

24/11/2025

NN-ICB/25-1377

Dear Requestor

Re: Freedom of Information Request

Thank you for your request for information, received on 28 October 2025, regarding Ophthalmology referrals, triage, and Patient Choice. We have processed your request in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

Under the FOIA, public authorities like ours are required to respond to requests for information within 20 working days. In response to your request, I can confirm that we partially hold the information requested.

Please find below our response to your request:

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I request information regarding the ophthalmology referral pathway and triage arrangements within Nottingham and Nottinghamshire ICB.

Specifically, please provide:

1. Referral flows and triage

- Which organisations currently act as triage providers for ophthalmology referrals (including cataract, YAG, and other ophthalmic procedures).

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire ICB has three triage providers for ophthalmology referrals:

- EMMS PCL (covering Nottingham City);
 - HealthHarmonie (covering Nottinghamshire County); and
 - Primary Eyecare Services (covering Bassetlaw).
- Number of referrals sent to each triage provider over the past 12 months.

Triage Provider	Number of referrals between Oct-24 to Sep-25
EMMS PCL	4,934
Health Harmonie	19,758
PECS	1,596

- Criteria or protocols used by triage providers to determine the appropriate level of care for each referral (primary, secondary, or tertiary).

Local community providers and independent sector providers have service specifications which outline the services they are commissioned to provide. The triage providers use the information within these and also knowledge of local pathways. In the absence of these, triage providers refer to the national guidance e.g. College of Optometrists clinical guidance.

- Details of how triage providers offer patients an informed choice of provider, including:

EMMS PCL work closely with the ICB's Referral Support Service (RSS) who offer choice of provider to patients in Nottingham City. The RSS and HealthHarmonie offer choice by telephoning patients after they have been referred and offering them a choice of provider. Primary Eyecare Services send a letter or text message to patients following a routine referral with an online link to select their preferred provider.

- How patients are presented with the range of NHS and independent sector providers.

The RSS and HealthHarmonie use the NHS Electronic Referral System (e-RS) and enter the patient's postcode and then offer a minimum of five providers who can offer the services they require. Primary Eyecare Services offer via an online link the ten providers closest to a patient's home postcode.

- How relevant information on locations, waiting times, and other factors is provided.

Staff from the RSS and HealthHarmonie provide patients with this information over the telephone provided it is available from the provider's Directory of Services on the NHS Electronic Referral System. Primary Eyecare Services can also be contacted over the telephone if patients want additional information and support to make their choice of provider.

- How this is facilitated and recorded, including any system, documentation, or workflow.

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire ICB does not hold this information.

- Copies of process documents, guidance, or SOPs provided to triage providers to support patient choice.

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire ICB does not hold this information.

2. Independent sector access

- Which independent sector providers are included in the patient choice options offered by triage providers.

The choice of providers (a minimum of five NHS or independent sector providers, if available) are usually offered based on the distance from where the patient lives, and also the providers' waiting times.

- Number of referrals received by each independent sector provider over the past 12 months, broken down by service type (e.g., cataract, YAG).

Independent Sector Provider	Number of referrals between Oct-24 to Sep-25	Service type (e.g., cataract, YAG)
ACES	173	The ICB does not hold this information.
CHEC	2,793	The ICB does not hold this information.
Newmedica	4,158	The ICB does not hold this information.
Spamedica	1,587	The ICB does not hold this information.
Optegra	506	The ICB does not hold this information.
Woodthorpe Hospital	382	The ICB does not hold this information.

- Any guidance or documentation provided to triage providers on offering independent sector providers to patients.

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire ICB does not hold this information.

3. Auditing and monitoring

- Any audits or reviews conducted to ensure patient choice is being applied consistently.

No formal audits have recently been undertaken. The RSS team sit within the ICB so are line managed internally.

- Anonymised or aggregated examples showing how patient choice has been implemented in practice, including outcomes where possible.

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire ICB does not hold this information.

- Copies of audit templates or summary reports (redacted where necessary to protect commercially sensitive or personal information).

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire ICB does not hold this information.

If you are unhappy with the way in which your request has been handled, NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) has an internal review procedure through which you can raise any concerns you might have. Further details of this procedure can be obtained by contacting Lucy Branson, Director of Corporate Affairs via lucy.branson@nhs.net or by writing to FOI Team at NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire ICB, Sir John Robinson House, Sir John Robinson Way, Arnold, Daybrook, Nottingham NG5 6DA.

If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the internal review, you can apply to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), who will consider whether the organisation has complied with its obligations under the Act and can require the organisation to remedy any problems. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire ICB. You can find out more about how to do this, and about the Act in general, on the Information Commissioner's Office website at: <https://ico.org.uk/for-the-public/>.

Complaints to the Information Commissioner's Office should be sent to:

FOI/EIR Complaints Resolution, Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Telephone 0303 123 1113 or report a concern via <https://ico.org.uk/concerns/>.

Yours sincerely

Freedom of Information (FOI) Officer on behalf of NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board

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All information we have provided is subject to the provisions of the Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2015. Accordingly, if the information has been made available for re-use under the [Open Government Licence](#) (OGL) a request to re-use is not required, but the license conditions must be met. You must not re-use any previously unreleased information without having the consent of NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board. Should you wish to re-use previously unreleased information then you must make your request in writing (email will suffice) to the FOI Lead via nnicb-nn.foi@nhs.net. All requests for re-use will be responded to within 20 working days of receipt.