



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Rt Hon Steve Reed OBE MP
*Secretary of State for Housing, Communities
and Local Government*
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

24 April 2026

To: Council Leaders
CC: Chief Executives

Dear Leader,

Health on the High Street

The Government is engaged in a programme of national renewal, driven by an agenda the Chancellor set out last year with 3 principles for reform of: (i) joining up services around people's lives; (ii) stopping problems earlier; and (iii) giving more power to local areas in partnership with communities and civil society

People's lives don't follow the artificial boundaries of the different services that can impact them. Health is not separate from someone's work, from training for a new job, or from reliable public transport to get there.

The highest performing services in the public and private sectors have a strong focus on the needs of their users or customers.

This Government has committed to creating a Neighbourhood Health Service, with more care delivered in communities and services tailored to local people's needs. This will support a shift from crisis towards prevention, leading to better public health and savings for the public purse.

Local authorities have a key role to play in this shift. The Government can't create a system that works for people and places from Whitehall.

As well as improving health outcomes, this is an opportunity to revitalise our high streets and town centres. We all know high streets need to adapt and diversify, given the problems faced by in-person retail. High streets are at the heart of many communities and are usually served by public transport, parking, and amenities. This makes them natural locations for service provision.

There are numerous examples of best practice from across the country. The opening of the Community Diagnostic Centre in Barnsley's Glassworks shopping centre led to a 22% increase in breast screening attendance and a 24% drop in non-attendance. It also contributed to 55,000+ more town centre visits yielding £3.15m+ visitor spend per year.

This is an exciting opportunity to align health and wellbeing, and regeneration objectives, leading to healthier and more prosperous communities. We are writing to urge you to work with your Integrated Care Boards to develop plans that boost public health and support regeneration of high streets.

Neighbourhood Health Centres

On 16th April, the NHS published guidance to NHS regions and ICBs that set out the strategic framework for how ICBs and NHS England regions, working with providers, should identify and develop Neighbourhood Health Centre schemes to support neighbourhood health. The guidance also instructs ICBs and NHS England regions on the planning work now required to develop a coherent pipeline of NHC schemes. The guidance is available here: [NHS England » Neighbourhood health centre guidance for regions and integrated care boards](#)

Neighbourhood Health Centres will be seen as the place to go for most health needs in every community. They will not only bring historically hospital-based services, but may also offer services like debt advice, employment support and smoking cessation services to bring public services together under one roof. They will be open at a minimum from 8am to 8pm, 6 days a week.

We have committed to open 250 Neighbourhood Health Centres – upgrades and new builds, by 2035. At the autumn 2025 budget the Chancellor confirmed funding for 120 centres, with a mix of upgrades and new builds to open by 2030.

The majority of Neighbourhood Health Centres will maximise value for money by repurposing poorly used, existing NHS and public sector estate. We are also challenging ICBs to move out of some of our poorest estate that is not suitable for modern-day healthcare. This will free up funding to run more modern facilities and keep other estate in good condition.

Working with ICBs

To develop proposals for establishing Neighbourhood Health Centres, we expect ICBs to be conducting rapid engagement with key partners, including local authorities. We strongly encourage you to engage proactively with your ICB to ensure proposals take account of, and where possible align with, your local priorities on regeneration (including high streets), public health and economic development.

While all ICBs are required to submit proposals by **June 2026**, we recognise that schemes will come forward at different stages of readiness. Engagement with local authorities at this stage is therefore important both to inform the June pipeline and to help shape longer term neighbourhood health and estate decisions in future phases.

We suggest that you consider the following:

- a) Mapping vacant or/underused properties that could be suitable for delivering neighbourhood health services and align with your regeneration plans. While there is preference for publicly owned properties, highlighting opportunities to broker with cooperative private and third-sector partners.

- b) For local authority owned property, considering whether NHS tenants could be supported with favourable terms where affordable.
- c) Highlighting local authority facilities where co-location with NHS services may be possible, working through One Public Estate partnerships where appropriate.
- d) Proactively engaging ICBs to improve utilisation of NHS estates in town centres, considering opportunities for co-locating services.
- e) Assisting ICBs with convening key local stakeholders and support community engagement.
- f) Considering ways to remove planning barriers to neighbourhood health and include in emerging Local Plans.

We encourage you to work closely with your local ICBs to realise this potential. Our departments are on hand to support and help remove any barriers.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Steve Reed". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

RT HON STEVE REED OBE MP
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government