

Our Reference North East and North Cumbria ICB\
FOI ICB 26–257

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 20 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 am writing to request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 regarding Prolonged Disorders of Consciousness (PDOC) provision commissioned or overseen by your Integrated Care Board. Please provide:

1. The PDOC services currently commissioned or supported by the ICB, including service name, location, provider, and whether the service is inpatient, community, outreach, or specialist assessment.
2. The number of individuals identified as PDOC (VS, MCS, eMCS, emerging consciousness) within the ICB footprint in each of the last three full reporting years.
3. Details of any SMART or equivalent PDOC assessment provision commissioned by the ICB, including number of assessments completed and the professional roles delivering them.
4. Referral pathways, eligibility criteria, and commissioning arrangements relevant to PDOC assessment, review, or ongoing management.
5. Any current or planned developments relating to PDOC service provision within the ICB.

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. For the North East and North Cumbria region, inpatient PDOC/SMART assessment beds are provided at Walker Gate Park (WGP), which forms part of Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust. The PDOC referrals are managed by an outreach team; on admission the patients are managed by the inpatient team at WGP and will be picked up by the outreach team again on discharge.
2. Between 26 August 2023 and 26 August 2026, 56 suspected PDOC referrals were received. 20 referrals were deemed appropriate for PDOC/SMART assessment and proceeded to admission.
3. The ICB commissioned pathway for PDOC assessment provision is via Walker Gate Park as above. The assessments are undertaken by a multidisciplinary team including Speech and Language Therapists and Occupational Therapists who have received formal SMART assessment training.
4. All suspected PDOC patients are referred via the Walker Gate Park Single Point of Access Team. Upon referral, the outreach team undertakes an initial assessment, either by telephone or face to face, to determine the patient's suitability for admission. Following discharge, patients receive ongoing follow-up reviews in accordance with Royal College of Physicians (RCP) guidance to support continued assessment, care planning and clinical management.
5. There are no service developments are currently planned.

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**