

Briefing: 024/26: Introduction to neighbourhood health – what it means for community pharmacy

Purpose of this briefing

This briefing provides community pharmacy owners and their teams with an introduction to neighbourhood health, Integrated Neighbourhood Teams (INTs) and emerging neighbourhood provider arrangements. It summarises the key concepts currently shaping NHS policy and highlights the potential opportunities, risks and practical actions for community pharmacy owners. It should help pharmacy owners and teams begin preparing for neighbourhood health developments while awaiting further national guidance and local implementation plans.

Background

Neighbourhood health is a central component of the NHS and Government's long-term vision for health and care services in England, as set out in the [10 Year Health Plan](#). The approach aims to organise care around local populations, deliver more services closer to home and improve coordination between health, social care and voluntary sector organisations.

Neighbourhood health reflects wider shifts from:

- Treatment to prevention;
- Hospital-based care to community-based care; and
- Organisationally focused services to person-centred care.

Many local health systems are already developing neighbourhood-based models, meaning some pharmacy teams may already be participating in initiatives that align with the neighbourhood health agenda.

What is neighbourhood health?

Neighbourhood health involves organising services around a defined local population and bringing together providers to meet the needs of that community more effectively. Neighbourhoods are typically expected to cover populations of approximately 30,000 to 50,000 people and should reflect natural communities rather than existing organisational boundaries.



At its core, neighbourhood health is intended to shift the focus of the healthcare system towards prevention, earlier intervention and supporting people to stay well for longer. It seeks to improve outcomes for people living with long-term conditions, reduce health inequalities and make it easier for patients to access the care and support they need. By encouraging services to work together around the needs of individuals and communities, the model aims to provide more joined-up care, reduce fragmentation between organisations and help people remain independent within their local communities wherever possible.

What are Integrated Neighbourhood Teams?

Integrated Neighbourhood Teams (INTs) are expected to be the main delivery vehicle for neighbourhood health.

INTs bring together a broad range of organisations and professionals, including:

- GP practices;
- Community pharmacy;
- Community nursing;
- Mental health services;
- Social care providers;
- Voluntary and community sector organisations; and
- Other local partners.

The purpose of an INT is to operate as a 'team of teams', working collaboratively to design and deliver care around individuals, families and communities rather than around organisational structures.

By enabling professionals and organisations to work more closely together, INTs aim to improve health outcomes, support earlier intervention and reduce unnecessary duplication across the system. A key objective is to deliver more proactive and preventative care within communities, helping people to manage long-term conditions effectively, avoid unnecessary hospital attendance and maintain their independence for longer. As neighbourhood health develops, INTs are expected to play a central role in shifting care closer to home and improving the experience of patients who require support from multiple services.

For community pharmacy, the development of INTs presents an opportunity to become more closely involved in neighbourhood-level care pathways, multidisciplinary working and the



delivery of preventive and long-term condition services. Active involvement in these arrangements could help ensure that the accessibility, clinical expertise and community reach of community pharmacy are fully utilised within emerging neighbourhood health models.

Neighbourhood Health Centres

Alongside INTs, NHS plans include the development of Neighbourhood Health Centres (NHCs).

These centres are intended to act as local health hubs bringing together a range of services under one roof, including general practice, community services, social care and other local support services. Future plans also envisage wider provision such as welfare support, employment advice and voluntary sector services.

The Government has set an ambition for 250 neighbourhood health centres by 2035 through a combination of new developments and improvements to existing facilities.

While details are still emerging, community pharmacy owners should consider how the development of neighbourhood health centres may affect local service delivery, patient flows and partnership arrangements.

Why community pharmacy matters to neighbourhood health

Community pharmacy is already embedded within neighbourhoods and provides daily contact with local populations. The sector's accessibility and existing clinical services offer mean pharmacy is well placed to contribute to neighbourhood health objectives.

Key strengths include:

Accessibility

Community pharmacies are among the most accessible healthcare settings and often provide the first point of contact for patients seeking advice and support.

