

Our Reference North East and North Cumbria ICB\
FOI ICB 24-477

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By Email

1 April 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 by North of England Commissioning Support (NECS) on 4 March 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, Gateshead, Newcastle, North Cumbria, North Tyneside, Northumberland, South Tyneside, Sunderland, and Tees Valley (which covers the five local authorities of Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton-on-Tees).

Please find the information you requested on behalf of the ICB as follows.

Your Request

I am writing to you under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request the following information:

Stool Tests

1. Are (a) quantitative faecal immunochemical test and (b) faecal calprotectin tests available in primary care in your area and for what indications?
2. If they are not available, please list the area(s) where faecal calprotectin tests are unavailable.

Diagnostic Pathways

3. How many diagnostic pathways do you currently have for patients presenting with Lower gastrointestinal symptoms?
4. Please can you list the titles of the pathways
5. Which of these pathways include the usage of faecal calprotectin test?

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. Yes, these tests are available in County Durham place. FIT is available to clinical staff for investigation after initial assessment as per NICE guidelines. Faecal calprotectin is available to clinical staff for further investigation after initial assessment if suspecting inflammatory bowel disease.
2. Please refer to the response to question 1.
3. There are no specific lower GI diagnostic pathways.
4. Please refer to the response to question 3.
5. GPs in County Durham have a referral pathway for 2WW lower bowel symptoms as well as general referral route to secondary care colorectal service for bowel symptoms. The ICB holds no further details of specific referral pathways for lower bowel symptoms.

Gateshead place

1. Yes, these tests are available in Gateshead place.
2. Please refer to the response to question 1.
3. 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 Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust (GHFT). All pathways are via GHFT.

In accordance with our duty under s.16 of the FOIA to provide reasonable advice and assistance to an individual requesting information, the FOI email address for GHFT is ghnt.foi.enquiries@nhs.net

4. Please refer to the response to question 3.
5. Please refer to the response to question 3.

Newcastle place

1. Yes, these tests are available in Newcastle place. The quantitative faecal immunochemical test is available for testing Bowel cancer. The faecal calprotectin tests is available in primary care in your area and for testing inflammatory bowel disease.
2. Please refer to the response to question 1.
3. NENC ICB does not hold this information in Newcastle place.
4. Please refer to the response to question 3.
5. Please refer to the response to question 3.

