

**Conversion Therapy Victim Support Service  
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**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Authority requires the development, set-up and operation of a helpline and website that will direct clients to relevant, existing services and provide initial pastoral support to individuals who have gone through, are going through, or are at risk of conversion therapy practices. The helpline and website will be collectively known as the Conversion Therapy Victim Support Service. The service will be required to direct clients to existing support, provide support directly when necessary and information to vulnerable persons, whilst the website will be expected to provide public information and resources on the topic of conversion therapy.
- 1.2 The Authority invites quotes for the development and operation of a Conversion Therapy Victim Support Service, focusing on the ease of access, quality and accessibility of information provided, outcomes for users, and quality of pastoral support for users.
- 1.3 The Supplier is expected to demonstrate that:
- At the time of bidding that the Supplier has either an existing helpline designed to provide information and support, or has past experience in developing and maintaining such a helpline.
  - That at the time of bidding the Supplier has either an existing website or has experience in developing and operating a website. And that this website links/linked directly to relevant services, provides/provided information and resources, and contains/contained alternative methods of contact such as instant messaging service or email;
  - How the Supplier's existing or past experience in developing and operating a helpline and website will enable them to deliver the project to time and to the expected level of quality.
  - That their bid demonstrates value for money for public expenditure.
- 1.4 Consortium or partnership bids are welcome. These bids must be able to demonstrate throughout their submissions how the organisations will cooperate and delegate in order to provide assurance of joined-up delivery with no additional financial or other costs to the Authority. Key to this service is an ability to support vulnerable clients from a wide range of backgrounds and not any singular community. This is due to the nature of conversion therapy and those who may need to use the service.

**2. PURPOSE**

- 2.1 The development of this service will constitute two phases. Phase one will operate up to and beyond the passing of legislation banning the practice on conversion therapy, until the point that statutory provisions of an extra-territorial nature are planned to come into force. Phase two will align the service to the new legislative framework that the ban will establish. **This tender is for phase one of the victim support service only**, which is outlined below. Success in securing this contract for phase one does not guarantee success in securing the contract for phase two.
- Develop, launch, and operate a live a support service, made up of a minimum of a helpline and website that ensures clients who feel they have been a victim of conversion therapy, are currently going through it or are at risk can find and

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access the support they need. The service will also be expected to provide initial pastoral support for these clients.

- Develop a service that can provide sensitive and reassuring support to users in various states of vulnerability and/or need, and from a wide range of different backgrounds. Such backgrounds will include but not be limited to people from faith communities, those who define as, for example, lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or trans, and those whose sexual orientation or transgender status remains a sensitive and in some cases unresolved matter.
- Develop a service that provides guidance and signposting to relevant services that users may require, such as counselling, options for making a report to the police, and other public services such as emergency housing. The service should also provide support to professionals who may be concerned about an instance of conversion therapy and are seeking support on what action to take.
- Develop and maintain a website containing information about conversion therapy, its legal status, sign posting to relevant services, and that can be expanded upon as required.

### **3. BACKGROUND TO THE AUTHORITY**

3.1 The Equality Hub leads work on policy relating to race, disability, women, social mobility, sexual orientation, transgender equality and a range of equalities legislation. The Equality Hub is responsible for realising the government's commitment to banning conversion therapy practices in the UK. The Foreign Secretary and Minister for Women and Equalities is the lead minister for the Equality Hub.

3.2 The Equality Hub sits within the Cabinet Office. The Cabinet Office sits at the centre of government, supporting the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, to ensure effective development, coordination and implementation of policy and operations across all government departments. More information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/the-equality-hub>

### **4. BACKGROUND TO REQUIREMENT**

4.1 A range of physical and talking acts may be carried out as part of conversion therapy practises to change an individual's sexual orientation or transgender identity.

4.2 There is a growing body of evidence that conversion therapy is harmful, and that exposure to conversion therapy is associated with poor mental health outcomes.

4.3 The government is committed to banning conversion therapy. As part of this commitment, the government will create a victim support service for those who have undergone conversion therapy.

#### 1.1 Background evidence

4.4 The 2017 National LGBT Survey saw over 108,000 LGBT individuals provide responses on a range of issues, including having been offered or undergone conversion therapy.

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- 4.5 2% of the 108,000 respondents to the National LGBT Survey 2017 said they had undergone conversion therapy, and a further 5% of respondents said they had been offered it.
- 4.6 51% of all respondents who had undergone conversion therapy said that it had been conducted by faith groups, while 19% said that it had been conducted by healthcare providers or medical professionals.
- 4.7 More data can be found at the National LGBT Survey Data Viewer, here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-lgbt-survey-data-viewer>
- 4.8 We will be happy to discuss the available evidence and research on conversion therapy with the successful Supplier, building on the content provided in/alongside the forthcoming public consultation document.

