NHS
North East and North Cumbria

Our Reference North East and North Cumbria ICB\ FOI ICB 26–294

North East and North Cumbria ICB
Pemberton House
Colima Avenue
Sunderland Enterprise Park
Sunderland
SR5 3XB

Tel: 0191 535 4288
E-mail: nencicb.foi@nhs.net

By Email

24 September 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 10 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 information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 concerning how the NHS North East and North Cumbria ICB addresses digital accessibility when commissioning and procuring digital services, systems and products.

For this request, “digital services, systems and products” includes patient-facing and staff-facing websites, applications, portals, online forms, digital platforms and software commissioned or procured by, or on behalf of, the ICB. Please provide the following information about the ICB’s current arrangements as at the date of this request.

Where your team handles requests for more than one ICB, please provide a response specifically for the NHS North East and North Cumbria ICB. If arrangements differ between predecessor organisations following a merger, please identify which arrangements apply to which areas, using existing recorded information.

1. Policy and governance
   Does the ICB hold a policy, standard, framework, guidance or other documented requirement concerning digital accessibility within commissioning or procurement?
   If yes, please provide a copy or link to the relevant document(s).

2. Procurement specifications
   Does the ICB's current procurement documentation require accessibility requirements to be included when procuring digital services, systems or products?
   Please provide any standard wording, specification, template or guidance used to describe these requirements.

3. Accessibility standards
   Please identify the accessibility standards specified in the ICB's current procurement requirements, for example WCAG 2.2 AA or another accessibility standard.

4. Bidder evidence
   What evidence do the ICB's procurement requirements ask suppliers to provide to demonstrate that their proposed digital product or service meets accessibility requirements?
   Please provide any standard questions, evidence requirements or guidance used.

5. Evaluation of tenders
   Please provide any current guidance or evaluation templates showing whether accessibility is:
   a. a mandatory/pass-fail requirement;
   b. a scored criterion;
   c. considered within another evaluation criterion; or
   d. not routinely evaluated.
   Where a standard accessibility weighting or scoring methodology exists, please provide it.

6. Accessibility testing and disabled-user involvement
   Do the ICB's documented requirements specify any of the following as part of procurement, implementation or acceptance of digital products or services?
   a. Automated accessibility testing.
   b. Expert/manual accessibility testing.
   c. Testing by disabled people and/or users of assistive technologies.
   d. An independent accessibility audit.
   Please indicate which apply and provide the relevant guidance or requirements, where held.

7. Contractual requirements
   Does the ICB include accessibility requirements, key performance indicators, contractual clauses or other ongoing accessibility obligations within contracts for digital services or products?
   If yes, please provide the standard wording or template currently used.

8. Pre-go-live and acceptance assurance
   Before a newly commissioned or procured digital service or product goes live, do the ICB's documented processes require evidence that agreed accessibility requirements have been met?
   If yes, please provide the relevant process or evidence requirements.

9. Ongoing supplier assurance
   Does the ICB have a documented process for monitoring or seeking assurance that commissioned digital services continue to meet accessibility requirements after implementation?
   If yes, please provide the relevant process, framework or standard reporting requirement.

10. Responsibility
    Please provide the job title or team/function recorded as responsible for:

a. Setting digital accessibility requirements.
b. Ensuring accessibility is addressed during procurement.
c. Monitoring accessibility of commissioned digital services.
Individual staff names are not required.

11. Supplier non-compliance
Does the ICB have a documented process for addressing circumstances where a commissioned digital service or product does not meet the accessibility requirements specified in the contract?
If yes, please provide the relevant policy, process or contractual provision.

12. Assessment or audit
During the period from 1 April 2025 to the date of this request, has the ICB undertaken, commissioned or received any organisation-wide review, audit or assessment of how effectively accessibility is incorporated into its digital commissioning or procurement arrangements?
If yes, please provide the resulting report, findings, recommendations or action plan. For a recently merged ICB, please include relevant predecessor-organisation reports held by the current ICB and identify the organisation covered.

I am seeking existing recorded information only. I do not require new analysis, a review of individual procurement exercises or a newly calculated estimate of how frequently a practice occurs.

Where information is not held, please state this against the relevant question. Where a document answers several questions, please provide it once and identify the questions it addresses.

If the information is already publicly available, please provide a direct link to the relevant document or page.
If any part of this request would exceed the appropriate cost limit, please advise which elements cause the difficulty and how the request could be narrowed to fall within the limit.

I would prefer your response electronically, with documents in their original digital format where available.

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.

1. NENC ICB does not its own policy relating to this but follows the NHS England standards available here https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/digital-accessibility/.
2. Procurement documentation does not have any specific accessibility requirements; these would be specifically created if required.
3. There are no specified accessibility standards; these requirements would be created for each service rather than being a standard. Please also refer to NHS England standards link provided in response to question 1.
4. There is no standard bidder evidence required. This would be included on a need-by-need basis depending on the service being commissioned.
5. The ICB is not aware of any standard current guidance or evaluation templates. Guidance and evaluation of tenders would be developed to assess the individual requirements dependent on the goods/services being procured.

6. Please refer to the response to question 5.
7. Please refer to the response to question 5.
8. Please refer to the response to question 5.
9. There is no documented process for monitoring or seeking assurance.
10. There is no one team or individual with direct responsibility for these areas. Please direct all queries to the ICB's central mailbox nencicb-sun.reception@nhs.net. Alternatively, please telephone the ICB's Switchboard on 0191-535-4288.
11. Procurement is not aware that these processes are in place.
12. NENC ICB holds no records of assessments or audits undertaken.

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