



HM Prison &
Probation Service

Probation
Service



Annex A1

Technical Questionnaire



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1. Introduction

1.1 This document allows us to evaluate the quality of your Service proposal for Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) for the region selected in the question before the Mandatory Declarations.

1.2 The document is split into 3 sections;

1.2.1 Region of this response

1.2.1.1 Please submit one copy of this template per lot you are bidding, this template is applicable the following Lots:

- East Midlands
- East of England
- London
- North East
- North West
- South Central
- South West
- Wales
- West Midlands
- Yorkshire and the Humber

1.2.1.2 Note: The Technical Questionnaire for Kent, Surrey and Sussex differs to this form. Please do not submit this form in response to Lot 3 – Kent, Surrey and Sussex.

1.2.2 Mandatory Declarations

1.2.2.1 Please populate the checkbox table selecting 'Yes/No' from the drop down in the end column, and entering any additional information in the bottom row;

1.2.2.2 If you state "No", you must provide an explanation, detailing which areas of the specification you cannot comply with, and how you propose to mitigate these failings to ensure there will be no gaps in service delivery. The Authority shall assess the mitigation provided and may, at its discretion, request additional information in relation to the submission where this requirement has not been substantially met and;

1.2.2.3 reserves the right to disqualify the Bidder from the Call-Off Competition, in accordance with 1.2.2.2.

1.2.3 Technical Criteria

1.2.3.1 Please provide a written response in the section marked 'Response' on each table

- 1.3 Bidders should complete all sections within this document if they wish to bid for Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) for any of the Lots.
- 1.4 The Methodology given within table 1 below will be used for the evaluation of the quality criteria unless otherwise specified within the response requirement.
- 1.5 Bidders should fully explain their answers and provide evidence backed up with examples to the question specifics. Bidders should aim to give the evaluator confidence that they can deliver the proposed service with features and benefits to MoJ. Unsubstantiated claims will not be given higher marks. Under no circumstances include any marketing information, materials and/or handbooks within your bid unless specifically requested to do so within the Limitation boxes.
- 1.6 Bidders should always provide their best possible proposal and answers for each individual question.
- 1.7 The Bidders Responses to each of the Award Criteria questions will be scored and weighted as shown in each individual question. These scores will determine the most economically advantageous Tender.
- 1.8 A statement that a particular requirement will be met is not in itself sufficient. Such Responses, or Responses that are ambiguous, may be taken as failing to meet the Requirement. Detailed information regarding how, when and to what extent a Requirement can be met must be provided where appropriate. Furthermore, if any requirement or part of a requirement cannot be met, this must be stated explicitly along with the reason why.
- 1.9 Bidders should be mindful that each criteria question may be evaluated in isolation. Where a bidder has already provided information that addresses a specific requirement in another question, this information should be re-stated, not simply referenced. Please note that any Response simply making reference to handbooks, marketing material or accreditations and not describing how this will be applied to the Requirement will not be accepted.
- 1.10 Please provide Responses clearly and concisely in a question answer format.
- 1.11 Word Count – All word counts stated for each specific question must be adhered to, if a response exceeds the relevant side limit, or the Authority determines a Supplier has included additional text as including but not limited to those identified in para 1.8, the additional text will not be considered by the Authority and will not be taken into account for the purposes of evaluation or moderation.
- 1.12 The technical evaluation will be split into a Mandatory Declaration checklist, and 4 Technical Criteria sections which have been weighted accordingly;
- 1.13 The Weightings of these sections will total 100% the weighting of each question is detailed below in the relevant section of the criteria, the response to each question will be evaluated and scored based on either;

(a) a pass/fail basis

(b) a weighted score with a minimum quality threshold; or

- 1.14 The Questions listed below will be evaluated against the criteria and scoring matrix detailed.
- 1.15 Technical Questionnaire responses should be uploaded as a word document to the appropriate question on the eSourcing portal. PDF documents's will not be accepted unless explicitly stated as otherwise in the limitations.

2. Scoring Methodology

2.1 The methodology given in the table below will be used for the evaluation of the award criteria unless otherwise specified within the Response requirement.

QUALITY THRESHOLD SCORE (%)	ASSESSMENT	INTERPRETATION
100	Exceptional	The Supplier's response: (a) meets all of the minimum stated criteria in an exceptional manner with a robust proposal that provides full confidence of an overall extremely effective solution , including the relevant ability, understanding, expertise, skills and/or resources OR (b) meets all of the minimum stated criteria in an acceptable manner with a proposal that provides full confidence effective solution, including the relevant ability, understanding, expertise, skills and/or resources, AND provides evidence of factor(s) that will add exceptional value beyond what is described in the criteria.
86.6	Very Good	The Supplier's response: (a) meets all of the minimum stated criteria in a very good manner with a robust proposal that provides full confidence of an overall very effective solution , including the relevant ability, understanding, expertise, skills and/or resources OR (b) meets all of the minimum stated criteria in an acceptable manner with a proposal that provides full confidence effective solution, including the relevant ability, understanding, expertise, skills and/or resources, AND provides evidence of factor(s) that will add significant value beyond what is described in the criteria.
73.3	Good	The Supplier's response: (a) meets all of the minimum stated criteria in a good manner with a robust proposal that provides full confidence of an overall effective solution , including the relevant ability, understanding, expertise, skills and/or resources OR (b) meets all of the minimum stated criteria in an acceptable manner with a proposal that provides full confidence effective solution, including the relevant ability, understanding, expertise, skills and/or resources, AND provides evidence of factor(s) that will add some value beyond what is described in the criteria.
60	Acceptable	The Supplier's response: meets all of the minimum stated criteria in an acceptable manner with a proposal that provides full confidence in an acceptable solution, including the relevant ability, understanding, expertise, skills and/or resources. There may be minor concerns which are easily resolvable and in any event which do not have a material impact on the overall acceptability of the proposal.
40	Minor Reservations	The Supplier's response: <u>does not</u> fully meet one or more of the minimum stated criteria in an acceptable manner and/or meets the minimum stated criteria in an acceptable manner but <u>does not</u> provide full confidence in an acceptable solution, including the relevant ability, understanding, expertise, skills and/or resources causing some minor reservations in one or more areas which may be resolvable but, if not, may have a material impact on the overall acceptability of the proposal.
20	Major Reservations	The Supplier's response: <u>does not</u> fully meet one or more of the minimum stated criteria in an acceptable manner and/or meets the minimum stated criteria in an acceptable manner but <u>does not</u> provide full confidence in an acceptable solution, including the relevant ability, understanding, expertise, skills and/or resources, causing one or more major reservations in one or more areas are unlikely to be resolvable but and may have a material impact on the overall acceptability of the proposal.
0	Unacceptable	The Supplier's response: <u>does not</u> meet one or more of the minimum stated criteria in an acceptable manner and/or contains insufficient information to provide full confidence in an acceptable solution, including the relevant ability, understanding, expertise, skills and/or resources, causing major reservations in one or more areas that are not resolvable and will have an impact on the overall acceptability of the proposal.

