RESPOND Respiratory Diagnostic Hub: Bringing Respiratory Care Closer to Home

Earlier Diagnosis | Optimised Care | Healthier Lives

I'm delighted to share that the RESPOND Respiratory Diagnostic Hub opened on 7 October 2026 in the Southern GP Federation/Trust area. It's a lovely step forward in bringing respiratory care closer to home for local people.

This initiative builds on the excellent work already undertaken within the Armagh/Dungannon Federation, at the Moy Practice, where a strong foundation has been established by Dr Deirdre Cleary and Miss Melissa Traynor for a more proactive, joined-up approach to respiratory care.

It's also a great example of what can be achieved when the wider health and care system across Northern Ireland and industry come together, combining their expertise, resources and shared commitment to improving patient care. RESPOND builds on the first Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed in Northern Ireland, with AstraZeneca as the industry partner in this case.



Southern GP Federation colleagues and partners supporting local respiratory care.

At its heart, RESPOND is about helping people get answers sooner — recognising respiratory problems early, making the right diagnosis and putting the right care in place before things get worse.

The Hub brings respiratory testing, specialist assessment and personalised care together, helping people get the right diagnosis and treatment sooner. Medicines optimisation is an important part of this: Following respiratory diagnostic testing, a clinician will review each patient's treatment and wider health needs, check that medicines are appropriate and working well, and offer practical support with inhaler technique and taking treatment confidently. Patients can also get help with self-management, stopping smoking and staying active, with referral for further specialist care when needed.

RESPOND in Action: Delivering the Five Neighbourhood Moves

What I particularly like about RESPOND is how it brings the five neighbourhood moves to life. Rather than asking people to travel further for every test or appointment, we're finding more ways to offer joined-up care locally.

1. Prevent – Anticipatory and Proactive Care

Using digital patient dashboards and risk stratification, practices can identify people who may have a respiratory condition, as well as those at greatest risk of deterioration, hospital admission or Emergency Department attendance. This helps us intervene earlier, prioritise those most at risk and ensure patients receive the right diagnosis, treatment and ongoing support to help them stay well and avoid unnecessary hospital visits.

2. Transfer Care to the Neighbourhood

RESPOND brings suitable respiratory tests and care into local communities, starting here in the Southern GP Federation/Trust area. It means patients can benefit from the knowledge and skills of their local Primary Care teams.

3. Substitute Outpatient Care

For many people, having tests and assessments closer to home could mean fewer trips to hospital. That's better for patients and could also free up hospital appointments for those who need specialist care most.

4. Redesign Clinical Pathways

GPs can refer patients to the Hub when they suspect COPD, asthma, or when the diagnosis isn't clear. The aim is to make the next step simpler, so people get the answers and care they need without unnecessary delays.

5. Accelerate Discharge and Delivery

Getting the diagnosis right earlier, alongside good treatment and ongoing local support, could help more people stay well and avoid a hospital visit. Over time, stronger community services may also help people get home sooner and feel supported afterwards.

A Partnership Approach to Neighbourhood Care

For me, RESPOND is about much more than a new diagnostic service. It's a practical example of how the five neighbourhood moves can make a real difference to people's everyday experience of care.

It's also important to recognise the hard work already happening in our local practices. RESPOND brings that experience together with colleagues across General Practice, Federations, wider health services and industry.

We're looking forward to learning from the Hub as it grows — hearing what it means for patients, understanding its impact and sharing what works. Hopefully, what we learn here in the Southern area can help other neighbourhoods too.

What excites me most is the difference this could make for local people: getting answers earlier, receiving the right support and knowing that more of their care can happen close to home.

Breathe Better Together — Healthy Lungs, Brighter Futures.

Dr Siobhán McEntee
NICON Primary Care Lead

RESPOND at a glance: referral guidance and services

The information sheet below gives an overview of the Hub's services and clinical support. Please contact the Hub team for current referral arrangements.

