

Our Reference North East and North Cumbria ICB\  
FOI ICB 24-070

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By Email

17 June 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 13 May 2024 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, Gateshead, Newcastle, North Cumbria, North Tyneside, Northumberland, South Tyneside, Sunderland, and Tees Valley (which covers the five local authorities of Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton-on-Tees).

Please find the information you requested on behalf of the ICB as follows.

**Your Request**

I am writing with a Freedom of Information request regarding the provision and delivery of audiology services within your organisation. To better understand how your trust deals with audiology services, please clarify whether your ICB provides these services:

- a. In-house (i.e. delivered in your NHS Acute / Community Trusts or provided by another NHS organisation)
- b. Outsourced (i.e. delivered by an independent provider in their care setting)
- c. Insourced (i.e. delivered by an independent provider in your care setting)

Additionally, please provide the following data for your ICB and for each financial year 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23, and 2023/24:

**Hearing assessments:** How many patients had a hearing assessment within the following settings and what was the total spending in £ on treating these patients (where possible please could you give the data per independent provider contracted):

- a. In-house
- b. Outsourced
- c. Insourced

**Hearing aid fittings:** How many patients had a hearing aid fitting assessment within the following settings and what was the total spending in £ on treating these patients (where possible please could you give the data per independent provider contracted):

- a. In-house
- b. Outsourced
- c. Insourced

**Hearing aid aftercare:** How many patients had hearing aid aftercare performed within the following settings and what was the total spending in £ on treating these patients (where possible please could you give the data per independent provider contracted):

- a. In-house
- b. Outsourced
- c. Insourced

**Hearing aid devices:** How many hearing aid devices were delivered to patients within the following settings and what was the total spend £ on hearing aid devices for these patients in (where possible please could you give the data per independent provider contracted):

- a. In-house
- b. Outsourced
- c. Insourced

**Other:** Could you please provide a copy of the service specification given to all bidders for when the contract for hearing aid services was last advertised?

If any of the specific splits are not available, please provide total figures for the system and specify which main splits are recorded by your ICB (in-house / independent sector).

**To clarify:** I am interested in whether the ICB has commissioned audiology services, such as hearing aids, from the private sector or from other NHS organisations. For these cases, I would like to receive data on volume (e.g., volume of hearing aids procured) and spending on these providers.

## 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.

Within the North East and North Cumbria region, audiology services are provided by NHS Acute Trusts and independent sector providers – the detail is:

NENC ICB Place	Audiology Providers
County Durham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specsavers</li> <li>• Scrivens</li> <li>• Minor Ops Ltd</li> <li>• County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust</li> </ul>
Newcastle, Gateshead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust</li> </ul>
Northumberland and North Tyneside places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust</li> </ul>
North Cumbria place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Cumbria Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust</li> </ul>

South Tyneside and Sunderland places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specsavers</li> <li>• Scrivens</li> <li>• Outside Clinic</li> <li>• South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust</li> </ul>
Tees Valley place (includes Hartlepool, Stockton, Thornaby, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Darlington)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust – Hartlepool, Stockton and Thornaby</li> <li>• Specsavers Optical Superstores – all localities</li> <li>• Scrivens – all localities</li> <li>• Minor Ops – all localities</li> <li>• Outside Clinic – all localities</li> </ul>

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 email addresses for those acute hospitals to make a request to them.

NENC Acute Hospital FTs	Email
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	foi@nth.nhs.uk
Northumbria Healthcare NHS FT	foi@northumbria.nhs.uk
South Tees Hospitals NHS FT	foi@stees.nhs.uk
South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS FT	stsft.freedomofinformation@nhs.net
The Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS FT	nuth.freedom.information@nhs.net

**Hearing assessments:** 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. However, we have estimated that to provide you with the required information, would exceed the cost limit of £450 for the NHS as specified in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004.

S.12(1) of the FOIA provides that a public authority is not obliged to respond to a request for information if the cost of locating, retrieving, and extracting information and preparing the response can be included in the costs for these purposes.

It is estimated that it would averagely take a member of staff approximately 1200 minutes to obtain the requested activity and financial information from the contracts management systems. Allocating 5 minutes per transaction, the NENC ICB estimates that 12 months' records x 20 contracts x 5 minutes = 1200 minutes divided by 60 = 20 hours to extract the level of detail requested from our contracts management systems system for each year. NENC ICB is therefore unable to provide the requested information within the prescribed limit.

In accordance with our duty to provide advice and assistance under s.16 FOIA 2000, we estimate that we would be able to supply you with the requested data for approximately 15 contracts within the appropriate limit, should you wish to refine and submit a revised request. However, this may not provide a full picture of the services offered, as contracts may be different.

**Hearing aid fittings:** Please refer to the response to 'Hearing assessments' for activity and spend.

**Hearing aid aftercare:** Please refer to the response to 'Hearing assessments' for activity and spend.

**Hearing aid devices:** Please refer to the response to 'Hearing assessments' for activity and spend.

**Other:** The NHS Standard Contract Service Specification for AQP is attached.

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**