

Our Reference North East and North Cumbria ICB\
FOI ICB 25–184

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By Email

16 September 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 6 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

I am writing to request the following information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, in relation to the NHS England guidance “Excellence in Continence Care” (published July 2018). The guidance outlines best practice in the commissioning and delivery of high-quality continence services for adults and children.

1. Commissioning of Integrated Continence Services

The guidance recommends that ICBs commission integrated, person-centred continence services spanning primary, community and secondary care (p.6–7).

- Does North East and North Cumbria commission an integrated continence care pathway that includes both adult and paediatric services?
- Are community-based continence services available to all residents within North East and North Cumbria area?
- Are continence services commissioned as a standalone service or embedded within other service pathways (e.g. urology, district nursing, care of older people)?

2. First-Line Assessment and Early Intervention

The guidance states that all patients with continence issues should receive a timely and comprehensive assessment, with early conservative management as first-line treatment (p.7, p.11).

- a. What is the current average and maximum waiting time for an initial continence assessment within North East and North Cumbria footprint?
 - b. Are assessments carried out by trained continence specialists or general staff?
 - c. Do your commissioned services routinely offer conservative management options (e.g. bladder training, pelvic floor exercises, dietary advice) before progressing to containment products or specialist referral?
3. Containment Products and Personalisation
The guidance recommends that containment products should only be offered after assessment and as part of a personalised care plan (p.14).
- a. Does North East and North Cumbria commission containment products for continence care directly, or delegate this to other providers (e.g. community nursing)?
 - b. Is there a policy or protocol in place to ensure containment products are only supplied after full assessment and as part of an agreed care plan?
4. Care in Residential and Domiciliary Settings
The guidance calls for continence care to be embedded within residential, domiciliary and supported living care pathways (p.8, p.17).
- a. Does North East and North Cumbria provide specific continence care training or protocols for care home and domiciliary care staff?
 - b. Is continence assessment and management part of the contractual requirements for care home providers commissioned by North East and North Cumbria?
5. Children and Young People
The guidance highlights the importance of commissioning age-appropriate continence services for children and young people (p.19).
- a. Does North East and North Cumbria commission a dedicated paediatric continence service?
 - b. Are school nursing teams supported with training or resources to manage continence needs in educational settings?
 - c. What is the referral pathway for children with daytime and/or night-time continence issues in your area?
6. Workforce and Training
"Excellence in Continence Care" states that commissioners should ensure a skilled workforce with appropriate training in continence care (p.10, p.15).
- a. Does North East and North Cumbria require continence training for primary care, community nursing, and social care staff?
 - b. Have any specific continence-related training sessions or professional development programmes been commissioned since 2020?
7. Data, Outcomes and Service Evaluation
The guidance recommends data collection on service usage, outcomes, and patient experience to improve quality and cost-effectiveness (p.20–21).
- a. Does North East and North Cumbria routinely collect data on continence service outcomes or patient satisfaction?
 - b. If yes, please provide the most recent evaluation or audit findings relating to continence care.
 - c. Does North East and North Cumbria use this data to inform service planning or pathway redesign?

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.

County Durham place

1. Commissioning of Integrated Continence Services

- a. NENC ICB in County Durham commissions County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust (CDDFT) to provide a paediatric continence service and an adults community continence service, in two separate contracts.

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 CDDFT – cdda-tr.cddftfoi@nhs.net – to allow you to make a request to them.

- b. Please refer to the response to question 1a.
- c. CDDFT does not deliver urology services for NENC ICB.

2. First-Line Assessment and Early Intervention

- a. 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 for County Durham ICB place.
- b. NENC ICB commissions the provider to employ specialist staff which are trained, experienced and can fully understand the implications/impact of incontinence on the health and wellbeing. Across the adult service, this includes band 5, 6 and 7 staff.
- c. Adults community continence service provides management of continence containment products and promotion of continence through advice and intervention. Both areas cover male and female patients with urinary, faecal or mixed incontinence. Promotion of continence is only to people over 16 years of age. Access is 08.30 – 16.30, Monday to Friday. The continence containment products are managed jointly with C3 and is largely telephone based. The promotion of continence is by face-to-face specialist assessment and intervention. Patients are seen in clinic or at home if they are unable to attend clinic.

