

Our Reference North East and North Cumbria ICB\
FOI ICB 25–186

North East and North Cumbria ICB
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By Email

27 August 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 7 August 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

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I am requesting the following information in relation to contracts between NHS North East and North Cumbria ICB (or any predecessor CCGs) and **Vocare Limited / Totally PLC** for urgent care and out-of-hours services:

1. Contract Renewal Decisions:
 - Copies of any internal reports, briefing notes, meeting minutes, emails, or correspondence relating to:
 - The decision not to renew or reprocure contracts with Vocare/Totally PLC between January 2024 and June 2025.
 - Any assessment of risk or performance that influenced this decision.
2. Financial Risk or Due Diligence:
 - Any documents (including internal or external financial assessments) discussing financial stability, viability, or concerns about Totally PLC or Vocare Limited in the period January 2024 to June 2025.
 - Any communication with NHS England or other NHS bodies regarding the financial position of Totally PLC.
3. Early Awareness of Administration or Sale to PHL:
 - Any correspondence, meeting notes, or reports discussing:

- The possibility or likelihood of Totally PLC entering administration before the official notice on 6 June 2025.
 - Any communications with PHL or advisors regarding the pre-pack sale.
4. Communications With Providers or Stakeholders:
- Any emails or letters sent by the ICB to:
 - Staff, subcontractors, locums, or unions affected by the change in provider.
 - PHL regarding the transition of services, responsibilities, and liabilities.

Please provide electronic copies of the requested materials. If redactions are necessary for data protection, please still include redacted versions where possible. If any of these requests are unclear, I'm happy to refine them. If the cost exceeds the appropriate limit, please advise on how to narrow the request.

Our Response

We can confirm, as per Section 1(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the ICB does hold the information requested.

1. The ICB has not been in a position to not renew or reprocure contracts with Vocare/Totally PLC between January 2024 and June 2025.

The ICB has reprocured GP Out of Hours (OOH) provision between those dates in order to meet national procurement requirements as the existing contracts were due to expire. Further contract extensions were not permissible within the procurement legislative requirements except for any emergency situation which may have arisen during the procurement process.

To ensure there was no gap in provision for patients while the procurement process was being undertaken, the ICB did award an urgent direct award contract to Vocare Limited on 1 June 2024 for the Newcastle geography. This arose as the existing contract between Vocare and Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust had ended. The urgent direct award contract expired when the procurement process ended and the new contract with the ICB was mobilised.

The GP OOH provision for Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland was reprocured in line with contractual and procurement requirements.

No decision was made not to renew or reprocure with Vocare, Totally PLC between these dates therefore the ICB does not have any information to share.

2. As part of all procurements, the ICB undertakes the appropriate financial due diligence at that point in time in the procurement process and that during that period of time (January 2024 – June 2025) there were no concerns on financial stability or viability from a procurement perspective.

The ICB received no communication from NHS England or other NHS bodies regarding the financial position of Totally PLC.

3. No correspondence was received by the ICB from Totally PLC/Vocare regarding the possibility or likelihood of Totally PLC entering administration before the official notice on 6 June 2025.

The ICB received no communications from PHL or advisors regarding the pre-pack sale from PHL or advisors.

4. The ICB does not have legal or contractual responsibility for communication to PHL staff, subcontractors or locums in relation to the change in provider from Vocare/Totally PLC to PHL.

Any individual communications that have been received from subcontractors have been responded to, but details have not been shared as part of this FOI for confidentiality reasons.

One GP union has emailed the ICB, and a response has been provided.

The ICB has met with PHL since the pre-pack sale and announcement of Totally PLC/Vocare going into administration regarding the due diligence requirements for the transition of the GP Out of Hours contract from Vocare/Totally PLC. That process, at the time of responding to this FOI request, is continuing.

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 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

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North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board**