3. Region of this response

Please select the region of this response:

Lot 5 – (CoSA) - North East

Please rename this file with the same name convention described in the Annex B – Financial Model, but replacing FRT for TQ.

4. Mandatory Declarations

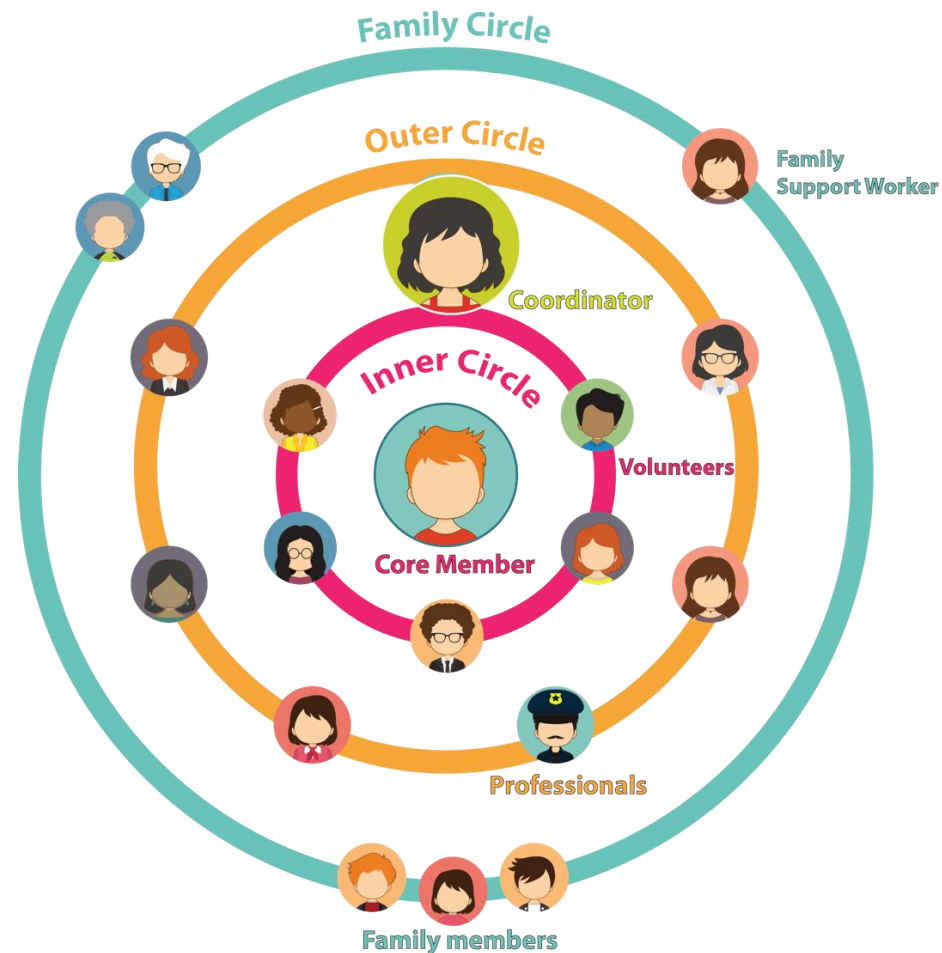
Question Area		Requirement – Select Yes/No		
MD-001	Service Description	1	Please can you confirm you have reviewed 'Schedule 2.1 – Services Description' and confirm that you understand and can deliver on the requirements and outcomes therein?	Yes
	Digital & Technology and Information Assurance	2	Please can you confirm that your organisation will comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018?	Yes
		3	Please can you confirm you have reviewed, understood and will be compliant with Schedule 2.3 (Standards) and Schedule and 2.4 (Information Security and Assurance) of the Framework Agreement?	Yes
		4	Please can you confirm your organisation will be compliant with the requirements of Security Level 1 (SL1)? To note; this includes Cyber Essentials (Basic) no later than two weeks prior to Call-off Commencement Date.	Yes
		5	Please can you confirm your organisation will upgrade to Cyber Essentials Plus, and comply with Service Level 2 (SL2), Service Level 3 (SL3) or Service Level 4 (SL4) of Schedule 2.4, if the Authority, at its sole discretion, determines additional Information Assurance is required of the Bidder of this contract at any stage during the contract term?	Yes
	Estates	6	Please confirm your compliance that services will be delivered in a way that supports environmental sustainability, in accordance with Schedule 2.3 of the Framework Agreement.	Yes
		7	The Bidder shall have a duty of care to provide a facility that meets basic H&S standards and is accessible to People on Probation and Bidder Personnel with protected characteristics (in the main but not limited to physical impairments), and takes into account the specific needs of users of the service in question. Please can you confirm that you will comply with this requirement?	Yes
		8	Please can you confirm your organisation will be compliant with the Legal and Regulatory Requirements as outlined in Appendix 1 – CoSA Supplier Own Site Suitability Review?	Yes
		9a	Please can you confirm your organisation will be compliant with the Best Practice Requirements as outlined in Appendix 1 – CoSA Supplier Own Site Suitability Review? (where this isn't possible please confirm you will comply with 4b to pass this mandatory question)	Yes
		9b	Where you can not comply with 4a please confirm you agree that adequate consideration has been applied and where necessary, mitigations are in place or are in development, and will be agreed by the Authority?	Yes
		10	Not applicable	Yes
		11	Please can you confirm that your estates solution will deliver an appropriate number of suitably geographically dispersed sites that reflect the needs of the service?	Yes
Workforce	12	Please confirm that you have appropriate processes in place to effectively carry out a relevant transfer under TUPE in the event of this being required, including accuracy and timeliness of payroll and pension payments with no disruption to transferring staff, and replication of contractual terms as necessary? Please note that all Providers must respond to this question in line with the documentation provided in this Tender process, and that no other consideration(s) should be taken into account.	Yes	
Enter any additional comments here N/A				

4. Technical Criteria Questions

- 5.1 The tables below sets' out the Award Criteria and weightings relating to the provision of the Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA), please provide your responses to each requirement in the 'Response' box, and upload the completed document to ITT_6417 question 1.2.1 in the technical envelope on the Jaggaer esourcing portal.
- 5.2 In responding to the technical criteria questions, Bidders are required to provide detail on all the following areas (these are the Authority's "minimum requirements").
- 5.3 Bidders should have regard to the appropriate scoring Matrix and the Specification (Schedule 2.1 of the Draft Call-Off Contract) and the wider Draft Call-Off Contract Documentation where appropriate when responding to the question (and should note that since the requirements listed are expected to be covered as a minimum, it may be appropriate for Bidders to include additional information as part of the response to the question in order to achieve a higher score).

