

Our Reference North East and North Cumbria ICB\
FOI ICB 25–353

North East and North Cumbria ICB
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By Email

12 December 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 2 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

This request is submitted under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Please treat each numbered question as separable should any exemption or time-limit issue arise. If full copies of policies or data cannot be released, please provide summary information or confirm where such data are held.

1. Commissioning Responsibility and Policy Alignment
 - a. Which organisation currently holds commissioning responsibility for LAAC (Left Atrial Appendage Closure) services in your region (e.g. regional specialised commissioning team, delegated ICBs, or NHS England national team)?
 - b. Does your organisation currently follow the NHS England national commissioning policy for LAAC (2018, updated 2023), or has a local policy or adaptation been developed? If a local policy, pathway, or protocol exists, please provide a copy or link.
 - c. If a local policy is under development or review, please confirm:
 - Expected date of publication or implementation.
 - Whether this is being coordinated with NHS England or local ICBs.
 - d. Has any local clarification or interpretation been issued to providers since the 2023/24 delegation of specialised services?
 - For example, memoranda, board papers, or internal briefings regarding LAAC commissioning responsibilities.

- If so, please provide.

2. Current Service Provision and Activity Levels

- Please list all NHS Trusts or provider sites currently authorised or contracted to deliver LAAC procedures within your region.
- Have any provider sites been rejected to deliver LAAC, and if so why and when?
- Please provide if any new sites are going through approval for delivering LAAC and also when they are expected to be live.
- Has your region set any activity targets, trajectories, or expectations for LAAC growth toward the 1,000-procedure national projection referenced in the NHS England commissioning policy? If yes, please provide details or supporting documentation.

3. Funding and Commissioning Approach

- Under which funding or contracting model are LAAC procedures currently commissioned (e.g. specialised contract, delegated ICB funding, block arrangement, tariff)?
- Has your organisation made any local amendments or clarifications to the national tariff or payment mechanism for LAAC?

4. Forward Planning for 2026/27

- Is your organisation undertaking, or planning, a review of LAAC service commissioning as part of its specialised cardiac or cardiovascular plans for 2026/27?
- Has LAAC been referenced in any regional delivery plan, stroke prevention strategy, or specialised cardiac service plan for 2026/27? If so, please provide a copy or extract.
- Who is the designated commissioning or clinical lead for LAAC or specialised cardiac services within your region? (Name and title if publicly available.)

5. Supporting Information

If available, please share any local needs assessment or modelling undertaken to estimate the potential eligible LAAC population within your region.

Further Clarification

Further to my initial FOI submission, I realised I omitted some contextual information.

It is our understanding that NHS England has formally delegated 59 specialised services to ICBs and regions (NHS England Board Paper, 5 December 2024 – Annex A). This includes Adult Specialist Cardiac Services, specifically: 13T – Complex Interventional Cardiology, under which LAAC/LAAO sits.

NHS England’s “Cascade Delegation: Commissioning Integration” guidance confirms that ICBs now hold responsibility for:

- commissioning,
- service oversight,
- activity and planning,
- and implementation of national policies for all delegated services.

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. Commissioning Responsibility and Policy Alignment
 - a. NENC ICB currently holds commissioning responsibility for LAAC (Left Atrial Appendage Closure) services in the north east and north Cumbria region
 - b. Yes, the organisation follows the NHS England national commissioning policy for LAAC (2018, updated 2023).
 - c. There is no local policy under development.
 - d. There has been no local clarification or interpretation issued to providers since the 2023/24 delegation of specialised services.
2. Current Service Provision and Activity Levels
 - a. The NHS foundation trusts (FTs) delivering LAAC procedures within the NENC region are the Newcastle-upon-Tyne Hospitals NHS FT and South Tees Hospitals NHS FT.
 - b. No provider sites been rejected to deliver LAAC.
 - c. There are no new sites are going through approval for delivering LAAC.
 - d. No, the region has not set any activity targets, trajectories, or expectations for LAAC growth toward the 1,000-procedure national projection referenced in the NHS England commissioning policy? If yes, please provide details or supporting documentation.
3. Funding and Commissioning Approach
 - a. LAAC procedures currently commissioned on a block arrangement.
 - b. There have been no local amendments or clarifications to the national tariff or payment mechanism for LAAC.
4. Forward Planning for 2026/27
 - a. NENC ICB is not undertaking, or planning, a review of LAAC service commissioning.
 - b. LAAC has not been referenced in any ICB delivery plan, stroke prevention strategy, or specialised cardiac service plan for 2026/27.
 - c. There is no commissioning or clinical lead for LAAC or specialised cardiac services within NENC ICB.
5. Supporting Information

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.

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**