

Our Reference North East and North Cumbria ICB\
FOI ICB 25–166

North East and North Cumbria ICB
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By Email

5 August 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 24 July 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

This FOI request relates to Getting Help Services, as summarised in the Getting Help Report attached. Information is requested in relation to:

1. How the successful providers plan to include local VCS organisations that contributed to the 2024 Getting Help Engagement Report?
2. How the successful providers plan to ensure that existing VCS services flourish and are not commercially harmed. This is especially important given the historical context and our experience.
3. A copy of the Getting Help Tender document, including any information relating to how and who put this tender together.
4. A copy of the Contract Award Notice when published.
5. The reasons as to why the original tender was not awarded as published in Sept 2024.
6. Reasoning as to why the tender was put together under 1 LOT, this design excludes smaller local VCS organisations from participating.

It remains important that successful providers can clearly demonstrate the meaningful engagement and involvement of local VCS organisations in the delivery of Getting Help services. Any information pertaining to this is requested to ensure openness, fairness, transparency and accountability.

If the outcome of the winning Getting Help tender causes commercial harm/ disadvantage to an organisation, by way of the chosen provider/providers gaining an unfair advantage then the matter will be dealt with by way of Complaint; supported by my local MP and Legal Services. This will involve historical mapping to understand the full extent surrounding the applicant's organisation's dissatisfaction and harm caused to date. The Complaint will take account of ICB minutes, stating that local VCS providers will flourish under the new Getting Help Offer. It is anticipated that successful providers will need to evidence how they will enable VCS providers to flourish, including equitable terms offered.

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.

1. This is a live tender process; therefore we are unable to answer this question as the process has not yet concluded.
2. Please refer to the response to question 1.
3. Please refer to the response to question 1.
4. Once published, this Contract Award Notice will be publicly available and will not be sent individually to anyone.

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, section 22, the Contract Award Notice is exempt from disclosure at this date because it is intended for future publication. It is considered that it is reasonable to withhold the requested information prior to publication.

We believe that following the established date of publication is sensible, in line with accepted practices, and fair to all concerned. It is acceptable to manage the availability of this information by planning and controlling its publication, as the timetable for publication enables internal consideration of the information prior to its public release.

When considering the application of this exemption we are required to assess the public interest in withholding or disclosing the requested information. There is evidently a public interest in the Contract Award Notice however, this is best served by preventing the disclosure of that information ahead of the ICB's predetermined timescale. It is considered that the public interest is to enable the ICB to finalise, approve and publish this information in the near future. We would therefore argue the public interest is adequately served by the existing publication date, pursuant to the ICB's existing intentions.

Therefore, on this occasion, we consider the public interest in withholding the requested information outweighs the public interest in providing the requested data at this time.

Please refer to the government website <https://www.find-tender.service.gov.uk/Search> The relevant published notices for this procurement are:

- 2025/S 000-026225
- 2025/S 000-030714
- 2025/S 000-043134
- 2025/S 000-045180

5. There was no tender issued in September 2024.

6. The service model approved by the relevant authority required a single point of access and consolidation of 7 current fragmented service lines into a single service provision this is why there is one LOT. The ICB cannot comment on live tender responses as all bid submissions received have stated that the entirety of their bids are commercially sensitive and confidential.

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 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**