

Our Reference North East and North Cumbria ICB\  
FOI ICB 24-017

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By Email

17 May 2024

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 by North of England Commissioning Support (NECS) on 5 April 2024 for information held by NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB) under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

NENC ICB covers the areas of County Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle, North Cumbria, North Tyneside, Northumberland, South Tyneside, Sunderland, and Tees Valley (which covers the 5 councils that make it up – Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton-on-Tees).

We have dealt with your request in accordance with your “right to know” under section 1(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (subsequently referred to as FOIA2000) which entitles you to be provided with information “held” by a public authority unless an appropriate exemption applies.

**Your Request**

We understand that, as of 2019/2020 around 11% of NHS funded Ophthalmic procedures are provided by three independent sector providers: Spamedica; Newmedica and Optegra. In addition, further procedures are provided by other smaller independent sector treatment centres such as the Independent Health Group, Practice Plus Group and Freedom Vision.

According to the Royal College of Ophthalmologists’ blueprint for delivering cataract training in the independent sector “every independent sector provider delivering NHS-funded cataract surgery must be able to train NHS ophthalmic trainees on at least 11% of whole cases within 2 years in every region”. This is also in line with the NHS England’s 2022 cataract service specification.

Please could you provide the following information, made as a freedom of information request:

1. Confirmation of the names and contact information (address or email) of all private sector providers currently commissioned to provide NHS funded cataract operations in your region.

2. Summary of how the ICB is monitoring/intending to monitor whether the independent sector providers they commission are meeting this specification.
3. Planned arrangements for providers found to be in breach of the contract specification to provide 11% of cataract operations as wholly delivered by NHS ophthalmic trainees within 2 years.
4. Number of NHS funded cataract procedures performed at each provider in England, divided into yearly information 2021, 2022, 2023.
5. Number of NHS cataract procedures performed at each provider in England, wholly performed by an NHS ophthalmic trainee, divided into yearly information for 2021, 2022, 2023.
6. Any formal comment from the ICB on the perception that independent sectors are not providing the agreed training and/or are detrimental to NHS trainees.

Please provide the information for (3) and (4) in an anonymized summary of numbers of cases, ideally as an electronic spreadsheet.

To clarify, for cataract operations only please.

## 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. 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.

The North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB) does not hold the records which you have sought. However, we have determined the records are held by the Independent Sector Providers.

2. The ICB will be continuing to monitor the IS providers delivering cataract care against their contract and service specification. This will be undertaken by contract managers and via meetings with the providers.
3. Discussions with providers about how they will accomplish the training requirement is ongoing discussion, with the ICB taking into account the guidance from HEE.
4. The number of funded procedures is noted in the spreadsheet below:



FOI ICB 24-017  
Response Q4.xlsx

5. 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.
6. The ICB has no comment on this question.

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 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 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 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.org.uk](http://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](http://www.legislation.gov.uk) . This will not affect your initial information request.

Yours sincerely

*S Davies*

**S Davies**  
**Information Governance Officer**