



North East and North Cumbria

Our Reference North East & North Cumbria
ICB\301

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02/05/2023

Applicant
By Email

Dear Applicant,

Freedom of Information Act 2000 - Request for Information – NHS North East & North Cumbria Integrated Care Board.

Thank you for your request received by North of England Commissioning Support (NECS) on 30/03/2023 for information held by NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB) under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

For information Clinical Commissioning Groups ceased to exist on 30 June 2022. Services that were previously delivered by the CCG are now being delivered by the successor organisation NHS North East and North Cumbria (ICB). This 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.

Request

1. What is your current updated policy on earwax removal in primary care in Sunderland?
2. What is the current waiting time for a microsuction at Sunderland Royal Hospital?
3. With the assumption of commissioning responsibilities by the ICB how will you provide microsuction now and how will people be referred to the service?

4. Will there be one policy across the North East and North Cumbria or will there be flexibility within the Durham, South Tyneside and Sunderland Central partnership?
5. Are there plans to use the potential within new arrangements e.g., primary care networks, integrated commissioning between areas to commission a cost effective and appropriately resourced microsuction service in primary care?

Response

Please be advised that some localities (referred to as 'place') within the NENC ICB may provide different answers in terms of the local pathways. This is due to the integration between the disbanded Clinical Commissioning Groups and the inception of the Integrated Care Board from the 1st of July 2022, whereby integration is still taking place across the services.

Question 1: As Sunderland has been requested specifically, the response for the remainder of the ICB places is "N/A".

Question 2: In accordance with section 1 of the Act this information cannot be provided as it is not held by the ICB. South Tyneside & Sunderland Foundation Trust may hold this information. You can contact them on the following email:

Stsft.freedomofinformation@nhs.net

Question 3: This is answered at place level. Please see the relevant response from each place under the below headings.

Question 4: At current this is managed at place level.

Question 5: Microsuction services are commissioned at place level within the ICB and there are currently no plans to commission anything different to what is currently commissioned across the ICB.

County Durham:

In County Durham, microsuction is currently managed and monitored through our Local Incentive Scheme. The scheme incentivises our practices to reach pre-determined performance / quality targets in several areas.

Our practices must demonstrate that they are offering in house aural irrigation / microsuction for ear care, in line with NICE Guidance. The relevant NICE guideline can be found at: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng98>

The scheme has just started for financial year 2023-24. The first round of monitoring against the targets will be undertaken after the completion of Quarter 1 (post June 2023).

Newcastle & Gateshead:

Patients can be referred to NuTH for the ear wax to be removed providing they meet the clinical criteria.

Patients with earwax that is contributing to hearing loss, or other symptoms, or preventing ear examination, or ear canal impressions being taken, should have earwax removed, or undergo treatment for removal, in a community setting (including self-care) prior to referral to secondary care. Providing earwax removal closer to home will prevent the inappropriate use of specialist services.

Referral should be arranged to a GPSI clinic or an ear, nose, and throat if the person has:

- *A chronic perforation of the tympanic membrane.*
- *A past history of major ear surgery.*
- *A foreign body in the ear canal.*
- *Used ear drops, which have been unsuccessful, and irrigation is contraindicated.*
- *Had unsuccessful irrigation.*
- *Had multiple attempts to remove the impacted earwax, including a combination of treatments, which were ineffective.*
- *Persistent symptoms despite resolution of the impaction.*

Referrals will be rejected if appropriate initial treatment has not been undertaken in a community setting (including self-care) or if no justification is provided for referral to secondary care.

Northumberland:

The initial treatment of ear wax is self-care. The patient is advised by their GP to use olive oil ear drops regularly which is often enough to slowly dissolve and remove the ear wax with no further intervention required by a clinician.

If using olive oil alone is not sufficient to help, then the current local clinical guidance from Northumbria Healthcare Trust and endorsed by the CCG is for the patient to syringe their own ears at home using an ear bulb syringe which is available to buy relatively cheaply at high street pharmacies.

If self-syringing does not work, or if the patient is not able to perform self-syringing (e.g., due to frailty), then the GP may refer the patient for ear irrigation by the local district nurse service

Referral should be arranged to a GPSI clinic or an ear, nose, and throat service if the person has:

- *A chronic perforation of the tympanic membrane.*
- *A past history of major ear surgery.*
- *A foreign body in the ear canal.*
- *Used ear drops, which have been unsuccessful, and irrigation is contraindicated.*
- *Had unsuccessful irrigation.*
- *Had multiple attempts to remove the impacted earwax, including a combination of treatments, which were ineffective.*
- *Persistent symptoms despite resolution of the impaction.*

North Cumbria:

We have commissioned an aural care service from our local Acute Trust, which is being reviewed to determine its impact on Primary Care and ENT /Audiology Outpatient activity.

In line with guidance, patients are initially encouraged to self-manage their ear care, however, if problems persist, they can (following referral from their GP) access micro suction clinics at various locations.

North Tyneside:

The service will continue to be provided by our acute trust with referrals received in line with the NICE guidance, The relevant NICE guideline can be found at:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng98>

South Tyneside:

South Tyneside Place commissions a primary care microsuction service, which GPs can refer in to. Please see embedded document for more information:



Sunderland:

1. *We do not have a formal earwax removal policy for primary care in Sunderland. Should a patient be assessed by a clinician as requiring earwax removal the practice would arrange for this to be undertaken either within the practice or for onward referral should it be clinically necessary.*

3. *Routine Referral for ear microsuction if resistant ear wax and:*
 - *The tympanic membrane needs to be seen*
 - *Symptoms are impacting quality of life*
 - *The patient is a child with a hearing aid*

Speak to on-call ENT:

- *If severe pain, deafness, or vertigo occur during or after ear irrigation*
- *If a perforation is seen following the procedure.*

Tees Valley:

"Removal of ear wax as per NICE Guideline 98" is commissioned as part of the Local Improvement Scheme however not all staff are trained therefore microsuction is not necessarily offered across all practices. The relevant NICE guideline can be found at: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng98>

In line 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 make a complaint or 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 complaint, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. 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.gov.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 sincerely

Ehren Smith

Information Governance Officer