**5. SCOPE OF REQUIREMENT**

- 5.1 Interested potential providers should carefully read the requirements set out below and respond to the questions set out in the response guidance.
- Please note: The Supplier is to assume that all requirements, unless otherwise specified, are core requirements and should therefore be included in the core contract price.
  - The Supplier is to implement all objectives and processes listed in their approaches once agreed and signed, if requested by the Authority.
  - As part of their bid the Supplier should develop a theory of change model, or (at the least) a statement which can later be shaped into a model in conjunction with the Authority.
  - The theory of change model, or statement, should describe the goal of the service, the overall outcomes for users, and how the activities planned by the Supplier will generate the required outcomes (along with any mechanisms for change, assumptions and enablers). The theory of change and all deliverables and outputs relating to the service must at all times be in line with Government policy and legislation, including the new legislation on conversion therapy once it's in force.
  - From the outcomes, the Supplier will be able to generate their monitoring framework, which will help them and the Authority monitor performance. The Supplier should consider how it will build measures such as number of users, quality of interaction/ complaints, into this framework; along with how it will identify potential improvements.

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5.2 The overall requirements of this work are listed below:

- A. *Utilising their existing relevant experience and capability, the Supplier will develop, launch, and operate a conversion therapy victim support service;*
- B. *The Supplier will develop an accessible helpline offering which includes:*
  - *Information about what Conversion Therapy practices are and their legal status for both helpline users and website users;*
  - *Initial pastoral support for users and direction to users, of relevant support services e.g. counselling;*
  - *Development of materials that provide information, signposting and support to users on topics such as the legal status of conversion therapy practices, counselling services, options for police reporting, housing services, victims of abuse, personal safety, sexual health etc.*
- C. *The Supplier will develop an accessible website that includes information on as at B. Accessibility must be in line with Government Digital Service standards and consider issues such as access and contact options for disabled people, and confidentiality for all users, many of whom will be vulnerable persons.*
- D. *The Supplier will be expected to provide a delivery timetable for the live launch of the helpline and website based on the outline schedule in the table at paragraph 6.2.*
- E. *The Supplier will work with Equality Hub officials in developing the resources, training, and other content for both the website and helpline;*
- F. *The Supplier will provide reporting on KPIs, finance, project management, risk, mitigations, and any other criteria required to achieve satisfactory delivery of the project, and its subsequent live operation.*
- G. *The provider will have demonstrable experience supporting vulnerable people remotely;*
- H. *Whilst not a core requirement, demonstrable experience of providing support relating to issues of personal safety and/or mental health and/or faith and/or sexuality and/or transgender status is desirable.*
- I. *All deliverables and outputs relating to the service must at all times be in line with Government policy and legislation, including the new legislation on conversion therapy once it's in force.*

5.3 The following sections outline each requirement in more detail.

### **Developing the Victim Support service**

#### Helpline and Website Content and Focus

- 5.4 The helpline and website will constitute the official government victim support service to individuals who have undergone, are undergoing, or are at risk of conversion therapy. The focus of the service must be the provision of support and information in a sensitive manner to all users.
- 5.5 The primary users of the service will be people who have undergone, are undergoing, or at risk of conversion therapy. Such users will be vulnerable and potentially still at risk. Suppliers will be expected to demonstrate an understanding of the needs of victims, potentially using the experiences of victims of similar offences and existing materials in supporting them, as a basis. Such offences would include

