

Our Reference North East and North Cumbria ICB\
FOI ICB 25–238

North East and North Cumbria ICB
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By Email

8 October 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 on 18 September 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, 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 you under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request updated information on the commissioning of ear wax removal services by NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board. Please could you provide me with answers to the questions below:

1. Does the integrated care board currently commission an ear wax removal service or services within primary care or community ear care services, available to all patients registered with GP practices within the integrated care board's boundary, as per NICE guidance?
2. If a wax removal service in primary or community care is not currently available to all patients, is there a plan to set up such a service in future, or to review the need for this service? This includes the provision of ear wax removal services as part of Neighbourhood Health Services.
3. If a wax removal service is commissioned, how can a patient access this service or services when it is considered clinically necessary and/or self-care advice, if appropriate, has been unsuccessful?
4. If the integrated care board does commission a wax removal service within primary care or community care, please provide the name or names of commissioned providers and their address or addresses.
5. Does the integrated care board utilise [TympaHealth](#) in the provision of wax removal services, including within pharmacies, and if so, which types of healthcare professionals offer wax removal using TympaHealth devices or equipment?

6. Does the integrated care board have a policy or guidance on ear wax removal and/or referral pathways for its primary care providers for patients for whom the benefit of ear wax removal is clinically indicated? If the integrated care board has issued such guidance, please provide a copy.
7. Can you provide a copy of any guidance the integrated care board provides to patients and/or clinicians on the self-management of symptomatic ear wax?
8. How many complaints has the integrated care board received from patients about difficulty in accessing or inability to access a wax removal service in the last 24 months?

NICE guidance states that [ear wax removal should be offered](#) if ear wax is [contributing to hearing loss or other symptoms, or preventing ear examination or ear canal impressions being taken](#).

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.

Responses to questions 1 to 4 are provided by ICB place below. Responses to questions 5 to 8 are provided for the full ICB.

County Durham place

1. Yes, the ICB does commission this service in County Durham ICB place.
2. Please refer to the response to question 1.
3. Patients can access the service via their GP practice.
4. 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, this is available publicly on the NHS Digital website: [GP and GP practice related data – NHS England Digital](#) The GP Practices full file name is **epraccur** and for your reference, NENC ICB's Organisation Data Service (ODS) code is **QMH** and the County Durham ICB place ODS code is **84H**. In accordance with s.21 of the FOIA, we are not required to provide information in response to a request if it is reasonably accessible to you by other means.

Newcastle Gateshead, North Tyneside and Northumberland places

The service is not commissioned in Newcastle Gateshead, North Tyneside and Northumberland places.

North Cumbria place

1. There is no specific commissioned service for ear wax removal in GP practices. They follow the local guidance regarding self-management, primary care level interventions and then refer on if required. There is an 'Aural care service' at the local acute foundation trust (North Cumbria Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust (NCIC)) which will accept routine referrals for micro suction and ear wax removal.
2. There are no plans in place in North Cumbria.
3. The current service provided by NCIC requires GP referral to access.
4. Ear Wax Removal Service & Aural Care, North Cumbria Integrated Care FT, ENT Department, Cumberland Infirmary, Newtown Road, Carlisle, CA2 7HY.

South Tyneside place

1. Yes, the ICB commissions this service in South Tyneside ICB place.
2. Please refer to the response to question 1 for South Tyneside.
3. Patients can access this service only by contacting their own GP practice only. The clinician will determine if the patient is able to undergo the procedure and refer to the provider.
4. The provider is Farnham Medical Centre, 435 Stanhope Road, South Shields, NE33 4QY.

Sunderland place

1. Yes, the ICB commissions this service in South Tyneside ICB place.
2. Please refer to the response to question 1 for South Tyneside.
3. Patients can access this service only by contacting their own GP practice only – the clinician will determine if the patient is able to undergo the procedure.
4. 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, contact details for Sunderland ICB place GP practices is available publicly on the NHS Digital website: [GP and GP practice related data – NHS England Digital](#). The GP Practices full file name is **eppracur** and for your reference, NENC ICB's Organisation Data Service (ODS) code is **QMH** and the Sunderland ICB place ODS code is **00P**. In accordance with s.21 of the FOIA, we are not required to provide information in response to a request if it is reasonably accessible to you by other means.

Tees Valley place

1. The ICB commissions all GP Practices within Tees and Darlington to provide an ear wax removal service.
2. Please refer to the response to question 1.
3. Patients would contact their GP Practice to access the service.
4. All GP Practices across Tees and Darlington are commissioned to provide this service. A list of practices can be found online using the link [NHS Digital – CSV downloads](#).

NENC ICB

5. We can confirm, as per Section 1(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the ICB on this occasion is not able 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 uses NICE guidance on ear wax removal and pathways.
7. The link to this guidance is [Quality statement 1: Earwax removal | Hearing loss in adults | Quality standards | NICE](#). In North Cumbria, the patient information site link is <https://patient.info/ears-nose-throat-mouth/hearing-problems/earwax>
8. NENC ICB have received zero complaints regarding difficulty in accessing or inability to access a wax removal service in the past 24 months.

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**