

Our Reference North East and North Cumbria ICB\
FOI ICB 24-512

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By Email

16 April 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 by North of England Commissioning Support (NECS) on 27 March 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, 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

"We are supporting and leading work to transform services for people with a Learning Disability and autistic people. We are focused on reducing the reliance on inpatient hospital beds through developing an enhanced approach to place-based support, building flexible, personalised and responsive community services that promote early intervention and preventative support, as well as improving overall health outcomes and reducing health inequalities for people with a Learning Disability and autistic people right across the region."

Please explain how you are doing this in regard to autism and how you are complying with The Autism Act 2009?

Our Response

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

The detail below shows how NENC ICB is supporting autistic people and complying with the Autism Act 2009.

www.northeastnorthcumbria.nhs.uk 

NorthEastandNorthCumbriaNHS 

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1. Strategic Approach and Local Implementation

We are committed to improving outcomes for autistic people and aligning our work with the requirements of the Autism Act 2009, the associated statutory guidance, and the national autism strategy. Our approach is embedded within the wider transformation of mental health, learning disability, and neurodevelopmental services across the region. We support this through:

- Co-production ensuring lived experience informs service design and delivery.
- Place-based delivery models, allowing flexibility to meet local need while aligning with strategic priorities.
- Close partnership with local authorities, education, social care, and voluntary sector organisations to create a joined-up system of support.

2. Service Development and Transformation

As part of our commitment, we are:

- Supporting early identification and diagnosis by working to reduce waiting times and improve pathways for autism assessment.
- Commissioning and developing post-diagnostic support services, recognising that diagnosis is just one step in the journey.
- Promoting reasonable adjustments across services to support access and inclusion for autistic people.
- Investing in community-based support and preventative services, reducing reliance on crisis or inpatient services.
- Working to ensure autism training is embedded across health and care staff groups in line with the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training requirement.

In parallel, we are progressing a collaborative regional approach to enhance the quality and consistency of ADHD and autism diagnostic services. This includes the development of an Accredited Provider Specification, co-designed with clinical leaders, system partners, and local advocacy groups who represent people with lived experience. The specification will establish clear standards and expectations for all providers delivering ADHD and autism assessments under the NHS, improving assurance, reducing variation, and supporting more streamlined pathways between independent and NHS services.

3. Governance and Oversight

We monitor progress through:

- Regional and local governance structures dedicated to autism, neurodiversity, and learning disability.
- Alignment with the national NHS Long Term Plan commitments and local Integrated Care Board (ICB) strategies.
- Regular reporting on key metrics.
- Engagement with national programmes, including the National Autism Programme Board and Autism Communities of Practice where appropriate.

4. Compliance with the Autism Act 2009

In accordance with the Autism Act 2009 and the subsequent statutory guidance:

- We ensure our commissioning practices consider the needs of autistic adults across health, care, and housing.
- We support the development of local autism strategies that reflect both national priorities and local needs.
- We engage with stakeholders including people with lived experience to inform planning, in line with Section 2 of the Autism Act.

- We work with local authorities to support the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and Local Autism Partnership Boards.

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

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 sincerely

S Davies

S Davies
Information Governance Officer