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**NATIONAL SPECIALIST MEDICINES SERVICE 2026-29**

**ATAMIS REFERENCE : C342363**

**PRELIMINARY MARKET ENGAGEMENT (PME)**

1. **Background**

* The National Specialist Medicines Service (NSMS) supports the NHS in the implementation of national policies and priorities in medicines use and safety by developing cost effective standardised tools and processes that can be adopted/integrated locally.
* It provides expert clinical quality assurance in medicines technical services and supports the NHS to get best value optimisation from the medicines budgets.
* It offers clinical support for frontline service delivery in relation to medicines and to enable strategic commissioning of medicines related services.
* The NSMS also provides essential information on clinical and cost effectiveness use of medicines and their supply at local and national level to ensure patient access to essential treatment to a range of stakeholders and citizens.
* The NSMS is commissioned by the Office of the Chief Pharmaceutical Officer at NHS England who also oversee and monitor performance/ delivery activity alongside NHSE commercial and policy colleagues.

1. **Scope of the Contract**

* The contracting authority will be NHS England who will be conducting this tender in line with their policy and procedures.
* The current contract expires 31 March 2026. In the event of a change of Supplier, it has been confirmed that TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment) may apply. In the event of a change of Supplier, for all or parts of the contract, NHSE will work with the Supplier for these contracts to use an appropriate exit strategy to protect the continuity of NSMS.
* NHS England is looking to award a contract/s for 36 months; 1 April 2026 – 31 March 2029 with an option to extend for a further 12 months.
* The contract is due to commence 1 April 2026. The mobilisation/ transition period will be around 3 months. Service delivery will begin in April 2026.
* The maximum available budget for this contract is £30,000,000 (excluding VAT but including fixed costs such as travel etc) over the 36-month term.

We anticipate that the pricing model will involve:

* Staff and fieldwork/ infrastructure costs (such as office accommodation, travel etc).
* Any supporting digital applications, including licencing.
* Publications and supporting materials/events.

1. **Specification Summary**

Current working assumptions about the NSMS 2026-2029 contract are outlined below. The primary objective is the delivery of four core functions to deliver the defined outputs.

The service specification has been written to enable potential suppliers to bid for all of the elements or one element of the service. One of the bidders must offer an over-arching management structure which will:

* Co-ordinate a national committee to address interrelated issues and ensure alignment.
* Contract management will remain a contractor activity.
* Review annual workplans to ensure there is no duplication.
* Identify and nominate specialist subject matter expertise to inform local and national initiatives to develop the technical pharmacy workforce.
* Ensure efficient working across elements of the service to ensure delivery workplans

The National Specialist Medicines Service will cover a range of services which provide support to NHS services in England across all sectors of the NHS. It will be broken down into the following lots:

Medicines Procurement: the provision of strategic advice to policy makers and implementation support for the procurement of medicines for hospitals providing NHS services

Pharmaceutical Quality Assurance: a range of activities relating to the audit of NHS medicines preparation, standards, quality improvement in the safe handling and preparation of medicines, conduct of clinical trials, advice, best practice guidance and assessments of new medicines.

Medicines Advice:

The Medicines Advice (MA): specialist information and advice for health care professionals and policy makers focussing on medicines optimisation, medicines shortages, horizon scanning, medicines safety and clinical enquiry answering

Medicines Use and Safety: enabling commissioners and providers to implement national priorities and local initiatives to deliver services and to improve patient safety, including facilitation of professional networks

There is an expectation that these services will be easily accessible and be underpinned by digital support that meets all NHS and public service standards. This must include cyber security provisions and cloud storage within the EEA. In addition, there will be a call-off element to the contract to enable speedy commissioning of work to support new initiatives and changes in national policies and priorities. This will be commissioned through the contract management group separately to the core contract with specific KPIs.

The supplier/s will be expected to liaise on the different elements of the service to ensure there is no duplication and that key dependencies are flagged to the contractor.

**Overview of Requirements**

The Supplier service would comprise the following elements:

* Programme management and implementation of all aspects of the service to a specified timeframe;
* Attendance and active participation with requests for Contract Performance meetings on a quarterly basis

**Reporting**

* Suppliers will comply with the NHSE contract management framework.
* Suppliers will provide written reports on the KPIs monthly.
* The Audit process will update the digital platform in real time to enable interrogation by NHSE at any point.
* The Suppliers will be required to collate and report performance data on medicines procurement at national, regional, ICB, and NHS Trust level on a monthly basis.
* The Supplier will put a quality assurance strategy in place to minimise error in the processing and collation of the outputs and final datasets.
* Medicines safety and shortages data will be required on a real time basis.

**Performance against contract key performance indicators set out in the contract will be reported in the public domain in line with the requirements of the Procurement Act 2023.**

**Expectations of the Supplier/s**

For quality assurance

* have demonstrable expertise in pharmacy technical services quality assurance by qualifications, 5 years plus years of experience and expertise;
* have sufficient suitably qualified staff and logistical capacities to organise audit inspections and follow up visits by 5 years plus of experience in this or a similar field;

For the medicines use and safety and information

* have demonstrable experience in delivering patient group directions for a variety of professions and settings by professional qualifications and 2 years' experience of drafting PGDs and SOPs for medicines use and safety

For all suppliers

* suitably qualified and experienced staff to provide advice on all aspects of specialist medicines and medicines mechanisms;
* contribute to discussion on the development of the service, including providing feedback on lessons learned and how the service could be improved in the future within the available resources;
* demonstrate engagement with core customers in frontline NHS services;
* show an expert understanding of the medicines legislation, regulation and policy landscape in England;
* demonstrate the ability to work alongside NHSE, DHSC and wider stakeholders in the management of patient safety medicines issues and shortages/ recalls, and;
* ensure adequate programme management is in place, including dedicated involvement of a senior member of staff, at director or associate director level, for all meetings with and presentations to NHS England.
* comply with NHSE/ DHSC policy directives.

