

Our Reference North East and North Cumbria ICB\
FOI ICB 26–261

North East and North Cumbria ICB
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By Email

2 September 2026

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 August 2026 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 would like to request the following information as a Freedom of Information Request for each ICB that this email address serves:

1. Please can you indicate how you currently assure appropriate use of NHS Payment Scheme Annex A (High Cost) Drugs (HCD) for your patients receiving treatment via NHS provider trusts (Please put a tick or a cross by all that apply and provide additional text where indicated)
 - a. Blueteq®
 - b. Other database software (please specify product used)
 - c. ICB employed staff imbedded into provider trust organisation providing patient-level assurance to ICB
 - d. ICB funding to provider trusts for assurance activities e.g. clinical audit (please provide a summary of your assurance process)
 - e. Assurance is through monitoring monthly spend against agreed HCD budget
 - f. Other/none, (please specify mechanism used, if any)
2. If using a bought in software product for HCD commissioning, please state month and year of next renewal date.

3. Within the next 12 months, are you planning a review and assessment of your current HCD commissioning assurance processes (and products) to appraise options for future HCD commissioning?

Please respond in email, MS Word, or MS Excel format.

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. Assurance of appropriate use of NHS Payment Scheme Annex A HCD:
 - a. Blueteq® is used for Value Based Commissioning and Individual Funding Requests. It is not used for ICB-commissioned HCDs in our provider trusts.
 - b. Other database software is not used. ICB Business Intelligence provide a processed data download as an Excel spreadsheet, which lists all the HCDs submitted by the trust as anonymised pseudo-NHS data. This data comes from DMIC (Data Management and Integration Centre), which is provided by Arden +Gem CSU, which is where all the data from trusts are submitted for both the ICB and NHSE
 - c. ICB employed staff are not imbedded into provider trust organisations.
 - d. NENC ICB does not fund provider trusts for assurance activities. Data received from trusts is reviewed by ICB for challenges although there is not currently a formal challenge process set up. Examples of the challenges include not tariff excluded, NHSE commissioned, no patient age, therapeutic indication needed. Audits can be contractually requested e.g. that medicines meet formulary, Northern Treatment Advisory Group (NTAG) and best value guidance.
 - e. Assurance is not through monitoring monthly spend against agreed HCD budget.
 - f. There are no other mechanisms used.
2. The ICB is not using a bought in software product for HCD commissioning.
3. Yes, the ICB is planning a review and assessment of current HCD commissioning assurance processes (and products) to appraise options for future HCD commissioning.

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**