

Our Reference North East and North Cumbria ICB\
FOI ICB 25–058

North East and North Cumbria ICB
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By Email

19 June 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 21 May 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 under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to make a new request for information regarding my previous FOI (FOI ICB 24–511, dated 30 March 2025), which sought minutes or notes from Independent Oversight Group (IOG) meetings held between October 2023 and July 2024.

To oversee the implementation of the Dame Marianne Griffiths review recommendations for the North East Ambulance Service (NEAS).

Your internal review response (21 May 2025) provided a link to the “NEAS Improvement Journey” presentation (<https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fnortheastnorthcumbria.nhs.uk%2Fmedia%2F4yldgrgg%2Fneas-improvement-journey.pdf&data=05%7C02%7Cnencicb.foi%40nhs.net%7Cecd2eccde3ee48f393f908dd988af21b%7C37c354b285b047f5b22207b48d774ee3%7C0%7C1%7C638834444725307492%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOilwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMilslkFOIjoiTWFpbGlldUljoyfQ%3D%3D%7C60000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=%2BYt6oXerCNbT49dl6DusMu3upHFPDn9LrhgPIM4sl1o%3D&reserved=0>) but did not confirm whether this contains IOG-specific minutes or notes. Additionally, your initial response (17 April 2025) stated that the

ICB holds “some” information but provided irrelevant documents (25 July 2023 board papers and 30 July 2024 AGM slides).

I request the following:

1. Confirmation of whether the “NEAS Improvement Journey” presentation contains minutes or notes from IOG meetings held between October 2023 and July 2024.
2. If not, confirmation of whether the ICB holds any IOG meeting records (e.g., formal minutes, informal notes, or reports of IOG discussions) and, if none are held, an explanation of why (e.g., not recorded, held by NEAS or NHS England).
3. A detailed description of the ICB’s search efforts for IOG minutes/notes, including which records were reviewed.
4. Given the public interest in transparency due to the NEAS scandal’s severity, allegations of covered-up patient deaths, systemic failures, and families’ disappointment (Chronicle Live, 24 July 2024), please provide any relevant documents in redacted form if exemptions (e.g., Section 40, personal data) apply, with a public interest test explanation.

Please acknowledge receipt and respond within 20 working days, as per the FOIA.

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 cannot confirm whether the “NEAS Improvement Journey” presentation contains minutes or notes from IOG meetings held between October 2023 and July 2024. NEAS gave the presentation and were responsible for the content which does include an IOG timeline. You may wish to redirect your request to NEAS, using the email publicrelations@neas.nhs.uk
2. We can confirm, as per Section 1(1) of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000, the ICB does hold IOG meeting records and these are attached. However, names of individuals in those records are exempt from disclosure under s.40(2) of the FOIA2000 as it would constitute personal data as defined by Article 4(1) of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).

Section 40(8) of FOIA confirms that for the purposes of considering disclosure, a public authority may consider the legitimate interest's lawful basis for processing. In considering the balance between identified legitimate interests and the rights and interests of the individuals concerned, we must consider if the proposed disclosure would be within the reasonable expectations of the individual when the data was collected.

We believe that disclosure of the personal information relating to these individuals would be contrary to the requirements of Article 5(1)(a) of the GDPR; namely that information must be processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner. These individuals would have no expectation that this information would be made publicly available, and we have not identified a lawful basis that would allow or require us to disclose this information.

We have followed the Information Commissioner's guidance in assessing whether it is fair to disclose the information under FOIA. This involves considering the nature of the information, the expectations of, and potential harm (of disclosure) to, the data subjects, and how any legitimate public interest in this information is balanced against the rights and freedoms of the data subjects.

In considering a disclosure under FOIA, we must consider that any information released under the Act will be placed in the public domain, through our own disclosure log or by other means. Where information has been removed from the accompanying file, we have replaced the text with a black rectangle.

3. The process was to send a retrieval request to Directors of Nursing for information held. They provided links to board meetings and advice to redirect. They also referred the FOI team to other staff who they believed held information.
4. Meeting minutes are the formal records of discussions held. Please find the minutes attached in our response to question 2.

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

**Information Governance Support Officer
North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board**