Health Creating Neighbourhood Health Blueprint 1.0

Introduction

NHS guidance describes Neighbourhood Health as 'reinforcing a new way of working for the NHS, local government, social care and their partners, where integrated working is the norm and not the exception'. But existing NHS, local authority and VCSE system paradigms are worlds apart, not to mention housing or education, making a common vision for neighbourhood health and its implementation tricky.

This Blueprint 1.0 is The Health Creation Alliance's initial contribution to framing, visioning and finding a route for local partners to implement Neighbourhood Health together with communities. We have generated this blueprint by looking predominantly through the community lens, as well as through other sector lenses, and by applying the health creation principles we have developed through our deep work with communities and local systems and with our diverse member-movement over the last 10 years.

Recognising how important 'perspectives' are in achieving success, we think cross-sector, community-inclusive governance will be necessary. We urge local partners to go further in understanding local communities as well as each other's perspectives, priorities and drivers. And we urge everyone to stick with the mission, because attaching ourselves to the outcomes will lead both to the cultural transformation required and to the necessary changes in how the money flows round the system.

We hope this vision we present is one that resonates with you and that communities and local partners all feel they can embrace. We intend to publish Blueprint 2.0 later in 2026 with greater real-world insight into routes to achieving the vision, including how power, resources and decision-making shift in practice at neighbourhood level.

If you have insight into real-world successes in making the shift, we would love to hear from you. We invite you to share your experiences, ideas and insights here.

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Reclaiming the language of health

Neighbourhood Health needs to re-own the language of health in its truest sense.

The World Health Organisation definition offers a helpful steer towards the shared ownership for health across many partners and communities, and away from an over focus on the association of any single service or sector as having greater responsibility for the public's health.

Other increasingly used definitions of health creation and of social care also help to support a rebalancing of what we might mean by health and wellbeing, and the notion that it can be created as well as illness treated and prevented.

"**Health** is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."
World Health Organisation

"Health Creation is the process through which people and communities gain a sense of purpose, hope, mastery and control over their lives and environments. When this happens, their health and wellbeing is enhanced."
Definition used by THCA (Hazel Stuteley OBE)

Social Care Future: "Because we all want to live in the place we call home, with the people and things we love, in communities where we look out for each other, doing the things that matter to us." *#socialcarefutures*

The three purposes of Neighbourhood Health

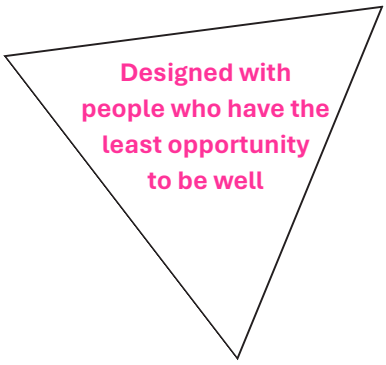
A shift from sickness to prevention and from hospital to community must come with a power-shift that increases community agency; by doing with, not doing to, and enabling communities to lead. This becomes possible when we understand the social injustices that take away agency with devastating implications for people's and communities' health. This is at the heart of health creation, which can also be embedded within approaches to healthcare.

1. Health Creation

- Recognise the social injustices that lie behind much avoidable ill health
- Listen and respond to the voices, ideas and ambitions of people with lived experience of poverty, trauma and discrimination
- Create the conditions for communities to have a sense of purpose, hope, mastery and agency over their lives and environments
- Play to community strengths and assets; enabling diverse communities to lead change
- Shape places and creating opportunities with people for all citizens to be well

2. Prevention

- Identify and respond to social injustices and embedded discrimination
- Address social determinants of health, trauma and associated behaviours that impact negatively on health and wellbeing
- Identify and treat early signs of disease using a health creation approach



3. Healthcare

- Respond to ill health needs for clinical treatment
- Provide equitable access to excellent experience of and optimal outcomes from healthcare services and co-create neighbourhood programmes that help to avert a health crisis, using a health creating approach

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Neighbourhood Health that addresses the 80%

It is when we understand Neighbourhood Health as an organic process, a 'petri dish' with many participants and contributors spanning informal community-led activities and formal statutory and healthcare services working together to achieve the three purposes of health, that we understand how it might address the 80% of our health that is influenced by non-healthcare factors. Healthcare services, that support 20% of our health outcomes, become part of the wider multiplicity of provision.

