



Neighbourhood Policy

The Neighbourhood Model of Health and Wellbeing continues to gather momentum as we work with partners across the system to turn ambition into action.

Over recent months, attention has focused on shaping a clear vision for the future of neighbourhood health and wellbeing. Work is underway with senior leaders and policy teams to agree the priorities and reform themes that will shape delivery between 2027 and 2030. More than a plan for neighbourhood services, this work presents an opportunity to create a common framework for delivering wider health and social care reform, helping to align ambitions across areas such as prevention, primary care, mental health, social care, health inequalities and long-term conditions. By bringing these shared priorities together, we can support a more coordinated approach to improving access, strengthening prevention and early intervention, reducing inequalities, and delivering more care closer to home. This will help establish a shared vision for neighbourhood services while providing a strong foundation for long-term planning, investment and transformation across the wider system.

At the same time, a number of innovation projects are moving from design into delivery. This marks an important shift from testing new ideas to implementing practical solutions that can improve outcomes for local people. Alongside this, work with partners is helping to advance proactive care approaches, with a growing focus on identifying needs earlier, supporting people to stay well and reducing avoidable pressures on services.

Recent progress includes:

- ❖ The signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with Roche Diagnostics in September 2026, which will strengthen the region's diagnostic and laboratory pathways and support the transformation of health and social care.
- ❖ Commencement of the RESPOND respiratory project in October 2026

Another key area of progress has been social prescribing. Strong engagement from partners and communities has highlighted the value of social prescribing, which has the potential to transform how people access support within their communities by connecting them with local services, activities and resources that improve wellbeing.

In September, partners from across the system came together for a dedicated Social Prescribing Workshop. The event generated strong engagement and positive feedback, providing valuable insights into what a future social prescribing framework could look like.

Together, these developments will help create a more preventative, person-centred and community-focused model of care, ensuring neighbourhoods play an increasingly important role in improving health and wellbeing outcomes for everyone.

From Vision to Delivery:
Shaping Healthier Neighbourhoods Together.



Integrated Neighbourhood Teams

The Neighbourhood Model of Health and Wellbeing is a major transformation initiative that will reshape how health and social care services are delivered across Northern Ireland. Its aim is to make it easier for people to access the right support, at the right time, and as close to home as possible.

But Neighbourhood is about more than changing where services are delivered. It represents a new way of working across the HSC system that will bring organisations and professionals together around the needs of people and communities, to deliver more services and care rather than expecting people to attend hospital.

This is long-term change. It will take time to develop new relationships, redesign pathways and shift care and resources closer to home. Integrated Neighbourhood Teams provide a way to begin making that change locally, learning what works and building on it over time.

Between April and June 2026, partners came together through a series of development workshops to lay the foundations for 17 INTs. This autumn, these teams will begin to meet and build the relationships, shared understanding and ways of working that will be essential to long-term change.

The programme is underpinned by the “Five Neighbourhood Moves”:

1. Anticipatory and Proactive Community Care

Using community based frailty, nursing, pharmacy, mental health and social care services and hospital and home to prevent deterioration and avoidable hospital attendance.

2. Transfer Services to INTs

Moving suitable services and resources from hospitals into neighbourhoods.

3. Reduce Outpatient Attendance and Follow-ups

Increasing use of virtual consultations, patient-initiated follow-up and community-based care.

4. Redesign Clinical Pathways

Enabling GPs, multidisciplinary teams and community pharmacists to provide access to more complex care closer to home.

5. Improve Discharge and Hospital Flow

Testing virtual wards and strengthening community support to help people return home safely and sooner.

This winter will mark an important next step as INTs begin to put the Neighbourhood Model into practice. For many older people living with frailty, a relatively small change in their health or circumstances can quickly lead to a need for more urgent care. Local health, social care and community partners will work together to identify people who may benefit from additional support and connect them with help earlier. The aim is to help more older people in our communities to stay well, safe and independent at home, while reducing avoidable visits and stays in hospital.

