Market Consultation

**For Thirlwall Inquiry Staff Emotional Support**

Project: **C253573**

Version Number: 1

Date: **08/04/2024**

1. **Introduction**
   1. This information note and accompanying information is being made publicly available to any organisations which are interested in The Thirlwall Inquiry Staff Emotional Support.
   2. For avoidance of doubt **THIS IS NOT A CALL FOR COMPETITION.** This is a market consultation. The purpose is to advise suppliers of the forthcoming Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) procurement and seek feedback from potential bidders and existing providers that may inform the final specifications for the Thirlwall Inquiry Staff Support requirement, if they wish to do so.
   3. This builds on a commitment to engage with the market, by sharing information and seeking input from the market to enable us to develop the final requirements and tender documentation in a fair and transparent manner. This exercise is to ensure that all tenderers have a clear understanding of the Department’s requirement and help reduce the number of questions that may be raised in the Tender Period
   4. It is essential to understand that this market engagement process is separate from the formal procurement process. When the formal procurement process begins through the publication of a contract notice, any supplier interested in the contractual opportunity must submit a tender, and all supplier bids will be evaluated on an equal basis and in accordance with the set criteria.

# Background

## The Thirlwall Inquiry has been set up to examine events at the Countess of Chester Hospital and their implications following the trial, and subsequent convictions, of former neonatal nurse Lucy Letby of murder and attempted murder of babies at the hospital. The Inquiry’s work is guided by its [Terms of Reference](https://thirlwall.public-inquiry.uk/about/terms-of-reference/).

## The Inquiry aims to take a trauma-informed approach to its work with all individuals involved, based on the principles of trauma and grief recovery initial stages. This means ensuring that it is considering people’s wellbeing and being cognisant of how people’s engagement with the Inquiry may cause distress. As part of the Inquiry’s trauma-informed approach, we want to create an inclusive, thoughtful emotional support offer that is accessible to anyone engaging with the Inquiry, in any capacity. Failure to provide appropriate, high-quality emotional support services would likely result in the Inquiry failing to gather the evidence necessary to complete its investigations and may increase distress and re-traumatise those attempting to assist it, creating disruption to the Inquiry’s process. This would ultimately undermine public trust in the Inquiry and cause reputational damage.

## All those engaging with the Inquiry will have the opportunity to access support, including Inquiry staff. The Inquiry recognises the potential impact upon its own staff and is committed to supporting them.

# Requirements

## DHSC is seeking feedback on theThirlwall Inquiry Support services for staff service Specification that covers the key deliverables:

## A pyramid wellbeing model for staff should be provided.

#### **Universal**: All staff within the Inquiry should have access to a generic wellbeing provision. This service should offer a 24/7 helpline and referral into structured counselling support for a minimum of six sessions per year. It should be able to offer one-to-one emotional support to staff that is underpinned with an understanding of the Inquiry’s work and the impact of exposure to trauma on staff.

#### **Targeted**: Staff within teams, where the risk of exposure to traumatic material and to trauma victims is considered high, should have access to group-based reflective sessions as standard as a proactive measure to mitigate against secondary traumatic stress (monthly or bi-monthly). Typical reflective practice group models can be effective, delivered by a suitably qualified and experienced health and social care professional. One specific model that has an evidence base in addressing empathy-based stress is Compassion Focused Staff Support. The Supplier should be able to provide group-based reflective sessions as required.

#### **Specialist**: from time to time, given the nature of Inquiry work that staff will experience more significant impacts of STS or be distressed from one-off encounters with trauma victims. These are typically one to two sessions to support staff to specifically process a one-off event or an intensive accumulation of exposure utilising trauma recovery model concepts (safety/stabilisations, processing, integration). The Supplier should provide ad-hoc access to staff trauma debrief support sessions.

### Outside of Inquiry staff support, there may be a requirement for the Supplier to provide **emotional support sessions to Inquiry witnesses outside of hearings on a by exception basis**. This referral will come through the Secretariat Inquiry team. Any sessions would be emotional support sessions for the purpose of stabilisation, containment and signposting (where appropriate). The supplier should be able to service this need as required.

# Procurement approach

* 1. The procurement will be conducted using an open tender. We are currently gathering internal approvals so the timetable included in this market engagement consultation may change.

