

Our Reference North East and North Cumbria ICB\
FOI ICB 26–221

North East and North Cumbria ICB
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By Email

14 August 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 4 August 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

Please treat this email as a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

On 4 August 2026, we were informed of the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board's proposed decision to make a direct award to Dr Julian Medical Group for the provision of BSL-fluent NHS Talking Therapies.

This request seeks to understand the commissioning process, proposed service model and evidence underpinning that decision. In particular, we are seeking assurance that the Health Care Services (Provider Selection Regime) Regulations 2023 and accompanying statutory guidance were correctly applied, including the applicable requirements concerning provider selection, transparency, publication of notices, standstill and the opportunity for affected providers to make representations.

Commissioning process

1. Please confirm the precise Provider Selection Regime process and relevant regulation relied upon, including whether the proposed award was made under Direct Award Process A, B or C, the Most Suitable Provider process, a competitive process, a framework agreement or another route.

2. Please provide the written rationale explaining why that route was considered applicable, together with copies of the relevant decision paper, options appraisal, provider assessment and approval record.
3. Please provide details of all notices published in connection with the proposed award, including the Find a Tender Service reference numbers, publication dates and any applicable standstill or representation deadline.
4. Please provide the assessment of Dr Julian Medical Group against the relevant Provider Selection Regime criteria, including quality, capacity, value for money, integration, health inequalities and social value.

Service specification and clinical capability

5. Please provide the service specification or statement of requirements, together with the proposed contract value, duration, commencement date and mobilisation date.
6. Please confirm whether assessment and therapy will be delivered:
 - directly by appropriately qualified clinicians who are fluent in BSL;
 - by clinicians working through BSL interpreters; or
 - through a combination of both models.
7. Please confirm:
 - the BSL competency level required of clinicians delivering therapy directly in BSL;
 - how that competency has been or will be verified;
 - the number and whole-time-equivalent capacity of appropriately qualified BSL-fluent clinicians committed at mobilisation; and
 - the NHS Talking Therapies steps and treatment modalities that will be available directly in BSL.

(Anonymised or aggregated workforce information will be sufficient. We do not require clinicians' names or other personal information).
8. Please provide the evidence relied upon to determine that the provider has sufficient clinical capacity to offer transferred patients treatment without a significant further wait.

Equality, accessibility and patient choice

9. Please provide copies of any Equality Impact Assessment, Health Inequalities Impact Assessment or equivalent analysis relating to the proposed service and transfer arrangements.
10. Please provide details of how the ICB assessed whether the proposed service would be clinically appropriate and equitable for Deaf BSL users, including any comparison between:
 - therapy delivered directly in BSL by a BSL-fluent clinician; and
 - therapy delivered through a third-party interpreter.

Please include any consideration of therapeutic alliance, confidentiality, clinical risk, engagement, outcomes and access to treatment modalities.

11. Please provide details of any Deaf BSL users, Deaf-led organisations or specialist Deaf mental-health clinicians consulted during the commissioning process. Or in the absence of this, the rationale of why this best practice was avoided?
12. Please provide details of the process the ICB has in place to ensure that affected patients:
 - receive accurate information directly in BSL and in any other required accessible format;
 - understand whether treatment will be delivered directly in BSL or through an interpreter;
 - are informed about available treatments, clinician competency and expected waiting times;
 - can ask questions and make a meaningful, informed decision about transfer;
 - can decline transfer without disadvantage; and
 - are offered an appropriate alternative where the proposed service cannot meet their needs, should it be evident there is a lack of equity.

13. Please provide copies of any patient communications, BSL videos, accessible letters, scripts, frequently asked questions or other materials prepared for this purpose, and confirm which organisation is responsible for producing, quality-assuring and delivering them.

Please provide the information electronically. Where information is already publicly available, please provide the exact document title, notice reference and webpage address.

Where information is withheld, please identify the exemption relied upon and provide the remainder with only exempt material redacted.

Where information relating to Dr Julian Medical Group is considered commercially sensitive, please explain how disclosure would prejudice commercial interests and consider whether it can be provided in redacted, anonymised or aggregated form.

If any part of the request is likely to exceed the appropriate cost limit, please provide advice and assistance under section 16 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, so that the request can be refined. Please continue to respond to the parts that fall within the cost limit.

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 ICB confirms the Provider Selection Regime 2023 Urgent Award process.
2. The rationale for award use is publicly available in the published notice: <https://www.find-tender.service.gov.uk/Notice/074328-2026>. 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.

Minutes of the July 2026 Sub-Committee, where this decision was approved, are not yet ratified and as such are not available currently. The minutes are expected to be ratified in the August 2026 Sub-Committee meeting.

3. Find a Tender Service reference number: Notice identifier: 2026/S 000-074328, publication date 05/08/2026 and any applicable standstill or representation deadline. There is no standstill or representation period with a PSR 2023 Urgent Award.
4. The ICB was required to assess in accordance with the PSR2023 Regulations and NHS England guidelines, and ensured the service being arranged is in scope of PSR2023. An assessment with the requested detail has not been completed.
5. The contract value, duration and commencement date is publicly available at this website: <https://www.find-tender.service.gov.uk/Notice/074328-2026>. 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.

The mobilisation date is expected to be the same as the contract commencement date. A service specification is not currently available and is in development.

6. The contract being enquired about will provide talking therapies services, as per the NHS talking therapies manual, directly by appropriately qualified clinicians who are fluent in BSL.
7. The ICB does not hold information on the first 3 points of your question. The ICB will work with the awarded provider to ensure they have the required competency and capacity to deliver NHS talking therapies in line with the talking therapies manual, including an offer of BSL fluent therapy.

8. Please refer to the response to question 7.
9. An equality impact assessment has not been completed. It will be completed as part of the procurement strategy for future provision.
10. Please refer to the response to question 7.
11. Engagement has not been undertaken at this time due to the urgent nature of the contract awarded. It will be completed as part of the procurement strategy for future provision.
12. In response to points 1 to 4, the ICB will work with the awarded provider to ensure all relevant accessible communications are developed, to enable individuals to make an informed decision about their care.

In response to points 5 and 6, the awarded contract will be the commissioned service in the NENC for BSL fluent talking therapies in the contract term. Individuals will have an informed choice, of the following options; not enter treatment, transfer to the commissioned provision for BSL fluent talking therapy or transfer to a local commissioned provision for talking therapy delivered through a third-party interpreter. If they wish to enter treatment individuals cannot decline a transfer because they cannot be seen by a non-commissioned provider.

13. The copies of communications requested are not developed at this time. The ICB will work with the awarded provider to ensure all relevant accessible communications are developed to enable individuals to make an informed decision about their care. The awarded provider will be responsible for developing these communications alongside the ICB.

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, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF 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**