Cross-sector working, backed up by multi-sector, community-inclusive models of governance, are the best way to change the culture of public services and patterns of working with communities. This is the route to delivering equity of voice, genuine pooling of sovereignty in the allocation of public resource and service re-design, and to adopting deliberative conversations and participatory budgeting that can reshape systems.

"The key to addressing a long-standing health problem is often about supporting someone to work through a long-standing social problem"

Warren Heppolette,
Director of the Prevention Demonstrator, GMCA

Investing in community agency and assets through health creating and preventative commissioning helps to create a new ecosystem. And consistent, qualitative community insight, alongside formal data, must become the driver of decision-making, both in addressing local issues, identifying local solutions and shaping Neighbourhood Health itself.

Completing the transformation requires reshaped Neighbourhood Health to influence how national organisations, and increasingly devolved administrations, facilitate and support different forms of democracy, participation and decision-making. The mechanisms for influencing policies, programmes and financial flows to support this vision of neighbourhood health are not yet in place.

THCA Partnership Summit, 21 October 2025

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Image 1: ***Community insight supported by data drives the shift***

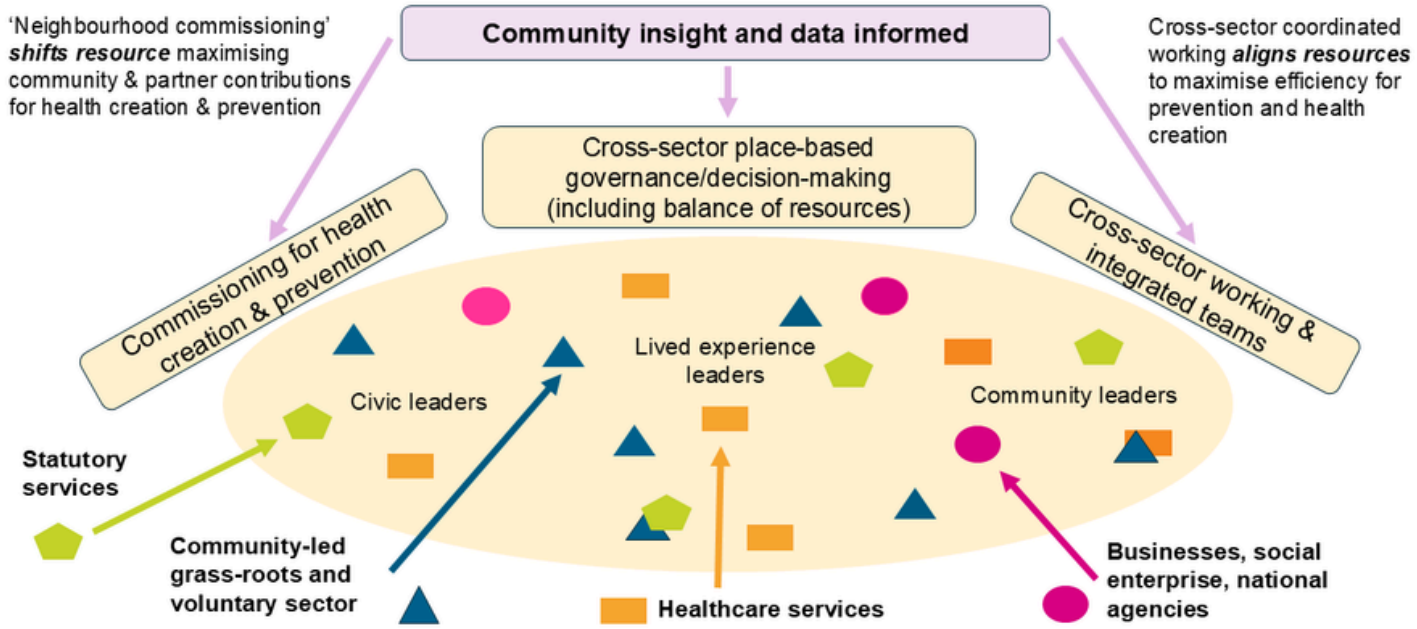
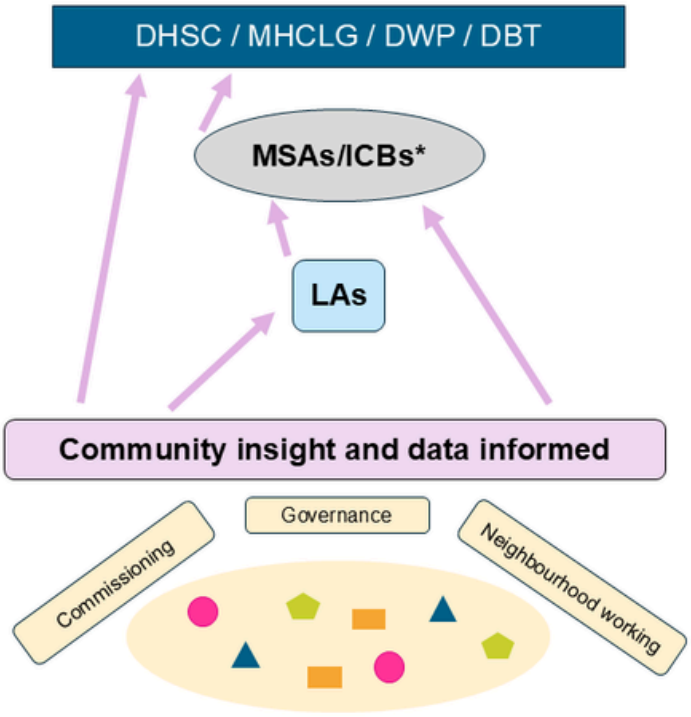