1. **market consultation-questionnaire return**
   1. This questionnaire forms part of the market engagement activity to support the procurement of Thirlwall Inquiry Staff Emotional Support.
   2. The purpose of this questionnaire is to explore the market reaction to the proposed facility. We hope to identify critical success factors and potential barriers in order to inform the formal procurement process. To maximise the success of this subsequent procurement process we request that suppliers are open and honest in their responses and provide as much detail as possible.
   3. Prior to completing this questionnaire, suppliers are requested to read the accompanying Market Consultation Document which sets out the background and the proposed service requirements.
   4. Participation in this Market Consultation is voluntary. It is not required to provide an answer to every question if particular questions are not relevant.
   5. The Department wishes to encourage participation at this stage in order to ensure a wide number of responses. The market engagement processes described above do not form part of the formal procurement process. When the formal procurement process commences any supplier may join the competition and all supplier bids will be evaluated on the same basis.
   6. The completed questionnaire should be returned via email [ccsinbox@dhsc.gov.uk](mailto:ccsinbox@dhsc.gov.uk) quoting **“Thirlwall Inquiry Staff Emotional Support.”** no later than **15th April 2024 at 5pm**
   7. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) applies to the Department. You should be aware of the Department 's obligations and responsibilities under the FOIA to disclose, on written request, recorded information held. Information provided by you in connection with this procurement exercise, or with any Contract that may be awarded as a result of this exercise, may therefore have to be disclosed in response to such a request, unless the Department decides that one of the statutory exemptions under the FOIA applies. The Department may also include certain information in the publication scheme which it maintains under the FOIA.
   8. In certain circumstances, and in accordance with the Code of Practice issued under section 45 of the FOIA or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004, the Department may consider it appropriate to ask you for your views as to the release of any information before a decision on how to respond to a request is made. In dealing with requests for information under the FOIA, the Department must comply with a strict timetable and the Department would, therefore, expect a timely response to any consultation within two working days.
   9. You may provide information which is confidential in nature and which you may wish to be held in confidence. You must give a clear indication which type of material is to be considered confidential and why it is considered to be so, along with the time period for which it will remain confidential in nature. The use of blanket protective markings such as "commercial in confidence" will no longer be appropriate. In addition, marking any material as confidential or equivalent should not be taken to mean that the Department accepts any duty of confidentiality by virtue of such marking. Please note that even where you have indicated that information is confidential the Department may be required to disclose it under the FOIA if a request is received.
   10. The Department cannot accept that trivial information or information which by its very nature cannot be regarded as confidential should be subject to any obligation of confidence.
   11. In certain circumstances where information has not been provided in confidence, the Department may still wish to consult with you about the application of any other exemption such as that relating to disclosure that will prejudice the commercial interests of any party.
   12. The decision as to which information will be disclosed is reserved to the Department notwithstanding any consultation with you.
   13. Whilst the Department expects to proceed to procurement in due course, there is no obligation to do so as a consequence of this early market engagement activity.
   14. The publication of any documents at this stage is intended to provide potential bidders with the opportunity to view and comment on a draft specification for the requirement. The Department does not intend to be bound by any information at this stage. The Department makes no commitment to accept recommendations or suggestions. Once published, the Invitation to Tender will contain the final requirements in relation to this service. All previous versions, including any documents published at this stage should be disregarded.

Regards,

**Corporate and Clinical Services, Commercial Lifecycle**

**Commercial Directorate, Department of Health & Social Care**

**39 Victoria Street, London, SW1H 0EU**

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Name of Supplier:**

Name of authorised representative in block letters:

Position:

For and on behalf of:

Date:

**(This should be completed by the Supplier or a partner or an authorised representative in his / her own name and on behalf of the company / organisation completing this questionnaire)**

# Section A: gauging the level of interest

## What features of the project are of particular interest to you as a supplier and why?

## Are there any features of the service that are of concern to you and why? How might these be addressed?

## We intend to open the tendering in May 2024 for contract and service delivery starting in June 2024. Would your organisation consider submitting a tender (or participating in a collaborative response) for this project? If not, is there any reason why? Could the Department take any steps to encourage greater participation?

# Section B: Supporting Documentation

## Does the Thirlwall Inquiry – Support services for staff - Service Specification document provide you with a clear understanding of the Service being procured? Is it structured in a clear and straightforward way? Would you require any additional information?

## The Thirlwall Inquiry – Support services for staff – Draft Service specification document provides you with a model for delivery of the support services in 3.3 and responsibilities in 3.5. Please provide any observations to the proposed services and responsibilities.

## Please provide any KPIs you may wish to suggest that you feel are relevant to this service requirement.

## Do you think the estimate value for this contract is appropriate? If not give an estimate value for the service and provide reasons for it.

## Do you have any concerns regarding the payment structure in the specifications? If so, what are your concerns and how we can address them.

## We anticipate that there will be personal data being processed in this contract, for that reason we require the appointed supplier to have either Cyber Essentials Scheme Basic Certificate; or NHS Data Security and Protection Toolkit; or ISO 27001 Information Security Management; The supplier will have 3 months to evidence compliance with this requirement. Do you have any concerns about this requirement? If ye, please provide an explanation.

1. **Section C: Implementation activities**
   1. In outline, what do you envisage will be the main activities required during the implementation phase, before the service commencement date? How long do you anticipate these activities will take? What additional information do you require to answer this question more fully?
2. **SECTION E: COMMERCIAL APPROACH**
   1. Do you feel that the procurement route is appropriate?
   2. The timetable for the procurement is set out below:[[1]](#footnote-2)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Event** | **Estimated times** |
| ITT issued to Tenderers | 17/04/2024 |
| Closing date for submission of Tenderers’ questions | 24/04/2024 |
| Answers to Tenderers’ questions circulated to all Tenderers by | 26/04/2024 |
| **Closing date for receipt of Tenders** | **07/05/2024** |
| Evaluation period including internal approvals (on or around) | 13/05/2024 |
| Outcome notifications | 16/05/2024 |
| Standstill period ends | 28/05/2024 |
| Anticipated Contract Signature Date | 29/05/2024 |

* 1. Do you think that the timetable is feasible? If no, provide reasons and what could be changed to facilitate wider participation.
  2. We intent to evaluation on Quality 70%, Cost 30%, Do you think this split is appropriate? If not, give reasons.

1. **Section F: Critical Success factors**
   1. What are the key critical success factors for the project?
   2. What are the major barriers to success? How might these be overcome?
   3. Please use this section to provide any additional information which you feel might be of value or to highlight any additional items that need to be taken into consideration.
2. **SECTION G: ADDITIONAL REQUEST FOR INFOMATION**
   1. If you have any other comment or questions to raise in regards to this procurement, please list them below. We will endeavour to answer all the questions by compiling a Q&A document that will be issued at tender stage.

**thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire**

1. These are estimated times and are subject to changes at the discretion of the Authority. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)