

Our Reference North East and North Cumbria ICB\
FOI ICB 25-396

North East and North Cumbria ICB
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By Email

13 January 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 26 December 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 writing to request the following information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 regarding the assessment, referral, commissioning, and management of patients with suspected or diagnosed irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) within your Integrated Care Board (ICB) area.

Please provide the information outlined below for each of the last five financial years, unless otherwise stated.

1. IBS Patient Referrals

- a. The number of patients diagnosed with IBS who were referred to gastroenterology services.
- b. The number of patients diagnosed with IBS who were referred to dietetic services.

2. GP Workforce, Training, and Clinical Guidance

- a. The number of GPs currently employed or contracted within your ICB who have additional training, accreditation, or a declared special interest in gut health, gastroenterology, or IBS.
- b. The guidelines, diagnostic criteria, and clinical pathways followed by GPs when assessing patients with suspected IBS (e.g., NICE guidance, local pathways, required investigations, and red-flag exclusions).

3. Referral Pathways and Waiting Lists

- a. The process for referring an IBS patient to a gastroenterologist.
- b. The current number of IBS patients on the gastroenterology waiting list and the average current waiting time for a first appointment.
- c. The process for referring an IBS patient to a dietitian.
- d. The current number of IBS patients on the dietetic waiting list and the average current waiting time for a first appointment.

4. Patient Complaints and Diagnostic Safety (Past 5 Years)

Please provide the number of complaints received relating to:

- a. Incorrect or inappropriate advice given by a GP to a patient with IBS.
- b. Misdiagnosis involving IBS (including IBS misdiagnosed as another condition, or another condition misdiagnosed as IBS).
- c. The steps taken by the ICB over the last five years to improve the quality of IBS diagnosis, referral accuracy, GP advice, and patient safety.

5. Commissioning, Oversight, and Quality Improvement

- a. Does the ICB commission any specialist IBS clinics, multidisciplinary gut health services, or community-based IBS programmes? If so, please describe these services.
- b. Has the ICB identified any service gaps for IBS care in its commissioning assessments or needs analyses?
- c. Does the ICB audit GP adherence to NICE IBS guidelines? If so, please provide details of the most recent audits.
- d. Has the ICB conducted any ICS-wide reviews of IBS diagnostic practices in the last five years?
- e. Does the ICB provide or commission any digital tools, online self-management resources, or mobile applications for IBS care?

If any portion of this request cannot be fulfilled, please provide advice and assistance in accordance with Section 16 of the Freedom of Information Act.

Our Response

1. 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.
2. Please refer to the response to question 1.
3. Please refer to the response to question 1.
4. NENC ICB took responsibility for primary care complaints from 1 July 2023. For the period prior primary care complaints were managed by NHS England.

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 the level of detail to provide the information requested for the period from 1 July 2023 to date.

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 contact email for NHS England – england.contactus@nhs.net – to request the information requested prior to July 2023. Please write “Freedom of Information” in the subject line.

5. Please refer to the response to question 1.

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**