NHS
North East and North Cumbria

Our Reference North East and North Cumbria ICB\ FOI ICB 26–304

North East and North Cumbria ICB
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By Email

14 October 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 16 September 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 an update to FOI ICB 26-221 regarding the current position of the commissioned BSL NHS Talking Therapies provision and to obtain information that was unavailable at the time of the original response.

In particular, the FOI response stated that: "Minutes of the July 2026 Sub-Committee, where this decision was approved, are not yet ratified and as such are not available currently. The minutes are expected to be ratified in the August 2026 Sub-Committee meeting."

Please therefore provide:

1. July 2026 Sub-Committee Minutes
   - The ratified minutes of the July 2026 Sub-Committee meeting referred to within the FOI response.
   - Any associated decision records, recommendations, briefing papers or appendices considered by the committee regarding the urgent award for BSL NHS Talking Therapies.

2. Equality and Health Inequalities Assessments
   The FOI response confirmed that no Equality Impact Assessment had been completed and that this would form part of future procurement activity. Please confirm:
   - Whether an Equality Impact Assessment has now been completed.
   - Whether a Health Inequalities Impact Assessment has now been completed.
   - If completed, please provide copies.
   - If not completed, please explain the current position and anticipated timescales.

3. Deaf Community Engagement
   The FOI response stated that engagement with Deaf BSL users, Deaf-led organisations and specialist Deaf mental health clinicians had not been undertaken due to the urgent nature of the award. Please confirm:
   - Whether any engagement has now taken place.
   - Which organisations, clinicians or Deaf BSL service users have been consulted.
   - Any reports, feedback summaries, meeting notes or engagement outcomes produced.

4. Service Specification
   The FOI response stated that the service specification was still in development. Please provide:
   - The final service specification if now available.
   - The current service model.
   - Details of the NHS Talking Therapies interventions available directly in BSL.
   - Confirmation of whether treatment is being delivered directly in BSL by BSL-fluent clinicians.

5. Patient Communication Materials
   The FOI response stated that patient communication materials had not yet been developed. Please provide copies of:
   - Patient letters.
   - Accessible information.
   - BSL videos.
   - FAQs.
   - Transition information.
   - Any materials explaining available treatment options and transfer arrangements.

6. Current Position
   Please provide an update regarding:
   - Whether the urgent award remains in place.
   - The current provider.
   - Current contract commencement and expiry dates.
   - Whether any longer-term procurement process has commenced.
   - Whether any Prior Information Notice, Request for Information, market engagement exercise or procurement timetable has been issued following the urgent award.
   - Information on how Deaf people are advised to access this BSL service (assuming it is live as it's an urgent award)

7. Meeting Notes
   Please provide copies of any non-confidential meeting notes, discussion summaries or stakeholder engagement records relating to:
   - The urgent award decision.
   - Transition planning.
   - Service mobilisation.

- Future procurement planning.
- Discussions regarding BSL NHS Talking Therapies commissioning.

Given the continuing impact on Deaf BSL users seeking access to NHS Talking Therapies across the North East and North Cumbria, we would be grateful for an update on the current position and future commissioning intentions.

Our Response

1. NENC ICB holds the information requested; the July 2026 sub-committee meeting minutes are attached.
2. An Equality Impact Assessment has not been completed, as the ICB deemed this not to be necessary.
3. Deaf community engagement has not been completed by NENC ICB.
4. NENC ICB does not yet hold a final service specification.
5. NENC ICB does not hold patient communication materials as noted in the request.
6. The contract award has been issued starting from 1 October 2026 for 12 months until 30 September 2027.

   There is to be a full procurement of Talking Therapies, and this will start in 2027 to commence in 2028. A full market engagement will be part of the process and how all people engage with the service will be taken into consideration.

7. On this occasion it is not possible 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.

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, 4th Floor, No. 3 Circle Square, 5 Hawkshaw Street, Manchester, M1 7BL 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