The Neighbourhood Model of Health and Wellbeing:
A new way of working for health and social care.



Moving Care Closer to Home

Part of the transformation of health and social care services involves a focus on helping people access high-quality care and support in their own communities, closer to where they live.

This is an important part of the wider [HSC Reset Plan](#) and will help to:

- ❖ Reduce pressure on hospitals and emergency services
- ❖ Improve access to care and support within local communities
- ❖ Strengthen joined-up working between health services, social care and the voluntary and community sector

Making this change happen means investing differently.

Over the next three years, HSC Trusts are expected to redirect around 2% of hospital-based spending each year towards community and neighbourhood services. This equates to approximately £50 million each year, helping to strengthen care beyond hospital walls.

Work is now underway with HSC Trusts and INTs to develop the framework that will support this shift. Together, they will look at how to move appropriate services into communities, redesign care pathways and workforce models, and strengthen local decision-making and investment.

Care Closer to Home isn't just about moving services. It's about rethinking how care is provided, building on what already works and testing new approaches that can make a real difference to people's health and wellbeing.

Several initiatives are helping to shape this new way of working:

- ❖ **Supporting people living with frailty**
A new neighbourhood-based pathway for **frailty and end-of-life care**, supported by Macmillan's Neighbourhood Transformation Fund, will explore how more joined-up care can be delivered closer to home.
- ❖ **Better respiratory care in the community**
A new neighbourhood respiratory pathway, funded by AstraZeneca, will initially establish three diagnostic hubs in the Southern Trust and introduce point-of-care testing in GP practices.
- ❖ **Local support for healthy weight**
The Obesity Pathway Innovation Project (OPIP), funded by Innovate UK, will introduce a local weight-management support pathway in the Northern and Southern Trust areas.
- ❖ **Improving cardio-metabolic health**
A new partnership with Roche Diagnostics will support improved health outcomes for people across Northern Ireland with an initial focus on scoping the potential for a neighbourhood cardio-metabolic pathway.

Transforming how care is delivered so people
get the right care, in the right place, at the right time.



Neighbourhood Digital Innovation, Intelligence and Evaluation

Work is continuing to strengthen the data, digital and innovation foundations that will help bring the Neighbourhood Model to life and support lasting change across services.

New digital tools are being developed to help INTs connect and work together more easily. These include secure online meeting spaces, shared platforms for collaboration, and better access to local information about services and community support. By working closely with partners, these tools are being designed around the needs of frontline staff, helping teams share information more effectively, coordinate support and respond more quickly to the needs of local people.

Good progress has also been made in building a clearer picture of the strengths, needs and priorities of neighbourhoods. A new neighbourhood-level data framework brings together information about population health, local services and the wider factors that influence wellbeing. This will help teams better understand their communities, identify where support is needed most, and make informed decisions about how services are planned and delivered.

Turning data, local insight and digital innovation into
better, more responsive support for communities.

Neighbourhood Relationships and Connections

Work is being jointly led by the Patient Client Council and the Department, building on the [*People to Partners*](#) and [*This Is Our Health*](#) initiatives. At its heart is a commitment to recognising the value of lived experience and ensuring that people are not simply recipients of services, but active partners in shaping, improving and influencing the support available in their communities. The approach encourages people to take an active role in their own health and wellbeing, while helping services become more responsive to the needs, strengths and aspirations of local communities.

A key focus is strengthening relationships between INTs, local communities and partner organisations. By working closely with local people and community groups, services can better understand neighbourhood needs and deliver support that reflects what matters most to communities.

Work is also underway to develop a consistent approach to participation across the system, creating more opportunities for service users, carers and communities to influence how services are designed, delivered and improved. Alongside this, a shared approach to social prescribing is being developed, recognising that good health is shaped by much more than healthcare alone.

Connecting people, communities and services
to shape better support and improve health and wellbeing.