1. **Preliminary Market Engagement (PME)**

NHS England is asking potential bidders to complete a market assessment questionnaire to help inform the forthcoming procurement exercise.

The aim of the market engagement exercise is to inform potential providers on the opportunity and to collate feedback. The information will be used to assist the commissioner in deciding on the most appropriate strategy for the future procurement. Please note that NHS England is in no way committed to enter or award any contract in relation to this PME and that all costs incurred by responding to this PME should be borne by the respondent.

Timings for the PME are as follows:

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| Publish PME | 8 April 2025 |
| Deadline for Supplier to ask clarification questions | 10am 14 April 2025 |
| Deadline for authority to respond to clarification questions | 16 April 2025 |
| PMEPME response deadline for Supplier | 12 Noon 22 April 2025 |

Clarification questions and PME responses must be submitted via the NHS England’s e-Tendering portal, Atamis. The PME (questionnaire) can be found on Atamis by searching for “**C342363 National Specialist Medicines Service 2026-2029**”. To register on the NHS England’s e-Tendering portal and to access this opportunity, please go to <https://health-family.force.com/s/Welcome>. You can then search for the opportunity and access any further information.

Any procurement conducted as a result of this notice will be advertised separately and any and all organisations wishing to participate in the procurement exercise will need to respond to that procurement advertisement as and when it is published, anticipated timescales are detailed below in Section 5 Procurement Overview.

1. **Procurement Overview**

* It is anticipated the tendering process will be run as an above threshold a single-stage tendering procedure for minimum 25 days under Procurement Act 2023.
* The intention is to establish a contract with one or more suppliers.
* The opportunity will be advertised via <https://www.gov.uk/contracts-finder> and <https://www.gov.uk/find-tender> and the Invitation to Tender will be published through the Atamis e-tendering portal [Welcome (force.com)](https://health-family.force.com/s/Welcome).
* The tender evaluation criteria will be split as follows:

Pass/ Fail Qualification Questionnaire (Cabinet Office Standard Supplier Questionnaire)

60% Quality and Technical/ 10% Social Value and Sustainability (for guidance on applying the Social Value Model, please refer to: [PPN 06/20 - taking account of social value in the award of central government contracts](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/procurement-policy-note-0620-taking-account-of-social-value-in-the-award-of-central-government-contracts))/ 30% Commercial (Price)

* Technical responses will be evaluated independently by a panel of subject matter experts before convening in a moderation session facilitated by the Commercial Team to agree consensus scores.
* All clarifications must be submitted through the tendering portal and no suppliers should canvass NHS England staff for an update unless submitted via the Atamis portal.
* The Contract Award Recommendation (CAR) will follow the NHS England governance process to ensure transparency, compliance and value for money.
* The Contract Award will be subject to an 8-day standstill period before the final award is made.
* The contract terms and conditions will be the NHS Standard Terms and Conditions for the Provision of Services.

**Procurement Timescales**

Subject to final approval of business case.

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| **Indicative Procurement Activity** | **Estimated timeframe** |
| Tender Publication Date | 2 June 2025 |
| Tender Closing Date | 12 Noon 27 June 2025 |
| Evaluation, Moderation & Approvals | July-September 2025 |
| Final Award Confirmation | 30 September 2025 |
| Issue Final Contract | 15 October 2025 |
| Anticipated Contract Start Date | 1 April 2026 |
| Anticipated Service Commencement Date | 1 April 2026 |

1. ****
2. **NATIONAL SPECIALIST MEDICINES SERVICE – 2026-2029**
3. **ATAMIS REFERENCE: C342363**
4. **PRELIMINARY MARKET ENGAGEMENT (PME)**

Please consider the questions below and submit your written response by no later than **12:00 Noon on 22 April 2025.** Maintain the format within this questionnaire and your responses should be brief and to the point. There is no maximum word count imposed but do not use brochures or marketing material as an answer to any questions as they will not be reviewed as part of the response. Please try to answer all questions where possible.

If you have any clarification questions, you can submit these to NHS England by **10am on 14 April 2025.** NHS England will respond to clarification questions by **16 April 2025.**

**Q1. Please advise of any potential barriers to bidding for the NMNS you foresee and what steps the NHSE can take to mitigate these barriers.**

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**Q2. Please let us know if you think we have not mentioned any key considerations or opportunities in relation to delivering the NSMS.**

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**Q3. Do you intend to bid for all, or part of, the NSMS contract? Please provide information on the reason for your answer.**

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**Q4. Please let us know your thoughts on the proposed pricing model. For example, any areas for improvement or alternative pricing models you would suggest considering.**

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**Q5. Please advise on your anticipated timeframe to enable a safe and effective implementation, mobilisation and transition from the outgoing service provider to the incoming service provider. Do you have any further questions or feedback on the PIN (for example any aspects that require further detail or clarification in the ITT)?**

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**Q6. Do you have any further questions or feedback on the PIN (for example any aspects that require further detail or clarification in the ITT)?**

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