TC-001 – Approach to Service Delivery				
Weighting:	30%	Quality Threshold:	60	Limitations
Question: The Authority requires the Bidder to deliver, at a minimum, the requirements outlined in the Overview of Service Requirements of the specification (Schedule 2.1) throughout the duration of Call-Off delivery period. Part A A-1) Please describe your full approach to delivering the requirements stated in ‘Section 6 Overview of Service Requirements’ (Schedule 2.1 of the Call-off Contract), including how you will ensure that Supplier Personnel maintain the CoSA standards required in the Circles UK Code of Practice as volumes of referrals fluctuate. A-2) Please explain how your approach described in part A will be tailored to meet the needs of Person(s) on Probation with protected characteristics. You must demonstrate an understanding of the challenges faced by Person(s) on Probation with each of the protected characteristics as stated in G1, Schedule 2.1 of the Call-Off Contract and how you aim to mitigate these. PART B: B-1) Please explain how you will tailor service delivery across the local landscape to meet the needs of People on Probation, including those who are difficult to reach geographically and those who find it difficult to engage. You must evidence a clear understanding of the challenges across the region and illustrate how this understanding will shape your service delivery approach to ensure a responsive delivery model with no gaps in provision. B-2) Please outline how your service delivery will be responsive to changes within the landscape, e.g. in response to a pandemic for example COVID-19.				Up to 2,000 words; The response should be entered in this table in the cell below; Additional diagrams and tables can be submitted to support your response, however any wording within these shall be included in the overall word count. Line spacing 1.5 Arial font size 11
Response				

Nepacs has an excellent reputation in the North-east for supporting people in the criminal justice system who face stigma, hardship and challenge in their lives; often these are high-risk cases, including prisoners from high-security environments and people who cause sexual harm. As a deliverer of rehabilitative, wraparound support for offenders and their families, we've been working with Circles UK for 18 months to establish our '**Circles North**' offer, meet the accreditation standard and identify opportunities for additional, added-value support to family members, fully-exploiting 140 years of expertise in this field. Our offer will therefore also include an additional 'family circle', with Family Workers supporting loved ones to maximise the chances of successful rehabilitation, along with access to our wider criminal justice wraparound support:



A1 Approach

Our approach will be governed by a robust policy and procedure framework, with extensive systems already in place developed in conjunction with the Circles UK team and fellow providers including Humbercare in neighbouring Yorkshire. We already work with offenders at all points of the journey, and have day-to-day contact with key organisations including Probation Directors, Prison, Police, MAPPA, MOSOVO, Health and Housing colleagues.

We offer teams already cleared to work in prisons, so we can start the process from inside custody. It also means we're acutely 'risk-conscious', with extensive checks and balances in place to ensure full-compliance with the Code of Practice and safety for all involved in the COSA.

Key to the success of any COSA is **preparation**. We'll invest heavily in pre-assessment with the Core member, with the Coordinator meeting with the individual on at least 3 occasions prior to establishing the COSA. Our associated processes and paperwork have all been developed using Circles UK recommended documents and in direct collaboration with another established Circles provider (Humbercare).

Beyond the 1-2-1 work with the Core member, our Coordinator will also facilitate three preparation meetings; one with the COSA Volunteers, one with the Outer Circle and a third with all parties, including the Core Member. This will include full disclosure, ensuring everyone knows their roles and starts on common ground.

In order to set and maintain **standards**, Volunteers will have a checklist for each meeting and follow-up reporting, with monthly Volunteer supervisions with the Coordinator (alternating between 1-2-1 and whole group). There will also be joint quarterly-reporting with the Outer Circle, with both Circles coming together to review progress. All 'live' Volunteers will participate in annual top-up training, regardless of 'current participation in a COSA.

Key to our successful approach will be the matching of a core member to Volunteers. To this end, we have worked with fellow Circles providers to develop a robust system for identifying and validating the suitability of Volunteers, involving paper-based and face-to-face assessments and 'interviews'. We already have a pool of 150 DBS-checked Volunteers, trained to work in HMPPS environments with high-risk individuals.

Continuity will be an essential feature of our approach. Volunteers will be asked to commit to 18 months of support, and any Coordinators' contractual notice period will be 6-months to reflect the need for stability.

Initial COSAs may be held in Probation hubs; however our approach will encourage **safe community integration**, at an appropriate pace, and therefore we will move delivery to non-CJ venues wherever we can. We have partnerships with national organisations including Humankind, Ingeus

and St Giles Wise, all able to help us source safe and secure community delivery venues. We'll also take the lead from fellow Circles providers, organising Circles in open places such as parks or beaches, along with supported community activities, (minimum of three Volunteers accompanying) and accompanied appointments.

We'll promote **safe online communication**, to ensure a connection between the Core Member and Volunteers between Circles; we'll use software such as Rocket Chat to facilitate this securely. Core Members and their families will also have access to our free Helpline, providing additional wraparound support. Probation reporting will go beyond the specification, including progress to work/training narratives.

A2 Protected Characteristics

While always ensuring full compliance with the Code of Practice, each Circle will nonetheless be highly-bespoke to the individual, based on a person-centred assessment which considers each protected characteristic and recognising challenges faced:

Protected Characteristic and others	Potential challenges faced	Mitigations/ Actions to personalise the COSA
Age	<p>Increased social isolation and lack of mobility</p> <p>May be issues relating to mental health/dementia</p> <p>Reduced digital skills to access alternative contacts</p> <p>'Traditional' marriages</p>	<p>We have a wide range of Volunteers, including older people able to relate to issues faced and students specialising in older adult care</p> <p>We're able to provide community venues, close to home and accessible to those with mobility issues</p>

		<p>Links with Shannon Trust will enable us to provide digital support</p> <p>Family Circle will provide help to partner to identify changes needed in 'traditional roles' to ensure change occurs during rehabilitation (e.g. partners provided with assertiveness coaching to help them hold conversations on an equal footing)</p>	
Marriage	<p>Impact of sexual offence on relationships – many marriages are broken, with children who don't understand the reason</p> <p>Partner experiences great stigma</p> <p>Loss of wider support networks</p>	<p>Family Workers able to provide help with practical and emotional impact of family break-up and support meditation/ action planning</p> <p>We're experienced in facilitating 'family activities'; we will combine this experience with our Volunteer-supported sessions between Circles</p>	
Pregnancy	<p>Wariness of Children's Services</p> <p>Requirement to maintain peri-natal health during difficult period</p> <p>Mental health issues associated with loss of access to children</p>	<p>Advocacy support on behalf of pregnant women/mothers</p> <p>Access to our peri-natal family workers, trained in MH support</p>	

