



# North East and North Cumbria

Our Reference North East & North Cumbria  
ICB FOI 408

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04 July 2023

By Email

Dear

**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 12 June 2023 for information held by NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB) under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

NENC ICB covers the areas of County Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle, North Cumbria, North Tyneside, Northumberland, South Tyneside, Sunderland and Tees Valley (which covers the 5 councils that make it up – Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton-on-Tees).

Please find the information you requested on behalf of the ICB as follows.

**Your Request**

Could you please provide me with any information you may have on our local ICB's plans for LGBTQ+ IVF treatments.

**Our Response**

*NENC ICB can advise you of the following in relation to your request:*

*The Value based clinical commissioning policy VBCCP has been in place across the North East and North Cumbria prior to the inception of the CCGs, and is now on version 12.*

*The VBCCP policy version 12 is in place for all places across the North East and North Cumbria*

<https://northeastnorthcumbria.nhs.uk/media/m0dkdhn/icbp040-vbc-policy-12.pdf>

*The changes to the policy from 2019 are included at the end of the policy.  
(earlier changes are available on request)*

*In January 2020 (for implementation April 2020) the section formally known as invitro fertilisation (IVF) and Intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI) renamed assisted reproduction treatments.*

*In January 2020 (for implementation April 2020) a fertility preservation section was added into the VBCCP policy within the assisted reproduction policy*

*The Assisted reproduction treatment section is in the prior approval section.  
This means that interventions should only be carried out where prior specific criteria are met, and a prior approval ticket (PAT) is obtained to demonstrated compliance with the criteria.*

*The current policy references requirements that same sex couples need to meet for eligibility for IVF treatment, and the exclusion of NHSE funded surrogacy*

*The updated policy also includes a fertility preservation policy and says that the NHS will fund fertility preservation for **anyone** who is at risk of premature infertility from iatrogenic or other medical conditions*

*The fertility preservation section is followed by an embryo/ gamete harvesting and storage policy that details the duration of storage.*

*The VBCCP and ICB have issued a statement regarding the planned policy review following the publication of the women's health strategy*

*The Women's Health Strategy (August 2022) sets out a 10-year ambition, to improve health outcomes for women, whilst radically improving the way in which the health and care system engage and listen to what women want and need. Fertility is a significant element of this strategy.*

*There will be a focus on:*

- 1) Removal of non-clinical access criteria to fertility treatment, such as one partner having a child from a previous relationship, to create more equality in access to fertility services.*
- 2) Same sex-couples – The strategy recognises that the interpretation and implementation by the NHS of the access criteria for female same-sex couples has been variable, placing greater financial burdens on female same-sex couples. The strategy sets out to relieve those additional burdens, so that there is no requirement for self-funding and the NHS treatment pathway for female same-sex couples will start with 6 cycles of artificial insemination, prior to accessing IVF services if necessary.*

*The North East and North Cumbria Value Based Clinical Commissioning Policy Steering Group, understand that this work is ongoing, and as such, will await further guidance from NHSE and NICE, prior to making any amendments to the current VBC Policy. It is expected that this work will conclude during 2024.*

*In line 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 make a complaint or 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 complaint, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. 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.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.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](http://www.legislation.gov.uk) . This will not affect your initial information request.

Yours sincerely

*Pamela Coxon*

**Pamela Coxon**  
**Information Governance Officer**