

Request for Information

**Project Title:** DHSC Water Fluoridation Engineering Support

**Project Ref: C298888**

Date: 30/07/2024

1. **Introduction**
   1. DHSC wishes to commission engineering support to advise on the water fluoridation programmes put in place by water companies. The engineering support will provide independent advice on operational cost and performance issues reported by companies and proposals from companies for capital investment by DHSC.
2. **Purpose**
   1. The engineering support supplier is needed to assist the existing fluoridation team in ensuring adequate performance of schemes consistent with legal agreements and value for money with planned further capital investments.
   2. The supplier will need to attend meetings with water companies and occasionally undertake site visits to water treatment works to better understand proposals.

1. **Background to the requirement**
   1. The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care is the "relevant authority" in England for the purposes of the fluoridation provisions in the Water Industry Act 1991, including in relation to fluoridation arrangements.
   2. Currently the Secretary of State has several water fluoridation agreements with five water suppliers in England: Anglian Water; Northumbrian Water, Severn Trent Water, South Staffs Water; and United Utilities. Approximately 6 million people in England live in areas covered by water fluoridation schemes.
   3. The Secretary of State’s fluoridation functions have been exercised by DHSC since 1st October 2021.
   4. Water fluoridation supports DHSC’s priorities for improving oral health and reducing oral health inequalities.
   5. This specialist engineer contract supports the delivery of DHSC’s water fluoridation functions to ensure that water companies deliver services in line with the agreements they hold with the Secretary of State, to ensure good performance from the operating costs and that DHSC’s capital investment has the largest possible impact on the performance of water fluoridation schemes.
2. **Scope of requirement**
   1. We would expect specific deliverables to include significant and timely support to DHSC. This would include:
      1. reviewing and advising DHSC on water fluoridation plant performance including understanding system performance issues as reported to the Drinking Water Inspectorate;
      2. identify underperforming plants and work with water companies to ensure resolution, if necessary, visiting plants to identify causes of underperformance and agree improvement programmes with companies;
      3. attending relevant DHSC meetings with water companies, the Drinking Water Inspectorate and other key stakeholders;
      4. ongoing review of water company capital investment plans including advice to DHSC on water company capital business cases;
      5. help to inform DHSC whether proposed water company operational and capital costs are reasonable;
      6. support to DHSC in assessing revenue cost pressures to ensure that they are reasonble;
      7. assessment of the feasibility and cost effectiveness of proposed water company capital investments;
      8. agree delivery and invoicing milestones, to which water companies will be held to account, and keeping track of progress with water companies, including undertaking ad hoc site visits if required;
      9. ensuring that the DHSC water fluoridation plant asset register is kept up to date and using it to inform advice to DHSC on water company water fluoridation capital programmes and future planning;
      10. reviewing and updating of DHSC’s water fluoridation risk register;
      11. assisting DHSC in developing a common approach to develop opportunities for greater efficiency and continuous improvement across relevant water suppliers;
      12. support any future work to develop new fluoridation schemes, including an assessment of the operability and effectiveness of any proposed future schemes; and
      13. responding to a range of ad hoc requests for water fluoridation engineering advice.
3. **Skills Required**
   1. Tenderers are expected to clearly document that they have the skills required to undertake this assignment. These include:
      1. water fluoridation engineering experience;
      2. experience of working with and/or for water undertakers;
      3. experience of advising on strategic aspects of water fluoridation, for instance in relation to feasibility studies;
      4. experience of interpreting plant and system performance data;
      5. experience of assessing capital investment proposals and business cases and monitoring progress;
      6. experience of advising on and/or managing equipment and system failures and
      7. excellent communication skills- written (including presentation skills) and verbal to participate in both internal and external meetings and visits.
      8. Experience of assessment on the environmental impact of water fluoridation
      9. Proven record of negotiation skills and managing difficult conversations
      10. Influence without authority
      11. Root cause analysis
      12. Additionally, experience of current equipment and systems in use in England and working with national and local government partners would be an advantage.
      13. Travel is an integral part of this role although telecommunications will be utilised in the main. It is expected that there will be engineering support available at face-to-face meetings across England should this be required. Time spent travelling and overheads from the travel will not form part of this contract.
4. **Contract Term**
   1. The contract will begin on 1st April 2025 and end on 31st March 2028 (with the option to extend the contract by 2 years in 12 month increments).**.**
   2. It is anticipated that we would require 3-5 days per week of engineer input.
5. **Market Engagement**
   1. The Market Engagement will be held on **12th September 2024 from 11:00 – 12:30**
   2. The Market Engagement will be conducted under PRC 2015 however the procurement will be competed under **The Procurement Act 2023**.
   3. The procurement will be competed via the Atamis e-Procurement Portal.

**8. Requested Information**

Please provide responses to the following questions (including your organisations name, address and contact details) before the market engagement event.

* Do you have the technical expertise to undertake the requirement?
* Do you have capacity to undertake the requirement?
* What cost considerations, costing criteria will be applied to your cost modelling?

**9. Clarifications Questions**

If you require clarification on any part of this RFI please use the messaging center function on the e-procurement portal. Clarification questions can be asked until 28th August 2024.

**10. Social Value**

Procurement Policy Note - 06/20

Taking account of social value in the award of central government contracts applies to this procurement.  
More information on the Social Value Model can be found at the following link:  
Procurement Policy Note 06/20 – taking account of social value in the award of central government contracts - [GOV.UK](https://gov.uk/) ([www.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/))