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- but not be limited to domestic abuse, forced marriage, coercive controlling behaviour and other honour based violence.
- 5.6 Whilst the primary service users of the helpline and website are expected to be victims of conversion therapy, users such as concerned friends and family, colleagues, and professionals in safe guarding roles are also anticipated. The bidder is therefore required to consider what services/information they envisage for people who are not victims and are not at risk but who may access the service.
- 5.7 It is expected that this service will take the form of a helpline and website. Suppliers must be able to demonstrate that they have current or past experience of operating a helpline that provides assistance and information to vulnerable and at risk people. Bids by Suppliers without current or previous experience of concurrently operating a helpline and website providing complementary information and support focusing on vulnerable people at risk will not be considered.
- 5.8 The Supplier will be expected to outline how they will develop and maintain the helpline and website, including how much will be developed from scratch and/or whether the new service will depend on/make use of any existing back-office functionality or service provision (and if so, what other organisations / bodies are involved in procuring / securing / providing / funding / overseeing that functionality or provision).
- 5.9 It is required that the supplier considers and demonstrates an understanding that users will have experienced varied forms of conversion therapy relating to their sexual orientation or transgender status. The service must be able to provide assistance to everyone who feels they have been a victim of conversion therapy. The supplier must consider all forms of conversion therapy, and demonstrate this consideration in their bid.
- 5.10 The sensitive handling of calls is of paramount importance to any successful bid, therefore examples of existing or recent training materials and call handling developed and/or used currently or recently by the Supplier will be of interest.
- 5.11 The website and helpline will direct users to specialist external organisations able to provide support in areas such as threats of violence, pastoral support/counselling, housing, drug or alcohol abuse, forced marriage etc.
- 5.12 As such, we anticipate a varied service subject to change and continuous updating. Therefore, the Supplier must be able to demonstrate that they are able to proactively identify and incorporate additions, revisions, and changes to the initial request outlined in this document, e.g. the addition of more resources online, or alterations to the training materials.
- 5.13 Based on existing data of conversion therapy victims in the UK (see paragraph 4.5), we expect the number of unique callers to the helpline to be in the magnitude of no more than 10-15,000 individuals per operating year. This projection does not include repeated calls.
- 5.14 The Service must be accessible and the website must provide alternative ways of contacting the Supplier on the issue of conversion therapy. This will ensure individuals who may have access issues relating to disabilities and/or are in a situation meaning they are unable to safely call, will have a range of ways of accessing the same or similar information and support. The Supplier will be expected to outline how this may appear in their bid e.g. email, online chat function, postal etc.
- 5.15 It is desirable that the Supplier demonstrate existing or past experience of handling sensitive issues by callers.

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- 5.16 If no existing or past experience exists, outlines of how the Supplier will develop understanding and subsequently support for all users as detailed at paragraph 5.5 is required.

Developing the Service - Requirements:

- 5.17 The Supplier will be expected to work closely with the Authority in developing materials and resources for the helpline and website, to ensure a consistent and quality offering that is responsive to the needs of the users and legally accurate where relevant. The Supplier will require the approval of the Authority for all outward-facing content including branding, any visible association with or endorsement by other organisations, use of any logos and any cross-referencing to other material on gov.uk
- 5.18 All materials created for the purpose of the Victim Support service, including but not limited to all user facing materials, training manuals, online resources and information, and guidance documents, will remain the intellectual property of the Authority.
- 5.19 The existing or newly developed website and helpline infrastructure will remain the property of the Supplier, but will be required to host the services outlined. As stated, at 5.16 the Authority will retain intellectual property rights.
- 5.20 The Supplier will be required to outline how the victim support service will be developed from planning phase to launch and operation. This must also include any requirements the Supplier has of the Authority to realise this.
- 5.21 The Supplier will work with the Authority on appropriate communications plans and activities for both the launch and continued promotion of the victim support service. Bidders will factor the costs for this activity into their bid. The Supplier will work with the Authority to draft and agree key messaging/narratives, core communications content and the mix and selection of channels/specific outlets/media involved and what part is being delivered by the Supplier and the Authority.
- 5.22 The launch of the helpline and website will occur on the same date, unless otherwise agreed.
- 5.23 The Supplier will be required to outline an initial timeline in their bid. This will be subject to change and revision depending on the needs of the Authority, within reason. We would expect the service to launch no later than 15 July 2022.
- 5.24 The contract for the development and operation of the Victim Support service will run for 24 months, with a 12 month review point. Subject to Supplier performance and budget availability, the Authority may extend the contract for a further year. At such key points, the Authority will be looking at the Supplier's success in meeting standards relating to quality, value for money, management, etc of the service.
- 5.25 A reporting structure will be required for both the development of the victim support service, and the operation of the service. This structure and its requirements will be agreed upon by both parties prior to the commencement of work, with reasonable changes as required throughout the life of the contract. The nature of such reporting will include monitoring, risk, qualitative, quantitative, and financial.

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**6. SERVICE LEVELS AND PERFORMANCE**

- 6.1 The Authority will measure the quality of the Supplier's delivery by:



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notice where possible. As a general guide the Authority will aim to turnaround minor requests within two working days and major requests (e.g. commenting on drafts of reports, or checking data outputs) within five working days. Key documents and decisions will require feedback from wider stakeholders. The Supplier should factor these clearance periods into project timings and indicate clearly in any project timetable when such outputs will be submitted for clearance.