Disability	<p>Access to delivery locations</p> <p>Stigma is further acerbated by increased social isolation</p> <p>Communication difficulties for Circle for people who have sensory impairments</p> <p>Increased instances of autism amongst offenders</p>	<p>Enhanced digital support (Shannon Trust) to enable more remote interventions</p> <p>We have access to disabled-friendly delivery locations for existing community interventions</p> <p>Experienced delivering interventions for people with autism, with specialist Volunteers who can support such groups</p> <p>Others in our pool of interested Volunteers have sign language experience</p>	
Race including BAME and traveller	<p>Experience of racism</p> <p>Experience of services that are not culturally sensitive/relevant, lack of trust</p> <p>Role of family in supporting desistance</p> <p>Privacy is very important to traveller community, which is an issue in terms of Circle transparency</p> <p>Higher percentage of people with poor literacy skills</p> <p>Language barriers, for example with people from Eastern Europe</p>	<p>All our Volunteers are trained in advocacy support</p> <p>Added-value of Family Workers trained to support wider family role in supporting desistance.</p> <p>We have traveller link workers, with excellent contacts across Local Authorities, to support any advocacy work</p> <p>Experienced working with HMP/PS-translating services</p> <p>Website instantly translatable into 100+ languages</p> <p>Partnership with Shannon Trust meaning we can provide help with form-filling, interviews and navigating support systems</p> <p>Cultural-competence and unconscious bias training for all staff/Volunteers</p>	

Religion	<p>Different cultural norms within different communities, with sexual activity viewed differently</p> <p>Rejection of offender by religious network/ family</p>	<p>We are already embedded across faith, disability, and multicultural groups</p> <p>Family Support Workers, already-trained in understanding and navigating different cultural norms, will support CM and families, including extended family</p>
Sex	<p>Perception there is less help for female offenders</p>	<p>Volunteers trained to support women offenders, including perinatal support in prison</p>
Gender re-assignment	<p>Stigma and lack of understanding in society of emotional impact of reassignment</p> <p>Self-identification may be fluid</p>	<p>As above, we are used to supporting people who are trans-gender, with Volunteers experienced in providing trans-gender counselling</p> <p>Early preparation sessions will talk through gender identification and ensure Inner/Outer Circles are using terms reflective of CM's wishes</p>
Sexual orientation	<p>Increased chance of mental health issues</p> <p>Vulnerable to sexual exploitation</p>	<p>Family Support Workers and Volunteers already recruited from LGBTQIA+ background and trained to support advocacy and emotional wellbeing</p>
Care Leavers and young people	<p>Lack of trust of statutory agencies</p> <p>Higher percentage of people with poor literacy skills</p> <p>Difficulties taking responsibility</p>	<p>Experience delivering specialist Care leaver programmes, both in prison and in the community, with staff interested in becoming Volunteers</p> <p>Volunteers with lived experience, able to provide emotional and practical support</p>

		Excellent links with LA Personal Advisers, ensuring COSAs align with Support Plans
Veterans	<p>Shame and rejection by peers</p> <p>Mental health issues, particularly PTSD, more prevalent</p>	<p>Veterans within our pool of Volunteers who have expressed an interest in facilitating a COSA</p> <p>Support with accessing PTSD support through links with healthcare provision across the region</p>

B1 Local Landscape

We've been working as an integral component of the North East criminal justice system for 140 years, delivering services in each of the seven prisons within the region (Categories A-D and YOIs), using Every Adult Matters/ trauma-informed approaches. This includes delivering a portfolio of services at each stage of the criminal justice journey, meaning we have daily contact with CJ colleagues and knowledge of the challenges faced by stakeholders, individuals and families at different times:



Locally, key challenges for us will include:

i. Managing demand:

The North-east has been without a Circles provider for some time and we know from Circles UK/Probation that demand is high. Our experienced Project Lead, Dawn Simpson, who has Probation experience and works in prison settings, will work closely with Probation Directors to prioritise referrals and geographies during mobilisation to ensure we target initial work where it is needed, with Volunteers ready to commence delivery promptly.

ii. Significant rurality and long distances between population centres (e.g. Berwick-Upon-Tweed):

We're used to working with individuals and families across the entire region, including away from the larger population centres. Our breadth of Volunteers, and capacity to recruit Volunteers from across the region (e.g. with connections with all of the region's universities) means that we can provide local support and minimise travel costs. We are also used to working with remote technologies in secure environments (e.g. supporting Purple Visits in prisons) and will make use of Rocket Chat to connect COSA participants between visits.

iii. Higher prevalence of deprivation:

This will be a key consideration in delivery of Circles, particularly with regard to travel for Core Members (and their families). To address this, we already have access to a large number of community venues region-wide; the venues are familiar with our work and our activities and we are confident that most will be accommodating to this service. This means we can reduce travel costs for participants, further supported by use of remote technologies. We also have wraparound support to help people manage budgets and excellent links to debt support and benefits advisers.

Our charity's relationships with Shannon Trust and education providers mean we can support individuals with accessing education to help improve skills. We're also used to advising and supporting people with criminal records on disclosure of convictions and work with employers who offer placements/employment to offenders.

B2 Responding to Change

Over the past two years we've demonstrated our ability to 'flex' to challenging situations. As part of our Covid response, we've had to develop support programmes for offenders and families to adjust to 'Purple Visits'; this has entailed supporting people with acquiring digital skills, purchasing laptops/tablets to support remote access interventions and offering befriending telephone support to combat isolation.

This experience means we're able to respond to changes to the delivery model, while remaining fully-compliant (as with HMPPS visits). We will continue to have a comprehensive business continuity plan, with specific actions for Circles provision; this will include ensuring we have 'back-up Volunteers' trained in Circles to step in should a Volunteer have to leave the COSA, without causing disruption. We'll also have a COSA Critical Function List detailing how we'll maintain a COSA in the event of sickness or staff shortages.