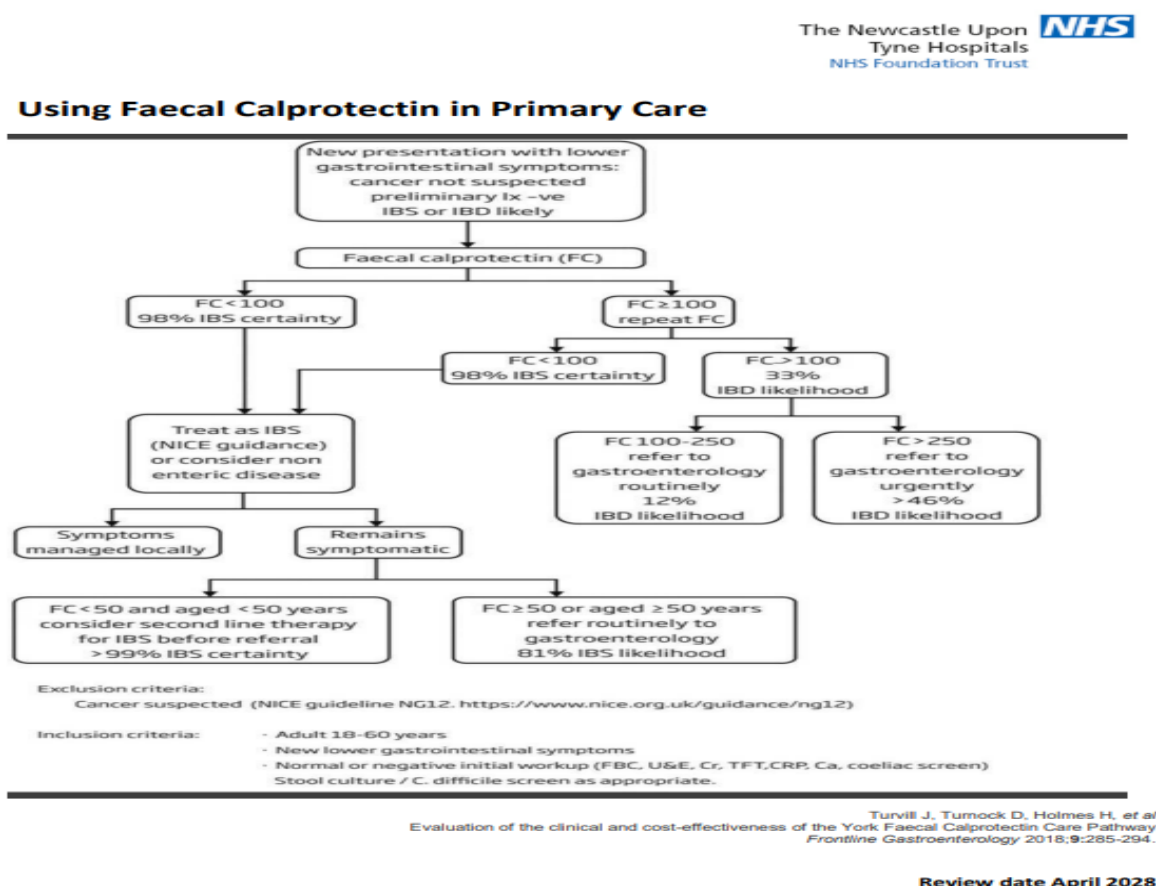
North Cumbria place

1. Both these tests are available to primary care within North Cumbria.
 - a. 2-week wait for possible colorectal cancer
 - b. Test available, see below for indications
2. Please refer to the response to question 1.
3. There are 12 diagnostic pathways, plus request pages for the relevant specialities.
4. These pathways are acute abdominal pain in adults, coeliac disease in adults, colorectal symptoms, constipation in adults, faecal incontinence, Inflammatory Bowel disease, Irritable Bowel Syndrome, Iron Deficiency anaemia, hernia in adults, anorectal and perianal abscess, diverticular disease, rectal polyps.

- The pathways including the usage of faecal calprotectin test are faecal incontinence, Inflammatory Bowel disease, colorectal symptoms, irritable bowel syndrome, non-acute gastroenterology assessment, acute abdomen in adults, constipation in adults, unintentional weight loss in adults. There is also a faecal calprotectin resource page.

Northumberland and North Tyneside place

- Both these tests are available to primary care within North Tyneside and Northumberland.
 - FIT indications as per NG12 Suspected Lower Gastrointestinal Cancer: [Recommendations organised by site of cancer | Suspected cancer: recognition and referral | Guidance | NICE](#)
 - Faecal Calprotectin used as per the Team net / Newcastle Upon Tyne Hospitals Foundation Trust Current Guidelines for use in patients 18-60, without suspicion of cancer and Neg investigations. Flow chart of guideline attached.
- Please refer to the response to question 1.
- There are three diagnostic pathways for patients presenting with Lower gastrointestinal symptoms.
- These pathways are:
 - Urgent suspected lower gastrointestinal cancer pathways
 - Standard secondary care lower Gastrointestinal pathway at a secondary care provider
 - Lower Gastrointestinal Advice and Guidance
- The Urgent Suspected Cancer Pathway doesn't use the Faecal Calprotectin test, but it may be used in the other pathways.



South Tyneside place

1. Yes, both are available for the investigation of lower GI symptoms. FIT for suspected bowel cancer (in line with NICE guidance DG 56) and for bowel cancer screening. Faecal calprotectin for lower GI symptoms where inflammatory causes are being considered.
2. Please refer to the response to question 1.
3. There are 4 diagnostic pathways for patients presenting with Lower gastrointestinal symptoms.
4. These are Coeliac Disease, Colorectal symptoms, Inflammatory Bowel Disease, Inflammatory Bowel Syndrome.
5. Colorectal symptoms, Inflammatory Bowel Disease and Inflammatory Bowel Syndrome pathways include the usage of faecal calprotectin test.

Sunderland place

1. Yes, both tests are available.

Offer qFIT to people including those with rectal bleeding:

- >40y with unexplained LGI symptoms
- <40y if clinical suspicion of LGI cancer
- Unexplained raised platelets >450 on 2 occasions 6 weeks apart (see hyperlink above for more guidance)
- For change in bowel habit consider stopping PPI/Metformin and reassess after 3 weeks before offering FIT

Arrange Faecal calprotectin if lower GI symptoms (to exclude IBD):

- Family history of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD).
- Patient younger than 50 years with chronic diarrhoea and there is suspicion of IBD.

2. Please refer to the response to question 1.
3. There are four diagnostic pathways in Sunderland ICB place.
4. The pathways are:
 - a. Inflammatory Bowel Disease (includes calprotectin)
 - b. Irritable Bowel Syndrome (includes calprotectin)
 - c. Colorectal and Anal Cancer (includes calprotectin)
 - d. Coeliac disease
5. The pathways below the usage of faecal calprotectin test:
 - a. Inflammatory Bowel Disease (includes calprotectin)
 - b. Irritable Bowel Syndrome (includes calprotectin)
 - c. Colorectal and Anal Cancer (includes calprotectin)

Tees Valley place

1. Yes, these tests are available in Tees Valley for investigation after initial assessment as per NICE guidelines and Faecal calprotectin is available to clinical staff for further investigation after initial assessment if suspecting inflammatory bowel disease.
2. Please refer to response 1.
3. All pathways are via the local foundation trusts.
4. Please refer to response 3.
5. Please refer to response 3.

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 complaints procedure provided by the North of England Commissioning Support Unit.

The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

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 sincerely

S Davies

S Davies
Information Governance Officer