Image 2: ***Shaping regional and national decisions from the ground up***

Sectors involved in neighbourhood health include:

- Voluntary and community
- LAs – Social care, Public health, housing, community teams, economic development, planning
- Housing Providers
- Education
- Probation
- Fire Service
- Police
- Business and social enterprise
- NHS – primary care, community trusts, mental health, acute trusts, ambulance, paramedics

*MSAs: Mayoral Strategic Authorities
ICBs: Integrated Care Boards



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What good looks like....

...for people and communities

1. Everyone is connected and living a life they value
2. People thrive in safe, health creating homes and environments with access to clean green spaces
3. Community-led health creating activities are invested in
4. Health and healthcare can be accessed in many locations through familiar, friendly connections
5. Citizens from every community shape neighbourhood health and healthcare; community insight is equal to quantitative data and communities coproduce and participate
6. There is reciprocity: communities bring resources to Neighbourhood Health (human assets, physical assets, financial assets) ... and are resourced by it
7. Crises are averted by addressing the small things before they escalate

...for leadership and workforces

1. Workforces at all levels are expected to spend time building relationships with communities and other local partners
2. Responsibility for health and healthcare is shared with communities and across sectors to maximise access to health creating and preventative solutions
3. Everyone can be a leader, leading upwards and outwards; host leadership, that creates the conditions for health, is the norm
4. Communities and workforces across sectors are connected, innovating and problem-solving together drawing on community insight and other data
5. Clinical decisions are shared by clinicians and patients

...for neighbourhood governance, accountability, commissioning

1. The imperative for social justice and social and health equity drives resource allocation decisions
2. Cross-sector/place-based governance to align resources and ensure transparency in decision-making across the three purposes
3. Commissioning supports sustainable health and wellbeing across the three purposes of neighbourhood health
4. Accountability for how local services and pathways are shaped and accessed is to communities
5. Success is measured on outcomes that are meaningful to people and communities

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About this briefing

The generation of this briefing was supported by a group of 'Sector Leads' convened by The Health Creation Alliance. Our thanks go to all those involved: Claire Astbury, Debs Thompson, Kavita Gaur, Matt Brayshaw, Merron Simpson, Moneeza Iqbal, Peter Hay, Rebecca Hunt, Ruw Abeyratne, Stephanie Lee, Warren Heppolette.

We hope the thinking and pictures in this briefing will inspire you to adopt a health creating version of neighbourhood health and continue working towards it. We hope it:

- Offers you a useful vision for what 'good' looks like
- Provides a necessary challenge to everyone involved in developing neighbourhood health
- Recognises existing agency and assets within communities, public services and beyond
- Enables you to see the shifts that need to happen
- Instils hope, energy and confidence for action
- Encourages you to take steps, no matter how small
- Creates a sense of urgency to embrace health creation as the future for neighbourhood health

Interested in working towards health creating neighbourhood health to reduce health inequity?

A Summary of our Learning Programmes

For more information click here
For a no obligation chat, please contact stephanie@thehealthcreationalliance.org