

Our Reference North East and North Cumbria ICB\
FOI ICB 25-363

North East and North Cumbria ICB
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By Email

16 December 2025

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 4 December 2025 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 make a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Please provide the following information relating to your Integrated Care Board's (ICB's) policies and guidance concerning the "bare below the elbows" approach or any equivalent dress-code policies for healthcare staff:

1. Policies and Guidance

Please supply the current version of any formal policies, protocols, guidance documents, or standards issued by the ICB relating to:

- "Bare below the elbows"
- Infection prevention dress-code requirements
- Clinical or non-clinical staff attire expectations
- Any occupational health or safety requirements related to staff appearance or uniform

2. Scope and Application

Please clarify whether these policies apply to:

- All staff within the ICB
- Staff working in provider organisations commissioned by the ICB
- Primary care (GP practices), community providers, or other contracted services

3. Implementation and Compliance

Does the ICB require, monitor, or enforce provider compliance with 'bare below the elbows'/ dress-code expectations as part of:

- Commissioning contracts?
- Quality schedules (e.g., infection prevention requirements)?
- Assurance frameworks?

If monitoring occurs, please provide any documentation describing how this monitoring is carried out.

4. Exemptions or Adjustments

Please provide any guidance you hold on:

- Exemptions or reasonable adjustments for cultural, religious, or clinical reasons
- How exemptions are assessed or approved

5. Changes Since 2020

Have there been changes to these policies since 1 January 2020? If yes, please provide:

- The dates of changes
- A brief description of what changed
- Any archived versions of the policy still held by the ICB

Our Response

We can confirm, as per Section 1(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the ICB

1. 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. NENC ICB is not a provider supporting frontline services. All NHS Providers delivering under a NHS contract are required to have the appropriate IPC policies protocols. etc in place and are able to be approached direct.

However, we have determined that the information is held by the acute hospital NHS foundation trusts (FTs) within the North East and North Cumbria region.

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 contacts for those foundation trusts to make your request.

NENC Acute Hospital FTs	Email/Online portal
County Durham and Darlington NHS FT	cdda-tr.cddftfoi@nhs.net
Gateshead Health NHS FT	ghnt.foi.enquiries@nhs.net
North Cumbria Integrated Care NHS FT	foirequest@cumbria.nhs.uk
North Tees and Hartlepool NHS FT	nth-tr.foi@nhs.net
Northumbria Healthcare NHS FT	foi@northumbria.nhs.uk
South Tees Hospitals NHS FT	stees.foi.admin@nhs.net
South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS FT	stsft@infreemation.co.uk
The Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS FT	https://www.newcastle-hospitals.nhs.uk/help/foi/

2. Please refer to the response to question 1.
3. Some provider trusts and local authorities in the NENC region have specific IPC teams to support audits in care homes and general practice, and to ensure compliance. Each care home and general practice are responsible as independents to have their own IPC policies that are monitored and checked by CQC as part of their registration and in accordance with the Health and Social Care Act.

For the ICB IPC is stipulated in the national NHS contract and we ensure that it is a standard agenda item on trust quality committee agendas with ICB staff attend (those papers are the property of Trusts and would need to be approached by the FOI author directly). IPC oversight is also part of LA led health protection meetings that ICB staff attend.

The NHS contract states that the provider should comply with all national guidance and includes a specific clause (service clause 21) around IPC requirements, including compliance on the code of practice on the Prevention and Control of Infections. This is publicly available here: 03-full-length-service-conditions-2526-cancer-amend-med-opt-mc.pdf

4. Please refer to the response to question 1.
5. Please refer to the response to question 1.

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