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# Soft Market Test

For

Provision of Integrated Alcohol and Drug Services – Adults, Children, Young People and Families

West Northamptonshire Council

Ref: SM270125

# Section 1: Introduction

## General Requirements

* 1. The purpose of this soft market test is to seek views from the market on our proposed service model for the delivery of an integrated alcohol and drug services for adults, children, young people and families. We are exploring the viability of a lead provider contracting model, with sub-contracting arrangements, where appropriate, and invite feedback on the overall approach, including its structure, effectiveness, and delivery.
  2. **Please note:** this market testing exercise is **not** an invitation to tender or a request for formal expressions of interest. This document does not form any part of an invitation to tender. West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) is issuing this request for **information only**. Any supplier invited to present to WNC is doing so to support market research only and to help make any potential procurement process more focused and efficient. No supplier selection or supplier preference is implied.

## Confidentiality and Freedom of Information (FOI)

* 1. **Please note:** all information included in this Soft Market Test is confidential and only for the recipients’ knowledge. No information included in this document or in discussions connected to it may be disclosed to any other party without prior written authorisation.
  2. All responses will be treated confidentially. However, please be aware that we are subject to the disclosure requirements of the FOI Act and that potentially any information we hold is liable to disclosure under that Act. For this reason, we strongly advise that any information you consider to be confidential is labelled as such. In the event that a request is subsequently made for disclosure under FOI the request will be dealt with in accordance with the legislation.

## Background

* 1. West Northamptonshire is a rural and urban area with a population of around 425,700 and an area of around 531.79 sq. mil, located in the East Midlands. Formed in 2021 WNC is a Unitary Authority responsible for half of the historic Northamptonshire and covers the former authority areas and responsibilities of Daventry District Council, South Northamptonshire Council, Northampton Borough Council, as well as the responsibilities of Northamptonshire County Council.
  2. Its functions include Revenues & Benefits, Waste Collection, Regeneration, Museums, Planning, Children and Adults Social Services, Housing, Libraries and Education to name a few.
* WNC focuses on the following 6 priorities to make West Northants a place to thrive:
* Green and Clean
* Improved Life Chances
* Connected Communities
* Thriving Villages and Towns
* Economic Development
* Robust Resource Management
  1. Details of the above can be found in our Corporate Plan. [Corporate Plan | West Northamptonshire Council](https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/corporate-plan)

## Soft Market Test Timetable

* 1. Please read this document and if you feel that your organisation is able to contribute to this exercise please complete the questionnaire at the end of this document and return, via email to procurement@westnorthants.gov.uk by 7 February 2025.
  2. We are seeking responses from the market on our proposed service model options which are described in section 6. Providers are also asked to indicate which of the service model options are their preferred. WNC may then hold a face to face event to discuss the responses in more detail. A decision will then be made internally on the best procurement approach. The timetable is provided below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Stage** | **Date** |
| Deadline for receipt of responses to Soft Market Test. | 7/2/2025 |
| Feedback Event | TBC |

* 1. Potential responders will not be prejudiced in any future procurement processes by either responding or not responding to this soft market test exercise.

# Section 2: Identification of Requirement

## Current Situation

* 1. West Northamptonshire currently commissions all drug and alcohol advice, support, treatment and recovery services on behalf of both West and North Northamptonshire councils, with all six contracts expiring on 31st March 2026. Agreement was reached in October for West and North Northamptonshire councils to commission their services separately from 2026 onward.
  2. Our current system includes five separate services to support prevention, treatment and recovery of drug and alcohol misuse. Specifically a children and young people’s prevention and treatment service, an adults treatment service, an adult recovery service, a family support service and a specialist training service.
  3. Our adult treatment service provider is additionally commissioned to provide a “single front door” triage and referral service for all other providers to support a seamless provision for people and their families, this is known as “STAR (Support, Treatment, Advice and Recovery) Northamptonshire”.
  4. The core treatment and recovery offer has been substantially enhanced/expanded in recent years using the supplementary substance misuse grants. These time-limited grants have funded additional specialist resource/teams to sit within our drug and alcohol services including, but not limited to, specialist mental health nurses, housing advisors and employment advisors
  5. Our treatment and recovery system, likely reflecting the significant additional investment, is seeing positive trends in outcomes. Among adults, there has been a steady upward trend in numbers of clients in treatment from June 2023 to August 2024 (numbers in treatment are reported with a 3 month time lag) and over similarly positive trend in increasing successful completions of treatments for both opiates and non-opiates in West Northants (though for non-opiates this follows on from a year that saw successful completions drop and so success rates are not quite back to where they were in early 2022 for non-opiates).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Adults** | **NIT August 2024** | **NIT Ambition 24/25** |
| Opiates | 760 | 833 |
| Non opiates | 456 | 395 |
| Alcohol only | 604 | 580 |
| **Total** | **1820** | **1808** |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | September 2023 | August 2024 |
| Young People in Treatment | 57 | 101 |

* 1. Retention in treatment and successful completions of treatment for opiate/crack use in West Northamptonshire are good (90% stay in treatment >12 weeks or successfully complete in that time) and benchmark well against the England average. For alcohol treatment this is not the case (only around two thirds stay in treatment >12 weeks or successfully complete in that time).
  2. In 2022 a comprehensive substance misuse needs assessment was conducted (attached) which included significant stakeholder engagement and identified many areas of good practice in the Northamptonshire system, but also made a number of recommendations around treatment and recovery services that can be summarised in two main themes as below:
     1. Improve the service offer for those with specific needs including:
* Dual (mental health plus substance misuse) needs
* Complex needs (beyond mental health and substance use needs)
* Young adults at the age of transition from CYP to adult services
  + 1. Improve the visibility and accessibility of services including:
* For those who are geographically isolated (or in any other under-served group)
* By ensuring the service offer is clear to all
* To improve early identification and intervention
* Specifically, the harm reduction offer, both in specialist services and for other organisations
  1. In addition to these, further recommendations on prevention were made which focused on children, young people and families. These included a recommendation to support a whole community or setting (e.g. school and workplace) approach, starting before birth and focusing on the early years (particularly for the most vulnerable parents) and supporting children at high risk (particularly those with adverse childhood experiences).