The aim of intervention is to resolve or improve continence or where this is not possible, to manage incontinence. Interventions may include education and advice, teach pelvic floor exercises or use of biofeedback or stim. Equally, they may teach Intermittent self-catheterisation/ Intermittent self-dilatation, bowel management and tras-anal irrigation, provision of specialist continence accessories, advise on medication (some of the team are supplementary prescribers) or recommend referral on to a specialist. The team work closely with other service e.g. Constipation service, District Nurses, MS nurses.

3. Containment Products and Personalisation

- a. Please refer to the attached service specification.
- b. Please refer to the attached service specification.

4. Care in Residential and Domiciliary Settings

Please refer to the response to question 1a.

5. Children and Young People

- a. County Durham place commissions County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust (CDDFT) to provide a paediatric continence service.
 - b. Please refer to the attached service specification.
 - c. Please refer to the attached service specification.
6. Workforce and Training
- a. Please refer to the attached service specification.
 - b. Please refer to the attached service specification.
7. Data, Outcomes and Service Evaluation
- 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 for County Durham ICB place.

Gateshead place

1. Commissioning of Integrated Continence Services
- a. Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust (GHFT) are commissioned to provide separate Adult Bladder and Bowel and Children's Bladder and Bowel Services to the population of Gateshead.
 - b. Please refer to the response to question 1a.
 - c. The Bladder and Bowel services form part of the suite of Community Services provided under the GHFT Community Contract with NENC ICB.
2. First-Line Assessment and Early Intervention
- a. As of July 2025, within the respective GHFT provided services:
Adult – 199 patients on the waiting list, waiting between 0-9 weeks
Children – 0 patients on the waiting list
 - b. The bladder and bowel service consists of a team of specialist nurses who are trained to support individuals with bladder and bowel problems.

The team of specialist nurses are trained to offer individuals with bladder and bowel problems support and advice. Following referral to the service, patients will receive a comprehensive bladder and bowel assessment. This will be carried out by a specialist nurse with a treatment programme tailored to suit individual needs. Patients may then be seen in a clinic for a more in-depth consultation and examination. Patients will be seen at home where appropriate.

- c. 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 GHFT.

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 addresses for GHFT – ghnt.foi.enquiries@nhs.net – to make your request.

3. Containment Products and Personalisation
- a. Yes, as prescribed by Specialist Nurse.
 - b. Please refer to the response to question 2c.

4. Care in Residential and Domiciliary Settings
 - a. 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.
 - b. Please refer to the response to question 4a.
5. Children and Young People
 - a. North East and North Cumbria commissions a dedicated paediatric continence service in Gateshead.
 - b. Please refer to the response to question 2c for Gateshead.
 - c. Referrals are made into the service via Health Professionals (Health Visitor, School Nurse, GP) for patients 0-19 years old Registered with a Gateshead GP who require level 2 bladder and bowel support.
6. Workforce and Training
 - a. Please refer to the response to question 4a.
 - b. Please refer to the response to question 4a.
7. Data, Outcomes and Service Evaluation
 - a. Yes, North East and North Cumbria routinely collect data on continence service outcomes or patient satisfaction in Gateshead.
 - b. There has been no recent evaluation and Friends and Family Tests Results are for GHFT Community services as a whole, though the July 2025 results showed that 100% of patients scored their experience at either Good or Very Good.
 - c. Yes, in Gateshead, data is used to inform service planning and any redesign.

Newcastle place

n 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 for Newcastle ICB place.

North Cumbria place

1. Commissioning of Integrated Continence Services
 - a. North Cumbria Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust (NCIC) provides adult bladder and bowel service in North Cumbria only. NCIC provide paediatric bladder and bowel service for North and South Cumbria.
 - b. Adult clinics are held in Workington, Wigton, Carlisle and Penrith. In-reach is provided to residential care homes and nursing homes. Home visits are offered to patient who are unable to attend a clinic appointment. Paediatric clinics are held in Carlisle & Workington. We have held occasional clinics in Penrith as needed. We also offer home visits if needed.
 - c. Adult services are commissioned as standalone services. Paediatric services are commissioned alongside the Children's community nurses.
2. First-Line Assessment and Early Intervention
 - a. The Adult Bladder & Bowel Service provide both L1 & L2 Assessment:
 - L1 – Continence assessment. If the patient is known to the Community Nursing Team, the Community Nurse will complete the L1 continence assessment. If the patient is not known to the Community Nursing Team, the Bladder & Bowel Service will complete the continence assessment.

