

Our Reference North East and North Cumbria ICB\
FOI ICB 25–269

North East and North Cumbria ICB
Pemberton House
Colima Avenue
Sunderland Enterprise Park
Sunderland
SR5 3XB

Tel: 0191 512 8484
E-mail: nencicb.foi@nhs.net

By Email

17 October 2025

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 8 October 2025 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

I am making the following request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. It concerns the withdrawal of NHS-funded COVID-19 vaccination for most patient groups in 2025, and the resulting duties of the Integrated Care Board (ICB) under section 117 of the Mental Health Act 1983.

This request concerns information held by the ICB in its capacity as a statutory section 117 aftercare body, irrespective of whether other bodies (such as NHS England or local authorities) also hold related information. Please provide material created, received, or held from 1 January 2023 to the present (or any shorter date range you consider most informative).

Please respond to each numbered request separately.

1. Policies and Guidance

Copies of any policies, protocols, or guidance (including drafts, internal briefings, or emails) which address:

- a. Whether COVID-19 vaccination may be provided under section 117 aftercare.
- b. The circumstances in which provision should be considered.
- c. Funding arrangements or commissioning pathways for such provision.

If none are held, please confirm explicitly.

2. Communications and Instructions

Copies of any communications issued by the ICB to:

a. NHS staff and providers.

b. Local authority partners.

regarding the provision of COVID vaccination under section 117 aftercare. This includes, but is not limited to, letters, emails, circulars, guidance notes, or bulletins.

3. Equality and Risk Assessments

Copies of any risk assessments, equality impact assessments, or governance papers (including draft or unpublished versions) which consider:

a. The impact of the withdrawal of NHS-funded vaccination on people with SMI.

b. The potential role of section 117 aftercare in addressing this impact.

4. Clinical Advice to Practitioners

Copies of any communications, training materials, or briefings provided to mental health practitioners, GPs, or social workers about:

a. Elevated COVID-19 risks for people with SMI.

b. The potential use of section 117 aftercare to support vaccination or related preventive measures.

5. Patient and Carer Information

Please confirm whether the ICB has issued any patient-facing material (letters, leaflets, website content, public notices, etc.) about vaccination access under section 117 aftercare.

If yes, please outline what and provide copies where possible. If none exist, please confirm explicitly.

6. Joint Working

Details of any joint working arrangements or agreements with local authorities or public health teams concerning COVID vaccination access for people with SMI under section 117 aftercare.

7. Budgeting and Funding

Confirmation of whether the ICB has allocated or earmarked funds to support vaccination access for people with SMI under section 117 aftercare, and copies of any related documents.

8. Data and Monitoring

Confirmation of whether the ICB holds any data on the number of people with SMI in its area who have received COVID vaccination since NHS eligibility was restricted, and copies of such data if held in any form (e.g. spreadsheets, reports, dashboards, or extracts from existing datasets).

9. Absence of Information

For each of the above numbered requests, if no information is held, please confirm this explicitly.

For clarity:

Each numbered request above is to be treated as a separate element.

If answering any part would exceed the section 12 FOIA cost limit, please process the remainder in full and specify which part(s) would require narrowing. Please also provide guidance on how those elements may be refined to bring them within scope.

Additional information (context note for WDTK public readers):

People with severe mental illness (SMI) were previously prioritised for NHS COVID-19 vaccination because of higher risk. In 2025, most people with SMI are no longer eligible through standard NHS provision, which has been tightly restricted due to policy and funding decisions despite ongoing greater clinical risk in this group.

Under section 117 of the Mental Health Act 1983, ICBs and councils must provide free aftercare to meet needs linked to mental disorder or to reduce relapse and readmission. This duty is broad — it can include physical health measures if needed to protect mental health stability.

COVID vaccination remains available privately through high street pharmacies (for example, Boots and others) at costs often around £100 per dose. This is a significant expense for people on low incomes, but a reasonable and proportionate intervention under section 117 aftercare.

This request asks whether the ICB has considered COVID vaccination as part of s117 aftercare, and how patients, carers, and practitioners have been informed. People with SMI should know that s117 aftercare is free and may include funding for private vaccination where needed to prevent deterioration.

Our Response

We can confirm, as per Section 1(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the ICB on this occasion is not able 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 NHS England.

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 address for NHS England – england.contactus@nhs.net. Please write “Freedom of Information” in the subject line.

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**