**Project management reporting**

- 6.6 It is expected that project leads for the Authority and Supplier, plus additional team members as required, will hold meetings on a weekly basis to monitor progress, address any issues, and ensure good communication between the Authority and the Supplier.
- 6.7 As part of the management of the project, the Supplier will be required to provide the following reports on a weekly basis, to the Authority:
- Brief weekly progress updates – to update on progress towards milestones and management of risks arising. The format of these reports should be agreed with the Authority and submitted in advance of the weekly meetings.
  - Submission of draft work for discussion/approval, as outlined in the timeline above.
- 6.8 Additional meetings will be arranged as required by the agreed upon timeline or as the need arises.
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**Risk management**

- 6.9 The Supplier will be required to implement a structured approach to risk management, outlining the key risks identified and how these will be managed. This is to include risks relating to project delivery, in addition to presentational risks due to the high profile nature of this programme.
- 6.10 Potential Providers should outline full details of this plan as part of their response, including the course of action to be followed should risks to project delivery arise, e.g. resourcing or timeline constraints
- 6.11 As part of the weekly progress reports outlined above the Supplier should report on performance against relevant milestones and include an update on risks identified and how these will be managed.
- 6.12 The Authority will assess performance based on these reports and will require additional meetings with the Supplier if milestones are not met, either in terms of timings or quality.

**7. ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS**

- 7.1 On completion of a signed contract, the GEO will set up a Purchase Order. Payments will be made in line with the milestones and/or timescales set out in the contractual agreements. The supplier may be required to provide evidence that the

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contractual agreements have been met prior to payment. Payments will normally be due 30 days after receipt of a valid invoice. This applies even if the supplier's invoice specifies an earlier payment date, unless the earlier date is agreed in the contract. A 'valid' invoice is one that:

- is sent in PDF format
- is submitted for goods or services that have been delivered in line with the contract
- contains a valid Purchase Order number (**invoices will be rejected without a PO number**)

7.2 Invoices should be sent direct to Shared Services at the following email address:

- [apinvoices-cab-u@gov.sscl.com](mailto:apinvoices-cab-u@gov.sscl.com)
- Hard copies can be sent to:
  - Shared Services Connected Limited
  - CAB Procure to Pay
  - PO Box 405
  - SSCL, Phoenix House
  - Celtic Springs Business Park
  - Newport, NP10 8FZ

7.3 If the details on the invoice match the details of receipted goods or services, the invoice will be paid by Shared Services. If there are discrepancies, Shared Services will contact the supplier and/or the requestor to resolve any differences.

## **8. LOCATION**

8.1 The location of the Services will be carried out at the Supplier's address, and the Authority's primary place of business, as stated below:

Government Equalities Office  
Sanctuary Buildings  
Great Smith Street  
SW1P 3BT

## **9. SECURITY REQUIREMENTS**

9.1 The Supplier is subject to confidentiality in regard to materials shared by the Authority in realising this project, which extends to discussions, written and verbal correspondence, documentation, and meetings with the Authority, related to the scope of the contract.

9.2 The Supplier is required to implement appropriate arrangements for data security at all times, particularly relating to the transmission and storage of personal data. Such procedures must meet the standards outlined in the framework terms and conditions, and the Data Protection Act.

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- 9.3 Processes should be in place for data being returned by interviewers and safeguarding against data loss, including appropriate risk management procedures. Potential Providers should confirm within their response that such procedures will be implemented and outline the technical measures to be put in place to meet such requirements.

**10. BUDGET**

- 10.1 The budget for this work must not exceed £120k in the first 12 months of the contract, and £120k in the second 12 months of the contract (total £240k in 24 months). These figures are inclusive of VAT.
- 10.2 The Authority is looking for the most competitive bid that can deliver maximum value for money. This will be assessed in accordance with Annex D.
- 10.3 During the development phase of the project, payment will be agreed via a payment schedule dependent upon milestone completions in an agreed upon project timeline. Upon the launch and operation of the live service, a payment schedule will be agreed that supports the operation of the service.
- 10.4 Usage of, and charges from, third party Suppliers should be clearly identified and explained at the point of bidding, together with an explanation of the criteria used to select, and the quality assurance processes used to monitor, any third party Suppliers. The Authority reserves the right to preclude, at any point, involvement of any third party Supplier not meeting those criteria or satisfying those quality assurance processes or on any other reasonable grounds. The Authority expects the Supplier to ensure that third party Suppliers are commissioned on a clear value for money basis, and that such activities are passed on at cost.
- 10.5 Prices should be inclusive of expenses and exclusive of VAT.