NHS
North East and North Cumbria

Our Reference North East and North Cumbria ICB\ FOI ICB 26–300

North East and North Cumbria ICB
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By Email

12 October 2026

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 on 16 September 2026 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, Newcastle Gateshead, North Cumbria, North Tyneside, Northumberland, South Tyneside, Sunderland, and Tees Valley.

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

Your Request

Under the Freedom of Information Act, I would like to request the following information within the 20-day timeframe from your Integrated Care Board on the following:

1. The total weight of unused prescribed medicines returned to pharmacists in your area for each of the past five financial years from 2020/2021 to 2025/2026. Please advise who weighs the medicines and ideally say if the medicines were returned to hospitals or community pharmacists.
2. The names of the pharmacies to where the drugs were returned.
3. The total cost to incinerate the drugs in each of those five years. Please advise who incinerates them.
4. The name of the drugs brought back within the same years, and an indication of how much those drugs were worth in each of those years.
5. The total population size you serve.

I am happy for you to supply the information in a way that is most convenient for you but is also as clear as possible. Please still provide partial information, if this is all that is available.

Please contact me if you need me to clarify my request or if you need to discuss and come to an agreement on what information could be provided within the time allowance of 18 hours.

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. The total weight of unused prescribed medicines returned to pharmacists in the NENC ICB area is detailed in the table below:

Year	Cost (£)	Weight (kg)
2021/22 (from Sep 2021)	£100,212.91	139,771.5
2022/23	£275,757.74	302,189.5
2023/24	£284,966.71	296,788
2024/25	£222,257.86	242,087.5
2025/26	£124,261	151,088.5
Total	**£1,007,456.22**	**1,131,925**

Note: Values provided in the table above do not differentiate between patient returned medicines and any medicines that a Pharmacy dispose of themselves.

2. The drugs were returned to all community pharmacies across the NENC region.
3. The total cost of unused prescribed medicines returned to pharmacists is detailed in the table above. All of the pharmaceutical waste for the past five financial years was incinerated by Stericycle, an external company.
4. 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
5. The total population size served by NENC ICB is publicly available on the ICB's website at https://northeastnorthcumbria.nhs.uk/about-us/. Therefore, the ICB considers this element of your request exempt from disclosure by way of s.21 as the information is readily accessible by other means.

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 Information 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 ICB's complaints procedure.

The Information Commissioner can be contacted at Information Commissioner's Office, 4th Floor, No. 3 Circle Square, 5 Hawkshaw Street, Manchester, M1 7BL or 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 faithfully

Information Governance Support Officer

Information Governance Support Officer
North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board