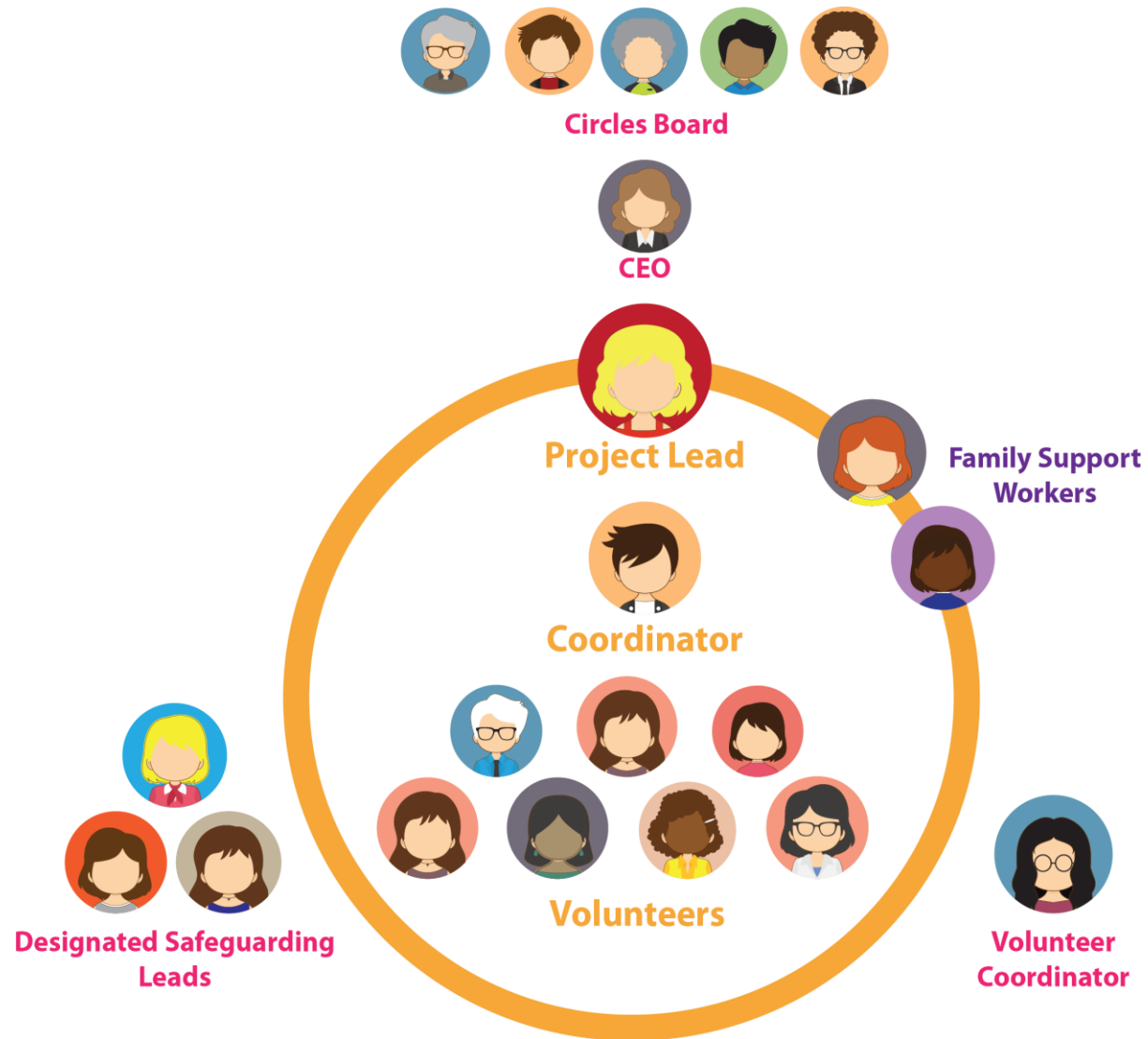
Our Project Lead, Dawn Simpson, and our Nepacs Volunteer Coordinator will also be fully Circles trained, providing additional back-up coverage in the event of an absence, to ensure continuity of support at all times.

Total Word Count – (Bidders to self-populate)

2000 words (including 62 words in diagrams)

TC-002 – Supplier Personnel Skills and Continuity				
Weighting:	25%	Quality Threshold:	60	Limitations
Question:				Up to 1,500 words; The response should be entered in this table in the cell below; Additional diagrams and tables can be submitted to support your response, however any wording within these shall be included in the overall word count. Line spacing 1.5 Arial font size 11
<p>The Authority requires the Bidder to advertise, recruit, train, support and retain Supplier Personnel (including volunteers) across the region to be able to deliver the Circles of Support and Accountability Service in a way that, reflects the diversity of the local community as outlined in the Overview of Service Requirements of the Specification (Schedule 2.1 of the Call-Off Contract).</p> <p>PART A:</p> <p>A-1) Please provide detail on how you will recruit volunteers and prior to the Call-Off Commencement Date, including examples specific to the Geographical Location, and detailing the specific advertising methods you will utilise to promote role attraction. Please outline how you will continue to build the pool of volunteers thereafter to maintain delivery of the service. If you have an existing pool of volunteers, please detail how you intend to use these volunteers.</p> <p>A-2) Please explain how your approach to A-1 will maximise opportunities for attracting people from diverse backgrounds, including those with protected characteristics, to build a pool of volunteers that represent the diverse characteristics of communities in the local geographies.</p> <p>A-3) Please explain how you will manage your Supplier Personnel (including volunteers) in the events of fluctuating referral volumes (both increasing and decreasing).</p> <p>PART B:</p> <p>B-1) Please describe how you will ensure that all Supplier Personnel (including volunteers) who deliver or support to deliver the services will have the appropriate skills and knowledge.</p> <p>B-2) Please explain how you will ensure training is up to date throughout the duration of the contract, including in response to any key changes in legislation, policy or best practice (specifically updates to Circles UK Code of Practice).</p> <p>Part C:</p> <p>Please describe what considerations you will make to ensure service continuity in the event of disruption and changing landscapes, in particular the following staffing events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Annual leave;b) Staff sickness;c) Attrition.				

(NB: You may wish to use examples and/or case studies of how you have previously handled similar situations).	
Response	
<p>A1 Recruiting Volunteers</p> <p>Nepacs is very much a Volunteer-driven organisation, with a pool of over 150 active Volunteers upon which we can draw. We've been working with our Volunteers to identify those who have the relevant skills, experience and interest to support Core Members and have people already trained in all aspects of risk assessment, security and supportive listening training (and all requirements of the Call-Off contract, section G6) . This means that we already have Volunteers we are able to start matching as soon as the call-off commences.</p> <p>We work across all 11 local authority areas in the North-East, with partnerships with Volunteer organisations including community and church groups and specialist charities with whom we undertake some of our recruitment. We also have relationships with the universities, especially Durham and Newcastle, from where we are able to recruit Volunteers undertaking courses in fields such as criminology, sociology, psychology and social care. These will continue to be a key source of recruits, with participation in the COSA aligning with the timings of the courses. We'll also continue to undertake joint recruitment with our colleagues at Citizens Advice Bureau, as well as advertising through Clinks, VONNE and the Community Foundations.</p> <p>We already have a dedicated Volunteer Coordinator, responsible for recruiting and supporting our Volunteers. This will be an added-value role, providing recruitment and pastoral support to the Coordinators.</p> <p>Other Volunteers will also support recruitment, sharing their positive experiences with potential recruits.</p> <p>Our proposed team is shown overleaf. It includes access to our existing Designated Safeguarding Leads and Family Support Workers to help the Core Member's significant others and provide additional wraparound support:</p>	



In order to support recruitment, we have a Volunteer Recruitment Strategy, approved by Circles UK, which works alongside our Equality and Recruitment Policies to ensure diversity and a systematic approach. This will include an annual Recruitment Plan, reviewed and tracked by our Trustee Board HR Sub-Committee and CEO.

As at present, we'll be running a series of social media Volunteer recruitment campaigns. This will be a 'generic' call for Volunteers. As people come forward, we'll talk with them about potential interests and our dedicated Volunteer Coordinator and Circles Coordinator will meet with those who may be suitable/interested in supporting Circles. This means we'll be fully-satisfied of someone's genuine interest before moving forward with the full suitability assessment.

A2 Diverse Backgrounds

The fact we work with such a varied network of specialist charities, such as those supporting Eastern European communities or older people, means that we are able to target recruitment to meet the needs of any Core Member with protected characteristics. We also find our MAPPA and CJ colleagues helpful in identifying Volunteers.

