

# Summary of latest Neighbourhood Policy

May 2026.



## Purpose

The Government has issued the latest national neighbourhood health policy for Integrated Neighbourhood Teams.

The NEL VCFSE Collaborative<sup>1</sup> ('the Collaborative') has summarised this with a focus on what matters for voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) organisations across North East London.

The Collaborative is integral to the North East London Integrated Care Board (ICB).

North East London ICB is developing neighbourhood based models of care aligned to the national **Neighbourhood Health Framework**. This includes establishing neighbourhood footprints, strengthening partnership working and supporting the development of Integrated Neighbourhood Teams and Neighbourhood Health Centres across boroughs.

The ICB is also working with borough-based partnerships, Health and Wellbeing Boards, providers and the VCFSE sector to shape local delivery plans and governance arrangements. Integrated Neighbourhood Teams, mandated in the new **NHS 10-year plan**, are multi-disciplinary groups of healthcare, social care and voluntary sector professionals working together at a local level. They are intended to focus on improving health outcomes, reducing inequalities and supporting people with complex or long-term needs within their communities. They have been designed to shift the focus towards proactive, joined-up care, preventing crises and reducing hospital reliance.

## Why does this matter for VCFSE?

Health is created where people live, learn, work and connect - not only where they receive treatment. Tackling the root causes of ill health requires community trust, local relationships and understanding of lived experience.

The national framework identifies VCFSE organisations as core partners in designing and delivering neighbourhood health. However the framework remains heavily focused on NHS performance measures such as reducing urgent and emergency care admissions, rather than fully prioritising prevention and wider determinants of health.

Despite this, neighbourhood working presents a significant opportunity for the VCFSE sector. The ICB should consistently enable VCFSE insight, data and community intelligence to shape neighbourhood plans so they genuinely reflect local needs, reduce health inequalities and support prevention.

<sup>1</sup> North East London Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise Collaborative.

## Added value of the VCFSE sector

VCFSE organisations contribute significant added value through:

- Trusted relationships with underserved communities.
- Early intervention and prevention.
- Social prescribing and care navigation.
- Volunteering and peer support.
- Tackling loneliness and social isolation.
- Community engagement and co-production.
- Flexible, culturally competent support.
- Addressing wider determinants of health.

## What does the new guidance say and why is 2026/2027 critical?

The **Neighbourhood Health Framework 2026/27** sets out the delivery expectations for Integrated Care Boards and local authorities through Health and Wellbeing Boards. Importantly, the framework explicitly references VCFSE organisations as delivery partners.

2026/27 is identified as a “developmental year” during which ICBs must:

- Agree neighbourhood footprints.
- Confirm Better Care Fund pooled funding intentions.
- Establish data-sharing arrangements.
- Develop neighbourhood delivery structures.

Integrated Neighbourhood Teams are identified as the core delivery mechanism for neighbourhood health. These teams are expected to work closely with VCFSE organisations and wider community assets to provide proactive, holistic care.

## Priority cohorts identified in the policy include:

- Frailty.
- Care home residents.
- Housebound people.
- People at end of life.
- People with long-term conditions, including:
  - Cardiovascular disease.
  - Diabetes.
  - Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).
  - Dementia.
  - Mental health conditions.
- Children and young people.

The framework also sets five minimum goals for improving health outcomes, although these remain largely health-system focused:

- Improving access to general practice.
- Improving experience of planned care.
- Improving urgent and emergency care.
- Improving patient satisfaction.
- Improving staff satisfaction.

The Neighbourhood Health Centre guidance expects centres to bring together GP services with community, local authority, adult social care and VCFSE services within each neighbourhood footprint.

## What should the VCFSE ask at place (borough) and neighbourhood level?

The sector should seek a commitment that every Integrated Neighbourhood Team and Neighbourhood Health Centre includes local VCFSE and resident representation within its steering and governance structures and that these roles are properly resourced.

Existing forums, partnerships and delivery organisations should be engaged early and consistently to help shape neighbourhood plans.

Please refer to the Collaborative's Integrated Neighbourhood Teams briefing for detailed recommendations on the principles needed to support meaningful VCFSE integration and contribution

## What should the Collaborative consider now?

### 1 Map where VCFSE already adds value

This includes identifying current contributions across borough neighbourhood models, including:

- Workforce contribution.
- Social prescribing.
- Volunteering.
- Care navigation.
- Services aligned to priority cohorts.

### 2 Map existing forums and engagement structures.

This should include:

- Existing VCFSE forums.
- Resident engagement forums.
- Community leadership structures.

### 3 Seek early involvement

The Collaborative should seek early involvement in:

- Neighbourhood planning discussions.
- Estate and infrastructure conversations.
- Governance arrangements.

Collaborative place representatives will continue seeking representation on HWBs and place-based partnerships.

### 4 Develop a clear VCFSE offer for Integrated Neighbourhood Teams

The sector should coordinate how it aligns to priority cohorts and clarify:

- Referral pathways.
- Workforce contribution.
- Community engagement approaches.
- Safeguarding links.
- Expected outcomes and impact.

### 5 Bring evidence that matters to commissioners and communities

VCFSE organisations hold deep community insight, trusted relationships and real-time intelligence about emerging need, inequality and barriers to access that statutory systems often cannot reach alone. This evidence must be treated as essential in neighbourhood health planning, not supplementary information.



The Collaborative is working to strengthen how this evidence is gathered, coordinated and presented to commissioners and system partners across North East London. This includes ensuring that evidence captured at borough and neighbourhood level directly informs planning, investment decisions, service design and evaluation.

We will continue to advocate for decision-making that values community voice alongside quantitative system data, recognising that meaningful prevention and reduction in health inequalities cannot be achieved without it.

To share insights, evidence or community intelligence with a place representative, please contact the Collaborative.

## **6 Ask for enabling conditions with a consistent voice**

The VCFSE sector cannot be expected to deliver as a core neighbourhood health partner without sustainable investment, equitable commissioning and the infrastructure required to participate meaningfully in system design and delivery. If neighbourhood health is to succeed, VCFSE organisations must be recognised, resourced and embedded as equal partners alongside statutory services - not viewed as an add-on or short-term solution.

**The Collaborative will continue advocating for:**

- Fair and sustainable funding.
- Infrastructure support.
- Appropriate commissioning approaches.
- Data-sharing agreements.
- Meaningful involvement in decision-making.

These enabling conditions are essential if VCFSE insight and community intelligence are to contribute fully to neighbourhood health planning, delivery and learning.

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**If you have any questions, want to share information or want to be connected to our representatives or neighbourhood discussions please contact us at [nelvcse@thcvs.org.uk](mailto:nelvcse@thcvs.org.uk).**

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**Voluntary, community, faith & social enterprise organisations working with the NHS across North East London.**