Prevention and early intervention

Pharmacies play a significant role in supporting prevention through vaccination services, smoking cessation support, blood pressure checks, contraception services and healthy living advice.

Long-term condition support

Pharmacy teams help patients manage medicines, improve adherence and support self-care for a range of long-term conditions.

Tackling health inequalities

Community pharmacies frequently serve populations experiencing deprivation, poor health outcomes and barriers to accessing other healthcare services.

These strengths align closely with neighbourhood health priorities and provide a strong case for community pharmacy involvement in local neighbourhood strategic planning and delivery.

Emerging neighbourhood provider contracts

The 10 Year Health Plan introduces proposals for new neighbourhood provider contractual arrangements. Although full details are not yet available, three broad models have been described.

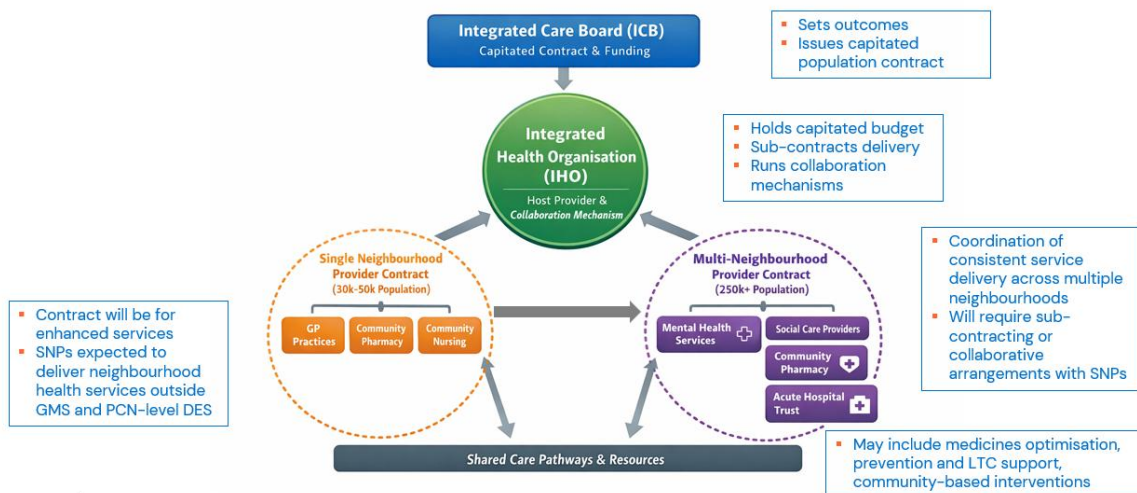


Figure 1: Proposed new contracting models and linkage

Single Neighbourhood Provider

This model is expected to cover populations of around 50,000 people and would be responsible for delivering services within a neighbourhood footprint.

Multi-Neighbourhood Provider



This model would operate at a larger scale, potentially covering populations of 250,000 or more. It is intended to provide greater infrastructure, analytics, support services and organisational capacity across multiple neighbourhoods.

Integrated Health Organisation

This model will operate under a capitated contract from the ICB for a defined population, typically covering 250,000 to 500,000 people at place level. Integrated Health Organisations (IHOs) are likely to be high-performing foundation trusts rather than new legal entities. They will hold the main contract working with partner organisations through subcontracting and formal collaborative arrangements to support shared decision-making. The aim of Integrated Health Organisations (IHOs) is to work at scale to address major NHS pressures and challenges associated with rising health demands and the fragmentation of commissioning and service delivery across the health and care system.

Implications for community pharmacy owners

At present there is limited detail about how community pharmacy will participate within these contracting arrangements. However, pharmacy owners should be aware that future commissioning models may increasingly be designed and managed at neighbourhood level and it will be important to understand how these arrangements develop locally. While some pharmacy owners may contract directly with neighbourhood providers, others may participate through subcontracting arrangements within wider provider collaboratives. Pharmacy owners should therefore remain engaged with their Local Pharmaceutical Committee and any local neighbourhood and place-based discussions to ensure community pharmacy's contribution is recognised within emerging care models and commissioning structures.

