

Our Reference North East and North Cumbria ICB\
FOI ICB 24–190

NECS – John Snow House
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By Email

17 September 2024

Dear Applicant

Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Request for Information – NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB)

Thank you for your request received by North of England Commissioning Support (NECS) on 29 July 2024 for information held by NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (the ICB) under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The ICB covers the areas of County Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle, North Cumbria, North Tyneside, Northumberland, South Tyneside, Sunderland, and Tees Valley (which covers the five local authorities of Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton-on-Tees).

Please find the information you requested on behalf of the ICB as follows.

Your Request

I would be most grateful if you would provide me, under the Freedom of Information Act, details in respect to the contract below.

Adult Audiology service

1. Please provide a copy of the strategic needs assessment undertaken to help ensure local hearing needs are met.
2. Please provide a copy of the current service specification for adult hearing care, including the KPIs/outcome data that is collected.
3. Commissioning:
 - a. When was the adult hearing care service last commissioned?
 - b. How long was the original contract awarded for under the NHS Procurement, Patient Choice, and Competition Regulations?
 - c. What provisions for extensions were included in the original procurement?
 - d. Please explain any and all extensions to the contract.
 - e. Please provide the quality indicators used to ensure that current adult hearing care services are providing quality and cost-effective care.

f. When will commissioners be reviewing the current contract under the new Provider Selection Regime (PSR), which came into effect on 1 January 2024?

4. Please list all providers that currently offer NHS audiology services in your region.
5. Could you provide any recent patient satisfaction surveys or feedback reports related to adult hearing care services?
6. What are the waiting times for initial consultations and follow-up appointments for adult hearing care services?
7. Are there any ongoing or planned initiatives to improve hearing care services in the region? If so, please provide details.
8. Please provide the budget allocated to adult hearing care services for the current and previous financial year.
9. What measures are in place to address disparities in access to hearing care services among different demographic groups in your region?

To clarify, I would like to confirm that our request pertains to all aspects of adult audiology, covering all regions and all types of contracts.

Our Response

We can confirm, as per Section 1(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the ICB holds some of the information you have requested.

1. There is a national Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) available – please find the link: [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Guidance \(england.nhs.uk\)](https://www.england.nhs.uk/jсна/guidance/)
2. Please refer to the attached spreadsheet. There are no audiology services commissioned in Northumberland and North Tyneside – patients living within these localities utilise services at the Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. In addition, there are no audiology services commissioned within North Cumbria.
3. Please refer to the attached spreadsheet.
4. Please refer to the attached spreadsheet.
5. On this occasion it is not possible to provide the requested information. In line with your rights under section 1(1)(a) of the Act to be informed whether information is held, we confirm the ICB does not hold any of the information requested. However, we have determined that the information is held by the acute hospital NHS foundation trusts (FTs) within the North East and North Cumbria region.

In accordance with our duty under s.16 of the FOIA to provide reasonable advice and assistance to an individual requesting information, we have provided the FOI email addresses for those acute hospitals to make your request.

NENC Acute Hospital FTs	Email
County Durham and Darlington NHS FT	cdda-tr.cddftfoi@nhs.net
Gateshead Health NHS FT	ghnt.foi.enquiries@nhs.net
North Cumbria Integrated Care NHS FT	foirequest@cumbria.nhs.uk
North Tees and Hartlepool NHS FT	foi@nth.nhs.uk
Northumbria Healthcare NHS FT	foi@northumbria.nhs.uk
South Tees Hospitals NHS FT	foi@stees.nhs.uk
South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS FT	stsft.freedomofinformation@nhs.net
The Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS FT	nuth.freedom.information@nhs.net

6. Please refer to the response to question 5.
7. South Tyneside and Sunderland localities undertook a service review of the Adult Audiology services in 2021 to ensure that we were providing the best quality care for patients suffering from hearing loss issues. The review included a robust patient engagement exercise which included a virtual workshop (due to COVID) and targeted surveys to ensure that all patient views informed the new AQP service.
8. Budget allocations are as follows:

Community Based Providers: Opening baseline (plus prior year impact):

2023/24: £6,000,915.29

2024/25 (at month 5): £6,811,650.00

NHS Foundation Trusts: Budgets for the FT are part of a block contract and not broken down at the level requested or available. Please redirect your request to the hospital foundation trusts in the NENC region.

9. In South Tyneside and Sunderland, all patients have equal access to care, treatment and support as our providers must comply with legal equality and human rights requirements, including avoiding discrimination, considering the needs of people with different protected characteristics and making reasonable adjustments. Our AQP services are located in the community and are delivered by 4 providers in the community, and this helps to mitigate any issues as it pertains to access.

In accordance with the Information Commissioner's directive on the disclosure of information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 your request will form part of our disclosure log. Therefore, a version of our response which will protect your anonymity will be posted on the NHS ICB website <https://northeastnorthcumbria.nhs.uk/>.

If you have any queries or wish to discuss the information supplied, please do not hesitate to contact me on the above telephone number or at the above address.

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request and wish to request a review of our decision, you should write to the Senior Governance Manager using the contact details at the top of this letter quoting the appropriate reference number.

If you are not content with the outcome your review, you do have the right of complaint to the Information Commissioner as established by section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Generally, the Information Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by the North of England Commissioning Support Unit.

The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

www.ico.org.uk

Any information we provide following your request under the Freedom of Information Act will not confer an automatic right for you to re-use that information, for example to publish it. If you wish to re-use the information that we provide and you do not specify this in your initial application for information then you must make a further request for its re-use as per the Re-Use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2015 www.legislation.gov.uk . This will not affect your initial information request.

Yours sincerely

S Davies

S Davies
Information Governance Officer