We already support offenders and families from all backgrounds through projects such as befriending, and have been locating and matching Volunteers from similar backgrounds to create meaningful working relationships. Likewise, we'll be advertising for Volunteers on partner websites and via their social media channels, targeting any particular need. Our web presence is instantly translatable into 100+ languages.

Our breadth of coverage across all areas, and our links with charities and universities in each Local Authority area, means we also have people able to support in each corner of the region, including as far north as Berwick. This means the provision will be fully-localised. Our Volunteer Coordinator will continue to monitor and report to the Board on the breadth of Volunteer recruitment, including people with protected characteristics and will manage the key social media and partnership recruitment drives throughout the year.

A3 Managing Fluctuations

Given our range of additional services, many of which include mentoring/coaching support, there is no shortage of activity for Volunteers. All Volunteers will receive our comprehensive training package (going beyond core requirements of section G6 of the call-off contract), enabling them to support people experiencing adverse childhood experiences, with trauma-informed interventions, in addition to the approved Circles UK package. This means we can build a pool sufficiently skilled to support other offenders or families during times of low COSA demand. Likewise, interested Volunteers not currently engaged with a COSA will be trained pre-emptively, ensuring we have a readily-available pool of people if numbers increase.

We also access student Volunteers from Universities, meaning we can recruit from specific courses to meet demand, and as individual needs/backgrounds arise.

Case numbers will be discussed at weekly management meetings with Nepacs' Volunteer Coordinator to identify recruitment needs and we'll work with Probation colleagues to jointly-prioritise waiting lists.

B1 Skills/Knowledge

All Volunteers will undertake the Circles UK approved training programme, as well as our own comprehensive package of criminal justice focused training. This includes specific modules of understanding and managing risk, safeguarding, escalation processes and safe working. We already have one Coordinator trained by Circles UK, who is also a trained trainer, already leading on the internal training programmes. Our Project Lead and Volunteer Coordinator will also be trained in the programme, ensuring a wealth of supervisory support for Volunteers. All Volunteers will have a monthly supervision with a Coordinator; this will be 1-2-1 and then as a group on alternate months. All Volunteers will be able to have a supervisory session whenever they need and everyone will have support available 24/7 through our 'out-of-hours' management hotline.

All Volunteers will receive a copy of the Circles UK Code of Practice as well as our own Circles-specific Volunteer handbook and safeguarding escalation toolkit. All Volunteers will sign to acknowledge receipt and this will be updated yearly. Volunteers and staff are involved in our liP accreditation processes. They will shadow other Volunteers as part of training.

The initial assessment of Volunteers is based on Circles UK approved materials, and will include a face-to-face meeting to gauge initial interest and assess suitability of a Volunteer to work with, and support, sex offenders, mapped against Circles approved 'Job Descriptions' and role profiles. All Volunteers will have copies of detailed Circles UK approved Volunteer Handbooks, Agreements and policies, which will complement both the comprehensive Nepacs training programme and the approved Circles UK two-day programme. All Volunteers will receive a pre- and post-training interview to assess effectiveness and identify any other training gaps, while checking that the Volunteer remains committed and suitable for the role.

B2 Training

All staff and Volunteers engaged with the Circles UK programme, including those 'on standby' who are 'between' Circles, will receive annual training updates (as a minimum). Our training management system will record all training received and this will be monitored by both our HR Team and the Coordinator, to ensure all training is kept up to date.

Supervision interviews will identify any outstanding gaps, and all Volunteers will have access to the same modules as staff within our training programme, delivered by an experienced in-house training team.

Our Coordinator will attend regular online and face-to-face meetings with fellow Circles providers (e.g. as with the recent update to the Code of Conduct), ensuring we remain up-to-date with any changes to Circles UK policies, procedures or legislation.

Throughout their time with us, the training for Volunteers will extend beyond that offered internally and through the Circles UK programme; we also 'pool' training with fellow providers and other partners, meaning we can offer, develop and deliver bespoke packages, for example on supporting trans-gender individuals in conjunction with our LGBTQIA+ partners or supporting literacy needs in conjunction with Shannon Trust.

C Disruption

Because we already have a pool of Volunteers, we're able to fill gaps easier than other providers. Our Project Lead will be trained to the same standards as our Coordinator, meaning that there will always be cover during periods of sickness and annual leave. All leave is pre-empted and followed by a full handover. We'll also train our organisational Volunteer Coordinator in the Circles UK programme, ensuring they can provide cover for unexpected absence. We also have an organisational succession plan, reviewed quarterly.

Our recruitment processes, including arrangements with Clinks and VONNE to support rapid in-sector advertising of vacancies, means that we're able to bring a job advert quickly to market. We also focus heavily on internal staff recruitment and have a succession planning strategy which means staff are supported to identify progression opportunities suitable to their experience. Our TNAs, undertaken annually with all staff, will include consideration of whether the Circles service is an area of interest, enabling us to identify/train new staff in the Circles UK programme and further build the level of cover we have for absence or attrition.

Delivering in the prison environment, we occasionally have situations where staff are sick, yet we have a contractual and security obligation to ensure sufficient coverage for a visit/ family session. In these instances, we always plan for at least one extra Volunteer to be on stand-by, as well as being able to call in a trained colleague from another service; this is thanks to the fact we train more people than we need and obtain additional security clearances to pre-empt any unexpected staff shortages.

Total Word Count – (Bidders to self-populate)	1500 words (including 16 in staff structure)
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TC-003 – Risk Management and Information Sharing				
Weighting:	25%	Quality Threshold:	60	Limitations
Question: The Authority requires the Bidder to have clear procedures for responding to changes in the behaviour of People on Probation that may indicate an increased risk or concern. 1) Please explain how you will ensure that all Supplier Personnel will recognise and respond to both subtle and overt changes in behaviour or relapse that may indicate an increase in risk to themselves, to victims, to other People on Probation, Staff Personnel (including volunteers), Probation Practitioners or members of the public? 2) Please explain how you will deliver CoSA to People on Probation where concerns around safeguarding, risk of serious harm or public protection have been identified by the Probation Practitioner, or that have changed, in a way that takes full account of identifying, recording and informing the Probation Practitioner to a change in these risks? 3) Please describe what information sharing processes will be established amongst Staff Personnel to ensure all reporting requirements outlined in section 7 of the specification are met. You should include an explanation of how personal data will be stored and securely shared with parties (including the probation practitioner) as and when requested.				Up to 1,500 words; The response should be entered in this table in the cell below; Additional diagrams and tables can be submitted to support your response, however any wording within these shall be included in the overall word count. Line spacing 1.5 Arial font size 11
Response <p>Nepacs works at all stages of the criminal justice system, from arrest through to rehabilitation in the community. We deliver in all criminal justice settings, including working with offenders in Category A prisons and people who are at risk of self-harm (e.g. during the Early Days in Custody), and we are therefore experienced in supporting people who are high-risk and vulnerable. Given the nature of our work, we already have robust safeguarding processes, fully-aligned to those of our Police, Probation and Prison partners.</p> <p>1) Responding to behaviours</p> <p>Preparation is absolutely key to the safe and effective management of any Circle and this is particularly true when it comes to supporting Core Members. As part of the referral process our Coordinator will be working closely with Probation Colleagues to review the risk management</p>				

information, including OASys assessments, risks of reoffending/ reconviction, risk of self-harm and any restrictions to which the person is subject. This review will be undertaken prior to undertaking the assessment with the prospective Core Member and any issues/triggers identified.

