

Our Reference     North East and North Cumbria ICB\  
FOI ICB 24-374

[NECS – John Snow House](#)  
Durham University Science Park  
Durham  
DH1 3YG

Tel: 0191 301 1300  
E-mail: [necsu.icbfoi@nhs.net](mailto:necsu.icbfoi@nhs.net)

By Email

17 January 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 29 December 2024 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**

Recently, Voltorol 50mg suppositories have been reclassified as a 'red drug.' I'd like to request the following:

1. Any impact assessments made on what this will do to patients who had this particular drug perceived them.
2. Any information on procedures for contacting patients in advance of this decision so they could be better prepared on how to deal with this event.
3. Whether advice was provided and/or followed by practices.
4. How many people did this decision impact, just raw numbers please.
5. Who (either collectively or individually) signed off this decision which has impacted all the above people.

If this isn't the correct email, please can you provide the appropriate email address.

[www.northeastnorthcumbria.nhs.uk](http://www.northeastnorthcumbria.nhs.uk) 

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## Our Response

We can confirm, as per Section 1(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the ICB does hold the information requested.

Voltarol suppositories, listed under the generic name Diclofenac, have always been classed as RED on the NENC ICB formulary. [North East and North Cumbria Formulary](#).

Previous to the NENC ICB formulary, Voltarol Suppositories have historically been red classification or no classification in areas of ICB. Historically:

- **North of Tyne, Gateshead and North Cumbria (NoTGNC) formulary** – In NoTGNC, diclofenac suppositories were not on the formulary and diclofenac use was generally restricted for post-op pain. Long term use was 4th line after ibuprofen and naproxen (low and high dose)
- **South Tyneside and Sunderland** – Diclofenac suppositories were not listed.
- **County Durham and Tees Valley** – listed as RED. All oral forms of diclofenac were removed when the Tees and Durham formularies were merged in the summer of 2019 as not the preferred NSAID on the grounds of safety. The suppositories were made RED at the same time as led to believe largely only used post-op.
- **Mar 2023, Northern Treatment Advisory Group (NTAG)** – a comparison of the three APC formularies with a proposed status in new single ICB formulary came to NTAG following meetings of formulary pharmacists across NENC who reviewed each BNF chapter. This included proposal that diclofenac suppositories be classified as RED based on previous historical status. This RAG list alignment was consulted on via NTAG website for 4 weeks in June 2023 and no comments received regarding diclofenac suppositories being RED.
- **July 2023** – Formulary signed off by the Clinical Director post public and clinical consultation as outlined above.
- **Nov 2023** – Formulary Working Group (FWG) recommendations:
  - Diclofenac suppositories for renal colic - Request to change the status of diclofenac suppositories to GREEN PLUS for renal colic as there had been some requests to continue this in primary care from urology. The group felt that overall, this wasn't required. Minutes available at [AGENDA ITEM 2](#) No comments were received on during the public consultation that followed in Nov 2023. FWG recommendations came to NTAG in Jan 2024 and were approved by Medicines Subcommittee in Feb 2024 and the category remained Red.
  - Decision summary NENC medicines committee February 2024: [NENC-Medicines-Committee-decision-summary-February-2024-final-v2.1.pdf](#) It states: *Diclofenac suppositories for renal colic; To remain RED following a request to change the status of diclofenac suppositories to GREEN PLUS for renal colic as there had been some requests to continue this in primary care from urology. The group felt that overall a change on RAG status was not required.*

1. As Voltarol suppositories were classed as prescription by a specialist only i.e RED, no impact assessments were made in primary care. They were considered unnecessary as there was no change in status made.
2. No consideration was given to contacting patients as no changes to status was made.
3. The formulary is available to practices and reflected in electronic prescribing systems used in GP practices. All decisions made by Medicines Committee are made available at: [Decision Summaries – NTAG](#) and prescribers are informed of updates on each occasion. No specific advice was provided to practices on this occasion as no changes were made and advice remained that diclofenac suppositories should only be prescribed by specialists.
4. The decision should not have affected any patients as no change was made to formulary and guidance.
5. Minutes of the NENC Medicines Committee meeting at which the decision not to change status was agreed as per recommendations of Formulary Working Group [AGENDA ITEM 2](#) is available at: [NTAG-Minutes-January-2024-approved.pdf](#). Membership of both groups is recorded in their respective minutes.

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](http://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](http://www.legislation.gov.uk) . This will not affect your initial information request.

Yours sincerely

*S Davies*

**S Davies**  
**Information Governance Officer**