

Our Reference North East and North Cumbria ICB\  
FOI ICB 24–197

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By Email

22 August 2024

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 1 August 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**

I am writing to you under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request updated information on the commissioning of ear wax removal services by North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board. Please could you provide me with answers to the questions below?

1. Does the integrated care board currently commission an ear wax removal service or services within primary care or community ear care services, available to all patients registered with GP practices within the ICS's boundary, as per NICE guidance?
2. If a wax removal service in primary or community care is not currently available to all patients, is there a plan to set up such a service in future, or to review the need for this service? If no, why not?
3. If a wax removal service is commissioned, how can a patient access this service or services when it is considered clinically necessary and/or self-care advice, if appropriate, has been unsuccessful?
4. If the integrated care board does commission a wax removal service within primary care or community care, please provide the name or names of commissioned providers and their address or addresses.

5. Does the integrated care board have a policy or guidance on ear wax removal and/or referral pathways for its primary care providers for patients for whom the benefit of ear wax removal is clinically indicated? If the integrated care board has issued such guidance, please provide a copy.
6. Can you provide a copy of any guidance the integrated care board provides to patients and/or clinicians on the self-management of symptomatic ear wax?
7. How many complaints has the integrated care board received from patients about difficulty in accessing or inability to access a wax removal service in the last 24 months?

## **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. However, for questions 1 to 6, this is available within the NENC ICB publication scheme which can be accessed on the ICB website: [Publications scheme | North East and North Cumbria NHS \(northeastnorthcumbria.nhs.uk\)](https://northeastnorthcumbria.nhs.uk/publications-scheme/) or please refer to our previous related request, our ref: FOI ICB480 from the NENC ICB FOI Disclosure Log at: <https://northeastnorthcumbria.nhs.uk/media/i0rd2tbh/icb480-response-letter.pdf>

In accordance with s.21 of the FOIA, we are not required to provide information in response to a request if it is reasonably accessible to you by other means.

In response to question 7, NENC ICB has received 4 concerns or complaints into the Complaints Team relating to ear wax removal. There have been 14 enquiries into the Parliamentary Team relating to ear wax removal.

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 faithfully

*S Davies*

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