## Our Requirements

* 1. West Northamptonshire Council wishes to procure an integrated alcohol and drug service, which includes treatment, recovery and builds community resilience for West Northamptonshire adults, children, young people and families.
  2. The new service will be outcome based and recovery focused. It will support a shift towards prevention and early intervention, demonstrate innovation and implement evidence based good practice to deliver the best possible outcomes for individuals and their families. There will be a sharp focus on reducing associated harms caused to children.
  3. The new service will be responsible for delivery of a comprehensive and dynamic range of services, to address the alcohol and drug related needs of adults and the consequent impact on their families and wider communities in West Northamptonshire. This will include a flexible range of programmes and interventions across all modalities in each locality.
  4. The new service will be a fundamental partner to improve the health and wellbeing of West Northamptonshire’s residents. It will build on current provision and will:
* Align with WNC strategic priorities including, importantly, the emerging Corporate Approach to Prevention & Early Intervention
* Offer greater integration with key local authority and wider partners services and, **where possible and appropriate, seek to co-locate services** with related public health, mental health, adults and childrens social care services e.g. at Community Hubs and Family Hubs
* Build recovery capital through models of **community-based recovery and asset based community development (ABCD), building on existing good practice** in West Northamptonshire.
* Work closely with partner agencie to ensure the right **support is available and co-ordinated for people with complex needs** e.g. older adults and those with long term conditions, poor mental health and other co-morbid disorders, people experiencing homelessness, domestic abuse or those engaged in survival sex work.
* Respond **proactively and collaboratively** as part of a multi-agency response, to emerging trends and issues such as exploitation and other safeguarding issues.
* Work with commissioners to understand and address barriers to accessing services, particularly for under-served and marginalised communities by developing more co-designed community appropriate service offers
* Increase access to services for all and improving accessibility outside of standard office hours through developing the **digital offer**
* Show an increased focus on **alcohol and brief interventions** and opportunities to intervene at the earliest possible point.
  1. The new service must deliver equitable access, quality and outcomes though an integrated assessment, treatment and asset-based community recovery service for the people of West Northamptonshire.
  2. The recovery outcomes will be realised by the achievement of the following:
* Improved relationships with family members, partners, and friends
* A reduction in harm caused by misusing parents/carers on children and young people
* Improving the chances for children and young people to reach their potential
* Increase of safeguarding for vulnerable children, young people and adults.
* A reduction in crime and reoffending
* Sustained education, training and volunteering activity leading to employment
* The ability to access and sustain suitable accommodation
* Freedom from dependence on alcohol and drugs where possible
* Prevention of drug related deaths and infection by blood borne viruses
* Improvement in mental and physical wellbeing
* A reduction in alcohol and drug related hospital admissions
  1. The financial envelope for is not confirmed and **amounts presented in this paper are approximate and subject to change**. However, we anticipate that on a 5+1+1+1+1 contract the overall value will be a minimum of approximately £30m, with the possibility of supplementary government grants increasing this by a further over £2m per annum (dependent on the continuation or otherwise of OHID Grant funding).
  2. We are seeking views from the market on the following key areas:

1. **Integrated Service Delivery** – a common area of concern has been transition from childrens to adults services, we are interested in the market’s view on strengths and challenges in integrating the various service areas for all ages versus developing separated integrated young peoples and adults services.
2. **Lead Provider Contract** – we would like to understand market readiness to deliver the proposed integrated service via a lead provider contract, with appropriate sub-contracting for specialist elements where necessary.
3. **Social Value –** we would like to explore how the model can demonstrate and deliver social value, including community benefits, social inclusion, and local economic impact.
4. **Digital Offer** – we would like to explore the feasibility and opportunities for a digital solution, including online support services or platforms. Are there any other digital innovations to consider and how can we support digital inclusion?
5. **Co-location with Partner Agencies** – we would like to understand the practicalities of co-locating with partner agencies or teams, fostering collaboration and improved outcomes.
6. **Lived Experience** – we would like to assess the potential for growing and building on the wealth of expertise in our local experts by experience through lived experience recovery organisations.
   1. **Expected Outcomes from the Soft Market Test**

* A clearer understanding of the market's capacity to deliver the proposed service model.
* Valuable feedback to refine the lead provider model and inform any potential tendering process.
* Insights into innovative service delivery options, including digital platforms and co-location with partner agencies.
* Recommendations for ensuring social value and meaningful involvement of lived experience organisations.

# Section 3: Supporting information

## Section A: Organisation and Contact Details

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Question** | **Response** |
| Name of your organisation |  |
| Registered office (if applicable) |  |
| Trading address (if different from office) |  |
| What if any local connections do you have with the authority? |  |
| Name of person whom an queries relating to this questionnaire should be addressed |  |
| Telephone Number(s) |  |
| Email |  |
| Address if different to above |  |

## Section B: Questions

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Question** | **Response** |
| What are your comments/views on the integrated service delivery model? |  |
| What are your views on the strengths and challenges of this model? |  |
| What are your views on the strengths and challenges of a lead-provider contract with appropriate sub-contracting? |  |
| What are your thoughts on the opportunities for a digital solution to support an integrated service? |  |
| Do you have any experience to share or thoughts on practicalities of co-locating services with partner agencies? |  |
| Do you have suggestions for enhancing the model or offering new approaches to improve service delivery and outcomes? |  |