Our Coordinator will then meet with the Core Member for an extended conversation, again reviewing risks and triggers. We are very much aware that, by the nature of the crime, sex offenders can be manipulative/ coercive and all training for staff and Volunteers will include support with identifying such behaviour. All identified risks, and potential triggers or signs of a change in behaviour, will be recorded on the assessment document, for sharing with the inner and outer circles.

Each Circle will also have a Relapse Management Plan detailing:

- licence conditions,
- restrictions
- relationships
- background information
- relapse triggers

During the initial meetings with the Inner and Outer Circles, the potential signs of a change in behaviour (for example who have come across service users who start to abandon self-care when they are at greater risk of re-offending) will be discussed and highlighted as behaviours to monitor. A clear escalation process, involving the Coordinator and/or Probation Lead/ out of hours contact, will exist depending on the nature of the trigger. Nepacs has three DSLs in addition to the Circles Coordinator, with someone on call 7 days a week to support any emergency escalations.

All staff and Volunteers will receive specific training on spotting the signs of behaviour change and on questioning and listening techniques to enable them to effectively assess danger to self or others as part of the Circles UK training programme; this will be updated annually for all staff and Volunteers.

All Volunteers will have access to a detailed COSA Risk Identification Tool Plan, to support identification of triggers, and covering:

- sexual preoccupation;
- access to victims;

- offences related to sexual interests; and
- emotional congruences with children.

All Circles meetings will be recorded, with Volunteers rotating the minute-taking to ensure there is no single 'lead' Volunteer, as per Circles UK practice. Any changes in behaviour will be noted in the minutes which will be shared within 24 hours with the Coordinator. Immediate high-risk concerns about safety/ reoffending will be alerted by telephone without delay, sparking an 'immediate risk' escalation process.

We will of course be keeping detailed attendance records for all Circles, and any associated follow-up contact with the CM, enabling us to alert Probation promptly to any missed appointments, or failures to comply with licence conditions.

Our SLAs will also include actions to take in the event that referrals are inappropriate, and will refer to the process to be followed in the event it is necessary to close a COSA due to the behaviours of the CM. Again, these processes will adhere to Circles UK guidance and be agreed with Probation.

2) Safeguarding Risks and Reporting

Preparation will be key to managing safeguarding risks. All staff and Volunteers will be working to Nepacs' detailed Policies and Procedures for Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults and Vulnerable Children. These have been updated in conjunction with fellow Circles providers and Circles UK, and approved as part of our membership application process. Our three DSLs will play a key role in the formation of each COSA, working closely with the Coordinator and Volunteers to understand the specific risks of each case. They will be involved in the regular risk assessments throughout the COSA. Likewise any Family Workers supporting wider family members will be included in risk reviews.

In terms of reporting of incidents and concerns, Volunteers will receive detailed training (and guidance in the Circles UK approved Handbook and Nepacs policies) regarding their responsibilities for monitoring, recording and reporting issues. Every COSA or community visit will have the minimum of three Volunteers, with the norm being 4-6 Volunteers present. Every meeting will be recorded. Minutes of meetings will be pseudonymised/ coded, with the Core Member referred to by an agreed code. All emails will be sent via our internal secure email system and

never using any personal accounts. Once received they will be forwarded to Probation colleagues using a CJSM account. As with other Circles across the country, meeting records will then be deleted from our system.

At the end of each meeting our internal risk assessment and associated mitigations will be updated as a result of the detail provided by the Volunteers. Any change will again be notified directly to the Probation Practitioner and we will work with them to review the Probation risk assessment accordingly. Where an incident occurs between COSA meetings, for example as a result of a contact from the Core Member or advice from a family member being supported by our team, then we will update the risk assessment immediately and notify Probation.

The risk assessments will be subject to audit by our DSLs on a monthly basis and all Safeguarding issues will be referred to the Outer Circle for full review. For urgent cases, a virtual meeting will be convened on the same day.

Each quarter, the Outer Circle will undertake a full review of any learning from safeguarding issues. Likewise all Volunteers will participate in regular safeguarding briefings, led by the Coordinator and DSLs, in which we will review learning from safeguarding as a team.

Service delivery and capacity information will be shared weekly with the Probation Director and MAPPA Team

Our Board of Trustees' sub-committee responsible for Circles delivery will review safeguarding incidents and learning on a bi-monthly basis and provide direction to the remainder of the Board, the CEO and staff as a result of learning.

Staff/Volunteers will use 'Safeshores' lone-working software which allows them to send real-time 'safety updates' using mobile phones.

3) Information Sharing

Given our range of service delivery to high-risk offenders and their families, we are used to developing and agreeing SLAs and ISAs with CJ and other providers, which have risk-management and effective communication at their heart. We will be using Circles UK approved templates as a basis for development of the SLAs and ISAs with Probation and other stakeholders involved in the Outer Circle and wider support for the individual and their family. These will be discussed in detail during the implementation period, to ensure we are agreed on areas including for example:

- referral criteria;

- referral information requirements;
- processes for addressing unsuitable referrals;
- responsibilities for updating the Probation Action Plan;
- response timescales;
- safeguarding escalation protocols;
- criteria for terminating a COSA; and
- exit strategies.

We are used to sharing information regarding individuals as part of our work in-custody, for example as part of a high-risk individual's ACCT processes, in which we play an active part. All staff and Volunteers are trained on their 'duty to cooperate' responsibilities for reporting information, along with their role in maintaining confidentiality and data protection, and the impact of safeguarding concerns on these. These responsibilities will also be covered in the Circles UK approved training and safeguarding training received, and updated annually.

Nepacs has Cyber Essentials accreditation and we are used to receiving and managing information from OASys and NOMIS and exchanging confidential information via HMPPS approved email/systems. Many of our staff and Volunteers have prison security clearance, including at Category A, so are well-versed in security protocols and the need for secure information management.

As part of our membership application to Circles UK, we have committed to the sharing with them high-level anonymised information on a 'legitimate interest' basis, with our policies updated accordingly. This is a criterion of membership. As with our communication with Probation, this involves use of pseudonymised/coded data (including demographic information, strength development reviews and half-yearly returns) and is in accordance with the 'Privacy Notice' given to all Core Members.

