Defining neighbourhoods (geographic / non-geographic)
- Scarce resource across all key partners
- Governance mechanisms (decision-making, resource etc.) need further clarity

Opportunities

- Ongoing strong partner relationships & commitment at local place
- Maximise joint working & experience for residents / patients
- Maximise scarce resource across system
- Tailor support & prevention approach further to local community need & voice
- Work at-scale where this adds value
- Maximise links to wider place / neighbourhood working e.g. Pride in Place

Interim strategic plan – draft principles (matching NNHIP pilot)

- Co-production (patients, community, workforce)
- Intelligence- and evidence-based, maximising local foundations
- Embedded monitoring & evaluation
- Proactive case finding, maximising systems & population data
- Maximise specialist capacity
- ‘One team’ approach
- Integrated assessment & delivery: care coordination & peer support
- Design in health creation, health promotion & early help
- Maximise access
- Connecting communities to support, relationship-based
- Whole system approach

Interim
strategic plan –
suggested
Strategic
Outcomes
(matching NNHIP
strategic outcomes)

- Improve healthy life expectancy & address inequality
- Integrate care & support
- Support community and workforce capacity building & co-production
- Increase access to support, across local communities
- Meet diverse needs of local communities
- Promote & maximise good health & wellbeing
- Reduce demand on services, through a focus on prevention

Interim plan – next steps

- Regional & local workshops
- Scaling up & defining neighbourhoods – lead by intelligence; addressing inequality
- Integrated neighbourhood teams (NNHIP pilot) – roll out
- Deliver BCF outcomes
- Design approach for working together e.g. holistic approach to neighbourhood health (inc. socio-economic determinants); digital innovation
- Evaluation & monitoring