- L2 – Carry a caseload of patients with complex bladder and/or bowel dysfunction. Paediatric bladder & bowel in North Cumbria has a waiting list time of 5-6 months.
- b. Assessment activity:
Adult Bladder & Bowel Service:
- L1 – Continence Assessment. Carried out by B5 and above Registered Nurse or B4 Assistant Practitioner.
 - L2 – Assessment. Carried out by B6 Registered Nurse who has completed an accredited post registration academic qualification.
- All paediatric initial assessments are carried out by Band 6 or 7 Registered Nurses.
- c. The Adult Bladder & Bowel Service provides all patients with assessment and where possible a treatment option for their Bladder and Bowel dysfunction before a containment management product is offered or implemented. All children/young persons are given a care plan/toileting plan +/- treatment for 3-6 months before a containment product is offered.
3. Containment Products and Personalisation
- a. Both Adult and Children's Services commission containment products for continence care directly. The current provider is Abena, although this contract is currently with procurement for re-tender.
- b. Adult patients who provide a positive response to the trigger questions, "Does your bladder or bowel ever / sometimes cause you problems?" must be offered a comprehensive continence assessment in accordance with national policy (ACA/RCN 2017, NHSE 2018). This includes adults where it is known or anticipated there may be difficulties with maintaining bladder and/ or bowel health. For example, individuals living with mental health conditions, learning disabilities, dementia or frailty. NCIC holds the policy for continence assessment and provision of containment products for children & young people, please redirect your question to the trust.
4. Care in Residential and Domiciliary Settings
- a. The Adult Bladder & Bowel Service provide Bladder and Bowel Awareness Carer Training. This training is open to any staff member involved in caring for patients including residential and nursing home staff, private carers and allied health professionals as well as NCIC care staff. The training is run monthly and can support 25 candidates on each session.
- b. No, continence assessments are carried out by either a B5 or above Registered Nurse or B4 Assistant Practitioner. If the patient is known to the Community Nursing Team, they will complete the continence assessment, if not the Adult Bladder & Bowel Service will complete the assessment.
5. Children and Young People
- a. Yes, NENC ICB does commission a dedicated paediatric continence service in North Cumbria.
- b. Public health nurses are commissioned by the Local Authorities, Cumberland and Westmorland & Furness.
- c. They support with level 1 work. NENC ICB is not involved with training of staff at this time. Resources are shared freely for staff to use.
- d. Referral sent to business support in Barrow or Carlisle. Triage is completed weekly. Acceptance letter with tier one information & stool/fluid charts sent to child/young person. Stool/fluid charts (48 hrs) to be completed and returned to business support within a month. Initial appointment booked when charts are returned
6. Workforce and Training

- a. The Adult Bladder & Bowel Service provide the following training:
 - Bladder Awareness training (Including Abena assessor training for those requiring this element)
 - Digital Rectal Examination (DRE) training
 - Bladder and Bowel Awareness – Carer Training
 - Bladder and Bowel Link Clinician sessions

For children's services, we offer training for carers and education staff in Intermittent catheter care, ACE procedures, Trans anal irrigation and enemas.

- b. The Adult Bladder & Bowel Team have a clear plan for professional development (although not specifically commissioned). CPD is usually linked with organisations that include Bladder & Bowel UK, Coloplast and the Association for Continence Professionals (ACP). The Adult Bladder & Bowel Team will also link with relevant companies for bespoke training on clinical devices.

There have been no specific commissioned sessions for children.

7. Data, Outcomes and Service Evaluation

- a. The Adult Bladder & Bowel Service has a robust framework for collection of data that enables informed decision making, improving operational efficiency and enhancing patient experience. The Adult Bladder & Bowel Service also collect and analyse patient experience feedback. The paediatric bladder & bowel service have a QR code for Child/young person & parents/carers to leave their feedback.
- b. 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 North Cumbria Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust.

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 addresses for the trust – foirequest@cumbria.nhs.uk – to make your request.

- c. Yes, as listed in question 7a.

The service specification attached documents the pathways and details of the Continence Service within North Cumbria ICB place.

