

Our Reference North East and North Cumbria ICB\
FOI ICB 25–317

North East and North Cumbria ICB
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By Email

24 November 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 8 November 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

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I would like to request the following information regarding the commissioning and operation of hyper-acute stroke services within the Tees Valley area of the NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB).

1. Direct Admission Pathway
 - a. Please provide the current service specification, pathway description, or commissioning agreement that defines how suspected acute stroke patients should access the hyper-acute stroke service.
 - b. Specifically, does the commissioned service require that patients can be received directly onto the stroke ward or designated receiving area 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, without first attending the Emergency Department?
 - c. Does this 24/7 direct-admission requirement apply to referrals from:
 - North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) paramedics;
 - Yorkshire Ambulance Service (YAS) paramedics; and
 - GPs or out-of-hours primary care services?
 - d. If not all referrers can access the stroke unit directly 24/7, please confirm what the out-of-hours pathway is for these patients and where they are conveyed.

2. Commissioned Providers and Funding

- a. Please confirm which NHS Trust(s) hold the contract(s) for hyper-acute stroke services for the Tees Valley population (for example, North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust and South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust).
- b. Please provide the annual contract value (latest available financial year) for each provider, and state whether the funding assumes or explicitly includes provision for 24/7 direct admission.
- c. Please indicate whether any contractual or financial adjustments are applied if the 24/7 direct-admission service is not provided in full.

3. Service Hours and Compliance

- a. Please confirm the actual operational hours for direct stroke admissions to the stroke ward or receiving area at each provider site.
- b. Please share any performance or audit data from the past two years that demonstrate compliance (or non-compliance) with 24/7 access requirements, including thrombolysis/thrombectomy availability, on-call consultant stroke cover, and door-to-needle times.

4. Governance and Oversight

- a. Please identify the ICB role or committee responsible for commissioning oversight and performance monitoring of the stroke pathway for the Tees Valley.
- b. Please provide copies of any meeting minutes, reviews, or correspondence (within the past 12 months) that discuss stroke pathway access hours, cross-border (NEAS/YAS) conveyance issues, or changes to service delivery.

I would prefer the information in electronic format (Word, PDF, or Excel). If parts of this request exceed the statutory time limit, please prioritise items 1–3.

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.

South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

1. Direct Admission Pathway

- The James Cook University Hospital (JCUH), Middlesbrough:
 - Provides Hyperacute, Acute and early Rehabilitation Stroke Services with access to imagining and vascular and neurology expertise
 - Provides a 7-day TIA Service to the population of South Tees and North Yorkshire.
- The Friarage Hospital, Northallerton:
 - Provides ongoing acute and rehabilitation stroke services to patients repatriated from JCUH following their Hyperacute episode. Repatriation would usually occur after 72 hours, dependent upon clinical need.
 - Provides a TIA service, predominantly for 'low risk' patients.
- For patients requiring longer periods of inpatient rehabilitation, there are designated stroke beds at Carter Bequest Hospital, Middlesbrough (10 beds) and Guisborough Primary Care Hospital (8 beds) with stroke specialist therapy teams at both sites.
- The Acute Stroke Unit (Ward 28) is a 30 bedded ward, based at the James Cook Hospital. The Unit comprises of 24 Acute Stroke beds and 6 monitored beds for individuals in the Hyperacute phase. The ward provides a multi-disciplinary approach to care using the

Integrated Stroke Care Pathway. Board Rounds take place to support a daily Senior Medical review of all patients using an MDT approach.

- Patients who require further rehabilitation or ongoing treatment and therapies may be referred to a Community Hospital into designated Stroke Beds with continued medical input provided by the Specialists/Consultants in Stroke.
- There are 10 designated stroke rehabilitation beds at Carter Bequest Hospital and 8 designated stroke rehabilitation beds at Guisborough Primary Care Hospital. On both sites there are specialist stroke therapy teams.
- The stroke beds at the Friarage Hospital are all located on the Rutson Unit with appropriate Therapy input and under the care of a Stroke Rehabilitation Consultant. When on leave this consultant will be covered by one of the Stroke consultants at JCUH.
- The TIA service meets 'Best Practice' standards so that can see, investigate and treat on all high-risk patients within 24 hours and all low-risk patients within a maximum of 7 days.

2. Commissioned Providers and Funding

The trust is paid as part of a block payment and NENC ICB is unable to break funding down to service level.

3. Service Hours and Compliance

Provision of a 24-hour Thrombolysis Service for those patients meeting the criteria. There is a 24/7 stroke specialist (Consultant) on call rota (partly from Neurology). STSFT is delivering to the service specification.

4. Governance and Oversight

NENC ICB is not aware of any performance issues within the stroke pathway, the contract meetings discuss performance by exception which stroke has not been highlighted as under delivering.

County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust (CDDFT) – Darlington

1. Direct Admission Pathway

- To provide high quality, comprehensive medical and rehabilitative care to stroke patients referred to our care, and to extend outreach care to all older patients who would benefit from elderly care expertise.
- Be directly admitted to a specialist stroke unit
- Be assessed by expert stroke clinicians from a range of professions within 24-hours
- Have access to brain imaging within 1hr of hospital admission for a number of patients and within 24-hours for the remainder
- Receive thrombolysis treatment (within 30 mins of hospital arrival) if a scan and stroke specialist confirms they need it, within three hours of the onset of a stroke
- Have their ability to swallow tested within 4-hours of stroke unit arrival
- nurses and therapists, known as a multi-disciplinary team
- Provision of high-risk TIA assessment – 7 days a week for stroke prevention
- Service description/care pathway:
 - Emergency direct admission hyper acute care
 - Rapid access to TIA Outpatient Clinic
 - Follow up care
- The stroke service is delivered by 5 consultants (including 2 part-time consultants) and an Associate Specialist.

- TIA patients are prioritised by use of ABCD2 score and if high risk are seen within 24 hours of referral (seen by stroke consultant on call via Ward 41 North Tees site at weekends). CT and Doppler's are performed same day with urgent referral for endarterectomy if indicated.
- Acute In-patients are managed on ward 2 at University Hospital North Durham. This has 4 assessment beds, 4 Hyper Acute monitoring beds and 12 Stroke Unit Beds

2. Commissioned Providers and Funding
The trust is paid as part of a block payment and NENC ICB is unable to break funding down to service level.

3. Service Hours and Compliance
There is access to a 24-hour hyperacute stroke service, 7-days-a-week. Patients can be monitored 24/7 in a high dependency bed and receive 24/7 care from a range of specialist clinicians including consultants. CDDFT is delivering to the service specification.

4. Governance and Oversight
NENC ICB is not aware of any performance issues within the stroke pathway, the contract meetings discuss performance by exception which stroke has not been highlighted as under delivering.

North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust (NTHFT)

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.

NENC ICB holds no specific service specification for Stroke with North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust. There is a Stroke Unit which patients are admitted to. However, we have determined that the information is held by NTHFT.

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 contact for the trust – nth-tr.foi@nhs.net – to make your request.

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**