**Request for Information**

***Instructions and Guidance***

**NHS England Down’s Syndrome Screening Quality Assurance Support Service (DQASS)**

**Ref: C239542**

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Dear Provider(s)

This Request for Information (RFI) process is being undertaken to engage with the market to inform the further development of draft proposals for an NHS England **Down’s Syndrome Screening Quality Assurance Support Service (DQASS)**

The objective of the RFI is to:

* Understand market Capability and Capacity to deliver the service.
* Understand the preferred service model for delivering the service.
* Understand if the proposed service model is viable.
* Understand the preferred / most viable contract length.
* Understand if there are any financial risks with the delivery of the service.
* Understand the mobilisation requirements of the service.
* Understand any barriers to bidding and whole service risk

Whereas this RFI has been prepared in good faith by NHS England it should not be assumed that the information in this RFI has been verified for absolute accuracy and completeness by NHS England and/or any advisor(s) to NHS England.

Expressions of interest to meet with the contracting authority to further explore responses to the Request for Information is not required at this stage, however maybe required at a later stage. Please indicate on Question 22 of Appendix A if you would be happy to participate in the supplier meetings should the contracting authority wish to do so. Supplier meetings will be allocated on a first come first served basis via Atamis. All written responses will be considered regardless of whether interested parties wish to participate or are invited to participate in meetings.

NHS England and their respective officers, directors, employees, agents, and affiliates do not make and will not make at any time, in connection with this service, any representation or warranty, express or implied as to the accuracy or completeness of this RFI or any such summaries.

In providing this RFI, the NHS England does not undertake any obligation to provide the recipient with access to any additional information or to update the RFI or correct any inaccuracies in the RFI, which become known to it. Nothing in the RFI or accompanying documentation should be relied upon as a promise or a representation as to the NHS England’s ultimate decisions in relation to the next stage, which will depend, at least in part, on the outcome of the discussions during this RFI process.

NHS England will not reimburse any expenses incurred by interested parties in preparing their responses to this RFI including attendance at any meetings. NHS England reserves the right to discontinue the process at any time and will not accept any liability towards interested parties should it be required to do so.

Completed RFI’s must be submitted by 13:00 hours on the 14 February 2024

Any submissions received after this specified deadline may not be considered in the market engagement process undertaken through the RFI process.

Yours faithfully

**Kaysha Maynard**

**Procurement Manager**

**Commercial Directorate**

**NHS England**

1 **THE RFI PROCESS**

1.1 The RFI process is being undertaken to allow the early market testing for an NHS England **Down’s Syndrome Screening Quality Assurance Support Service (DQASS)**

1.2 The documentation is available to all interested parties who have registered an interest in the service via the e-Tendering portal following the advertisement of a Prior Information Notice/RFI on Contracts Finder and Find a Tender (FTS).

1.3 Accompanying this document, the following attachments are available to interested parties to further inform the submission of the respective RFI: -

* Appendix A - RFI Response Document (Please note that this document needs to be completed and returned via the Atamis system).
* Appendix B – Service background information document.

1.4 These documents are provided to assist potential providers in the completion of the RFI submission, however, please note that this information is indicative only and may not reflect the data used in any forthcoming procurement process if applicable. Interested parties are required to complete Appendix A – RFI Response Document and return via Atamis.

1.5 Expressions of interest to meet with the contracting authority to further explore responses to the Request for Information is not required at this stage, however may be required at later stages. Please indicate on Question 22 of Appendix A if you would be happy to participate in the supplier meetings should the contracting authority wish to do so. Supplier meetings will be allocated on a first come first served basis via Atamis. All written responses will be considered regardless of whether interested parties wish to participate or are invited to participate in meetings.

**2 SCOPE OF THE SERVICE**

2.1 The service requirements are outlined in Appendix B – Background Information. Please note that this is a summary of the current service model and proposed model and is subject to change based on feedback including that from the RFI process.

## 3 VISION

3.1 The Vaccination and Screening directorate (V&S) forms part of NHS England and exists to protect and improve the nation’s health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities. This is achieved through world-leading science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships, and the delivery of specialist public health services.

The Down’s Syndrome Screening Quality Assurance Support Service (DQASS) is in place to monitor and support the quality and effectiveness of the screening tests for Down’s syndrome (T21), Edwards’ syndrome (T18) and Patau’s syndrome (T13) in England.

The DQASS service supports the NHS Fetal Anomaly Programme by providing statistical services that delivers independent clinical audit data and feedback to screening laboratories and ultrasound practitioners to enable quality assurance and continuous quality improvement.

The analysis undertaken by the service checks the baseline median values, risk algorithm parameter values and population measures, such as age adjusted follow-up rates. Through meta-analyses, DQASS provides information on effects of factors such as smoking that is used to improve screening performance.

The analyses provided by DQASS is used by the [Screening Quality Assurance Service (SQAS)](https://www.gov.uk/topic/population-screening-programmes/population-screening-quality-assurance) to improve the screening programme through feedback on all aspects of the test to laboratories, ultrasound departments and commercial.

DQASS provides independent audits of screening laboratory and ultrasound data in a standardised and statistically valid format.

The service model includes statisticians who are experts in Down’s, Edwards’ and Patau’s syndromes.

The current service requirements are:

* Collating data from 22 screening laboratories in the UK  that screen for Down’s, Edwards’ and Patau’s syndromes
* Providing data and reports back to the labs and screening support sonographers to support consistency and improvements in practice
* Making recommendations to the V&S directorate including quality and assurance
* Engaging with software suppliers
* Informing national guidance
* Providing support and training to lab staff and ultrasound practitioners and screening staff working in the V&S directorate

For more detailed information about the DQASS, including reporting, please visit:  <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/downs-syndrome-screening-quality-assurance-support-service>

# 4 SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

4.1 This document is **not** an Invitation to Tender (ITT), nor does it form any part of a procurement process. It is a Request for Information (RFI) based on the draft service requirements provided with this document.

4.2 The RFI Response Document should be submitted no later than 13:00 hours on the 14 February 2024.

4.3 Interested parties’ responses do not constitute firm offers capable of acceptance. Instead, their responses will be construed as indicative only.

4.4 Unless otherwise agreed, NHS England shall not be obliged to return any materials submitted by interested parties before, during or after any procurement process.

4.5 Any information provided as part of this RFI may be used by the NHS England to inform future market analysis activity.

4.6 NHS England recognises that with a new service model there is a clear need to test with interested parties that outline requirements are not deficient to any material degree and that the content as to outcomes, as designated, are deliverable and affordable. To understand and appreciate these issues, it is essential that NHS England seek a fuller understanding from interested parties to enable requirements to be fully reflective of issues and concerns, which are relevant, and to adopt these, where appropriate in the final service model.

4.7 In addition, there is an option to allow interested parties to submit their individual caveats in relation to any section of the proposed service model where they may identify outcomes that they may not be able to provide and/or offer alternative suggestions. It should be noted by interested parties that in making these suggestions, the areas where this information may arise should be substantive in the context of delivering service model outcomes.