

Our Reference North East and North Cumbria ICB\
FOI ICB 26–209

North East and North Cumbria ICB
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By Email

3 August 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 26 July 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

Please provide the following:

1. All of the adult hearing loss services that are commissioned and available to Stockton residents.
2. The referral methods (Self/GP/ENT) for each provider and the inclusion/exclusion criteria.
3. If right to choose can be used for audiology services?
4. The waiting time for first appointment and hearing aid fitting for services in NHS trusts (all trusts in NENC).
5. Details of NHS hearing aids available by provider.

Our Response

1. North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust are the acute hospital trust commissioned and available to Stockton residents for adult hearing loss services. Independent Sector audiology providers operating within the Tees locality, including providers such as Specsavers, Scrivens, Minor Ops and Outside Clinic, subject to contract arrangements in place at the time of referral.
2. Referral methods are GP and self-referral.
3. The NHS Right to Choose framework applies primarily to consultant-led services.

Community adult hearing services commissioned through local arrangements already provide patients with provider choice between commissioned NHS and independent sector providers. Patients may choose from the locally commissioned providers available within the service

4. 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 North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust

In accordance with our duty under s.16 of the FOIA to provide reasonable advice and assistance to an individual requesting information, we have provided the FOI contact for the trust: nth-tr.foi@nhs.net.

5. Service specifications do not mandate particular manufacturers or models. Providers are required to:
- Supply NHS-funded hearing aids that meet NHS minimum technical specifications.
 - Maintain an adequate range of hearing aids and accessories.
 - Source devices through NHS Supply Chain or demonstrate compliance with NHS minimum specifications where alternative procurement routes are used.

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**