

Our Reference North East and North Cumbria ICB\
FOI ICB 26–161

North East and North Cumbria ICB
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By Email

17 July 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 2 July 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 regarding the Integrated Care Board's (ICB) implementation, governance, and oversight of Freedom to Speak Up (FTSU) arrangements, following the transition of responsibilities on 1st July 2026. Specifically, please provide the following information:

1. Strategy and Implementation Plans
Copies of any specific strategy, transition plan, or policy document approved by the Board regarding how the ICB will execute its new system-level oversight responsibilities for FTSU.
2. Local Guardian Arrangements and Mapping
 - a. A list of all Freedom to Speak Up Guardians directly employed or commissioned by the ICB to cover the ICB's own staff and those within NHS Trusts in your nominated operating area.
 - b. Confirmation of how the ICB is ensuring that primary care providers (GP practices, dental practices, community pharmacies, and optometry providers) within your Integrated Care System (ICS) footprint have access to a designated FTSU Guardian (e.g., via a centralized hub, a commissioned service, or individual practice arrangements).

3. Governance and Board-Level Accountability

- a. The name and job title of the Executive Director and the Non-Executive Director (NED) who have been given formal board-level accountability for FTSU within the ICB.
- b. Copies of the section of minutes, papers, or briefing notes from any ICB Board or Committee meetings held between 1st January 2026 and the date of this response where the dissolution of the National Guardian's Office or the ICB's new FTSU responsibilities were discussed.

4. Budget and Resourcing

The total financial budget allocated by the ICB for FTSU arrangements (including Guardian salaries, ring-fenced time, and training) for the 2026/27 financial year.

If any of this information is already in the public domain, please provide the specific URLs to the exact documents. If the cost limit under Section 12 of the FOI Act is likely to be exceeded, please contact me to discuss how the request might be refined, prioritizing items 2 and 3.

I look forward to hearing from you within the statutory 20 working days.

Our Response

We can confirm, as per Section 1(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the ICB does hold the information requested.

1. The ICB did not produce a specific Freedom to Speak Up (FTSU) transition plan or standalone strategy document for the transfer of responsibilities. FTSU oversight is incorporated within existing ICB governance and assurance frameworks. No transition plan is held.
2. Local Guardian Arrangements and Mapping details:
 - a. The ICB employs a Freedom to Speak Up Guardian at Band 8a, 0.6 WTE. The Guardian provides support to ICB staff and system-level programmes.
 - b. Primary care access to FTSU is delivered through a centralised ICB Guardian network, offering a single point of contact for GP practices, dental practices, community pharmacies and optometry providers. No additional Guardians are commissioned.
3. In terms of governance and accountability:
 - a. The Executive Lead for FTSU is Hilary Lloyd. The Non-Executive Director for FTSU is David Stout.
 - b. Meeting reports and papers detailing the dissolution of the National Guardian's Office and the ICB's new responsibilities are:
 - Executive Committee, 12/01/2026: FTSU Policy was discussed and approved: [item-91a-20260113-exec-cttee-public-minutes-final.pdf](#)
 - Executive Committee, 10/02/2026: FTSU Quarter 3 Report was discussed and received: [item-91b-20260210-exec-cttee-public-minutes-final.pdf](#)
 - Leadership Committee, 12/05/2026: FTSU Quarter 4 Report was discussed and received: see attached.

The FTSU policy is publicly available on the ICB's website: [FTSU.pdf](#)

4. The ICB's FTSU budget covers the Band 8a Guardian at 0.6 WTE, associated on-costs and training. The ICB has no other budget associated with F2SU in 2026/27.

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**