Our Coordinator will of course attend local Multi Agency Public Protection Agency (MAPPA/MOSOVO) meetings, or other relevant forum, as required, as well as providing reports to inform such meetings. This will be in addition to monthly progress reports provided to the Probation Practitioner; if appropriate these will have additional input from our DSLs.

All staff and Volunteers involved in a COSA will also receive training in safe working practices and how to report any breach of those as a result of their participation in the COSA (for example, relating to any inappropriate sexual conduct, harassment or aggression).

Total Word Count – (Bidders to self-populate)

1500 words

TC-004 – Implementation				
Weighting:	20%	Quality Threshold:	40	Limitations
Question: The Authority requires evidence and assurance from the Bidder that their implementation plans are robust, credible and achievable. A) Please explain how you will ensure the implementation plan is successfully achieved by the Call-Off Commencement Date. This should include how critical activities will be completed to ensure the delivery of services, supported by digital and technology, information security, workforce and estates. B) Explain how you will ensure that the appropriate accreditation to deliver this service is obtained by the Call-Off Commencement Date. C) Please provide an Implementation Plan (in any format) to detail planned timescales and responsibilities to meet the Implementation milestones as per Call-Off Order Form, clause 26A Implementation and Schedule 2.1 Section 10, in the Call-off Contract. This section requires explicit reference to the milestones and requires bidders to provide a confident plan of how each milestone shall be met on time. D) Please complete a RAID log outlining all Risks, Assumptions, Issues or Dependencies that you foresee in implementing this Service and how these shall be mitigated to ensure Service delivery is not impacted.				Part A & B Combined – up to 1000 words Part C – up to 3 A4 Pages Part D – up to 3 A4 Pages The response should be entered in this table in the cell below; Additional diagrams and tables can be submitted to support your response, however any wording within these shall be included in the overall word count. Line spacing 1.5 Arial font size 11
Response				
A) Successful Implementation Nepacs has a strong track-record of implementing HMPPS services and have been working with Circles UK for 18 months to secure membership of the organisation and associated accreditation. This means we are both experienced in mobilising complex contracts and well-advanced in our preparations to begin delivery. Our implementation will be led using Prince2 principles by an experienced Implementation Manager with experience working in both Probation and Prison environments. Dawn Simpson, who oversees specialist services in custody and community environments, will be the Project Lead beyond				

go-live, providing continuation for commissioners and for the staff and Volunteers working day-to-day on delivery. She will provide weekly updates to commissioners.

Dawn has excellent links with CJ colleagues across the North-east region, and is a member of our Senior Leadership Team. She will be supported in implementing the service by our CEO, Amanda Lacey, who works at a strategic level with Probation, Prison, PCC and MoJ staff both locally and nationally. Dawn will report in on a weekly basis to the CEO and to the Board. To this effect, a special sub-committee will be formed to oversee the Circles service, both through implementation and delivery, providing direction.

The implementation will be managed through a detailed implementation plan, which is summarised in the attachment at section C.

The first priority will be evolving existing **Partnership Relationships**, and building new ones, with Probation and other key stakeholders. Dawn is already experienced in this area, having developed projects from standing starts, setting up introductory meetings and then agreeing SLAs, ISAs and referral processes. We already have one Coordinator in place, so will be able to ensure these meetings focus on specific actions detailed within the mobilisation plan, informed by staff trained by Circles UK and already fully-familiar with processes.

A second priority will be mobilisation of our **Staff and Volunteer Workforce**. This work has already begun; we have a number of Volunteers from various backgrounds, including students of local universities, interested in supporting Circles. They have already been trained in the Nepacs programme, including safeguarding training. We also have a Volunteer Coordinator actively recruiting more Volunteers across our service portfolio, but already actively identifying potentially suitable people for the service. Upon award, our marketing team will launch a series of recruitment campaigns on social media and in association with our charity partners (including CAB, with whom we undertake joint-recruitment).

As we have an in-house training team, already Circles trained, we'll be able to organise and complete Volunteer training within a matter of weeks.

Digital Technology will play a key role in our implementation activities. We already have all the systems in place for recording details of the Volunteers' recruitment and training journeys, along with secure email accounts for transfer of information. Our password-protected system enables us to store (anonymised) information about individuals and families supported and we have robust IT policies, and dedicated IT support. All our IT delivery is Cyber Essentials compliant. There will be a separate website for the service. All staff/Volunteers have access to lone working technology.

In terms of **Information Security**, we are already Cyber Essentials compliant and ICO registered. CJSM emails will be in place for all staff. An Information Management Security Plan will be agreed with Probation.

In terms of **Estates**, we have strong relationships at both a strategic and operational level with Probation and prison colleagues. Dawn is security cleared to access prison environments, as are many of our staff and Volunteers, meaning we can work in custody environments throughout mobilisation and beyond to organise and support core members in the lead up to release. We have a network of premises we can access, via our partners in services such as Humankind, Ingeus and St Giles Wise, as well as making use of Probation hubs. Our Coordinator will contact each of the other community sites currently used for our other service delivery, to obtain agreement for the delivery of COSAs and undertake relevant suitability checks as in advance of the call-off commencement.

B) Accreditation

In terms of Circles UK accreditation, we have already been confirmed as members of the Circles UK Network and attend regular provider briefings. We also contribute to development of Circles UK materials, including being active members of the current consultation on the Code of Practice. Our CEO, Amanda Lacey, has regular calls with Riana Taylor, her Circles UK counterpart to review and develop our offer. This consultation will continue throughout mobilisation and beyond; Riana will attend our conference in November, along with other partners/stakeholders. This will provide an excellent opportunity for initial networking prior to the more formal meetings planned for implementation.

Over the past few months, we have appointed a dedicated Circles Lead, Angela Donaghy, already trained and approved to be a Circles Coordinator. She has attended full Circles UK training, and is a trainer herself. Angela is already preparing the training materials for the Volunteer programme, and is sharing learning with our DSLs and other key staff.

Angela has also been working closely with Humbercare, the provider in Humberside, to finalise our Circles materials and update our policies. This process is now almost complete, with final sign off due within the next two months. We are currently having the final policies reviewed by HR legal experts to ensure we have covered all requirements of the service, prior to formally submitting them for formal sign-off.

We will continue to build our networking arrangements with fellow providers across the country, with whom we share our best practice on family support and Volunteer recruitment, being a Volunteer-driven organisation. This will ensure that we are able to share new resources and learning from any experiences. This has proved useful in developing our current range of assessment, information and support materials for staff, Volunteers and core members alike, including, for example, easy read versions of handbooks.

Our live checklist of preparation activities has been developed using the Circles UK membership criteria, supported by Humbercare, and will provide the final internal sign-off before the last of the paperwork is submitted to Circles UK for checking. We have already reviewed progress at a meeting with Circles UK, who were very pleased with progress; no problems are foreseen in this area.

C) See Implementation Plan (attached separately)

D) See RAID Log (attached separately)

Total Word Count – (Bidders to self-populate)

1000 words (Sections A&B)

plus separate attachments for C& D (3 pages x A4 each)



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