North Tyneside and Northumberland place

1. Commissioning of Integrated Continence Services

- a. A pathway is commissioned in North Tyneside. A pathway is not commissioned in Northumberland; however, a business case is in progress.
- b. Yes, there is a community continence service for adults in Northumberland and North Tyneside and for children also in North Tyneside provided by Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust.
- c. The tier 2 community continence service is a stand-alone service however there are links to all relevant pathways.

2. First-Line Assessment and Early Intervention

- a. There is approximately a 3-month wait for continence assessments, unless there is a need to see urgently.
- b. Assessments are carried out by trained staff within the tier 2 continence team.

- c. Yes, there is a graduated approach to intervention and support before containment products or a specialist referral.
3. Containment Products and Personalisation
 - a. Products in Northumberland and North Tyneside come via a referral to the Home Delivery Service (HDS) team who have a shared inbox.
 - b. The PAST (Product Assessment Scoring Tool) for children is completed in Northumberland by a health visitor or relevant person. In North Tyneside, children and adults undergo a full assessment process before the supply of containment products.
4. Care in Residential and Domiciliary Settings

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 for Northumberland and North Tyneside ICB place.
5. Children and Young People
 - a. There is a dedicated paediatric pathway in North Tyneside as part of the tier 2 continence community service.
 - b. Yes, school nursing teams are trained in ERIC in Northumberland in addition in North Tyneside where there is a dedicated tier 2 children's continence service there is the offer of additional support and training from them to school nurses and staff within education settings.
 - c. Bedwetting:
 - Referred to the 0–19 services across Northumberland and North Tyneside.
 - In North Tyneside these mainly come via education staff in Northumberland the referrals come through 2 main routes via the Front Door through a MARF or a direct referral from a social worker to the single point of contact.
 - If the child is deemed not appropriate in Northumberland for this pathway, then they will be offered a Family health needs assessment at home and 1-1 support tailored to the child's needs, in North Tyneside if the child is deemed as more complex the school nursing team will refer on to the tier 2 paediatric continence community service. This includes children who were dry for 6 months and then begin wetting again.

Daytime wetting:

 - Often linked to constipation.
 - Medication titration might be required (dosage adjustments).
 - All children receive a bowel chart as many wetting issues are linked to bowels.
6. Workforce and Training
 - a. The Tier 2 community continence service In North Tyneside provides training across the system.
 - b. There have been no specific training sessions commissioned.
7. Data, Outcomes and Service Evaluation
 - a. Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust collect data in house relation to their tier 2 service community service to support the team, data has been more difficult to extract in terms of secondary care paediatrics.
 - b. Please refer to the response to question 7a.
 - c. Please refer to the response to question 7a.

South Tyneside and Sunderland place

1. Commissioning of Integrated Continence Services
 - a. South Tyneside and Sunderland have an all-age continence pathway. The CYP element is currently under review.
 - b. Community-based continence services available to all residents within South Tyneside and Sunderland.
 - c. The continence service is commissioned as a standalone service.
2. First-Line Assessment and Early Intervention

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 for South Tyneside and Sunderland ICB place.
3. Containment Products and Personalisation
 - a. Products are commissioned via the South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust Bladder and Bowel Service.
 - b. Please refer to the response to question 2 for South Tyneside and Sunderland.
4. Care in Residential and Domiciliary Settings

Please refer to the response to question 2 for South Tyneside and Sunderland.
5. Children and Young People
 - a. South Tyneside & Sunderland have an all-age continence pathway. The CYP element is currently under review.
 - b. School nursing is commissioned through Public Health.
 - c. CYP with daytime or nighttime continence issues must complete a level one assessment (this is usually done by the health visitor, specialist health visitor, GP, school nurse, community nurse learning disability or CCN). Following completion of level one assessment, the CYP will be reviewed and a referral to level 2 (paediatric specialist continence nurse) will be made.
6. Workforce and Training

Please refer to the response to question 2 for South Tyneside and Sunderland.
7. Data, Outcomes and Service Evaluation

Please refer to the response to question 2 for South Tyneside and Sunderland.

Tees Valley place

In Tees Valley ICB place, continence services are delivered by Trust/community services. 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 addresses for the foundation trusts in the Tees Valley area to make your request.

NENC Acute Hospital FTs	Email
County Durham and Darlington NHS FT	cdda-tr.cddftfoi@nhs.net
North Tees and Hartlepool NHS FT	foi@nth.nhs.uk
South Tees Hospitals NHS FT	foi@stees.nhs.uk

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**