Opportunities and risks for community pharmacy

The neighbourhood health agenda presents both opportunities and uncertainties for community pharmacy. As health and care services become increasingly organised around neighbourhood populations, there is potential for community pharmacy to play a more prominent role in multidisciplinary care, prevention and the management of long-term conditions. Community pharmacies are already embedded within local communities and provide highly accessible clinical services, placing them in a strong position to contribute to the ambitions of neighbourhood health.



If community pharmacy is actively involved in the development of INTs and other neighbourhood-based arrangements, pharmacy teams may benefit from closer working relationships with general practice, community services and the wider healthcare system. This could create opportunities for more integrated patient pathways, improved referral processes and greater involvement in the design and delivery of local services. It may also help strengthen recognition of the contribution that community pharmacy makes to prevention, early intervention and tackling health inequalities.

However, significant uncertainties remain. The future commissioning landscape is still evolving and there is limited clarity about how neighbourhood provider arrangements, Integrated Health Organisations and other emerging models will operate in practice. There is also likely to be considerable variation in implementation between different areas of England. Community pharmacy owners should therefore be mindful of the risk that local neighbourhood structures could develop without sufficient pharmacy representation if the sector is not engaged. Workforce pressures and operational capacity constraints may also affect the ability of pharmacies to participate fully in new collaborative arrangements. For these reasons, proactive local engagement with neighbourhoods through LPCs will be important to ensure that community pharmacy is recognised as a key neighbourhood healthcare partner and that future models make best use of pharmacy expertise.

Practical actions for pharmacy owners

While neighbourhood health policy continues to develop, pharmacy owners and their teams can take practical steps to prepare for future changes.

Building and maintaining relationships with local healthcare partners will become increasingly important. Strong links with GP practices, Primary Care Networks, community providers and the LPC can help ensure that community pharmacy is included in discussions about service transformation and neighbourhood working.

Pharmacy owners should consider how best to optimise the delivery of nationally commissioned Advanced services from their pharmacies and how these services could be integrated into neighbourhood level service pathways to support long-term condition management, acute care and prevention. Together with LPCs, pharmacy owners should seek opportunities to demonstrate the value of community pharmacy to local neighbourhood leads and



commissioners, highlighting the accessibility of pharmacy services, their reach into local communities and their contribution to prevention and population health outcomes.

Pharmacy owners should continue to monitor announcements relating to INTs, neighbourhood provider contracts and Neighbourhood Health Centres through LPC and ICB communications. Although many aspects of implementation remain uncertain, pharmacies that understand their local system and engage early with neighbourhood developments are likely to be better placed to influence future opportunities and respond to changes as they emerge.

Key messages

Neighbourhood health represents a significant shift in the way health and care services are organised in England, with a greater local emphasis on prevention, integration and delivering care closer to home. INTs are expected to play a key role in bringing together professionals and organisations around the needs of local populations.

Community pharmacy is well aligned with the aims of neighbourhood health. Pharmacies are highly accessible, trusted by their communities and already deliver a range of services that support prevention, early intervention and the management of long-term conditions. These strengths position community pharmacy as an important partner in neighbourhood-based care.

At the same time, important questions remain about how future commissioning and provider arrangements will develop. Community pharmacy owners should therefore remain informed about local developments, either directly or through their LPC, and seek opportunities to engage with neighbourhood health initiatives as they emerge. Early involvement will help ensure that the expertise, accessibility and value of community pharmacy are reflected in the design of future neighbourhood health services.

Further information

Community Pharmacy England has a [dedicated webpage](#) that provides further information, FAQs and resources to support pharmacy owners and LPCs with neighbourhood health. The resources section includes documents to support pharmacy owners awareness of neighbourhood health and other resources to support local system stakeholder discussions. Direct links to a small selection of these resources are provided below however more can be accessed by following the link to the webpage:



[Introduction to neighbourhood health for pharmacy owners](#)

[The community pharmacy offer infographic for pharmacy owners](#)

[Summary community pharmacy services](#)

[Neighbourhood health MP briefing](#)