**Supplier Day and Request for Information (RFI) Report**

**NHS Prescriptions, Print & Cards**

**Project Name: NHS Prescriptions, Print & Cards**

**Procurement Ref: 22\_02\_04**

**20th September 2022**

**Document purpose**

The purpose of this document is to:

* Document and publicise the outcomes of the Supplier Day and Request for Information (RFI) for the NHS Forms, Print and Cards future reprocurement;
* Provide a public record of the outcomes of the Supplier Day and RFI;
* Ensure compliance with UK procurement legislation.

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# Executive Summary

This Supplier Day and RFI Report for the NHS Prescriptions, Print & Cards re-procurement pretender market engagement is readily available to all interested parties.

The Supplier Day and RFI has delivered invaluable feedback to the NHS Business Services Authority (‘NHSBSA’) and the wider stakeholders to support its on-going work to develop the tender documentation for this contract opportunity. The level of supplier engagement and participation in the process has been welcomed and is much appreciated.

**Background: General**

The current NHS Forms, Print Exemptions, Cards & EHIC (FPECE) Agreement is managed and executed through the NHS Business Services Authority on behalf of the Department of Health and Devolved Authorities.

The NHSBSA is preparing to go to market for a single supplier framework for the replacement to the NHS Prescriptions, Print and Cards requirement. The current Agreement is currently delivered by Xerox UK Ltd. The timing of this re-procurement exercise is driven by the expiry of the current contract on 30th June 2024.

**Background: Supplier Day & RFI**

The opportunity to participate in the Supplier Day and RFI was made publicly available through the publication of a PIN notice[[1]](#footnote-2) in the Find a Tender Service and the opportunity was also published on Contracts Finder[[2]](#footnote-3). The purpose of these notifications being to initiate pre-tender market engagement for this contract opportunity.

During the week commencing 8th August 2022, the NHSBSA, and other members of the Project Team, presented to and met with a cross-section of the market via a Microsoft Teams webinar and one to one Microsoft Teams sessions.

Meeting with a cross-section of the market ensured the pre-tender market engagement was carried out in a fair and transparent manner, to build the profile of the programme and its credibility with the marketplace.

Interested parties registered to attend a Microsoft Teams Webinar and were offered individual supplier meetings with the NHSBSA and members of the Project Team.

A presentation was delivered by the NHSBSA and members of the Project Team to all registered suppliers on the morning of 8th August 2022 and this was then followed by individual supplier meetings.

Nineteen (19) suppliers accessed the opportunity of which seven (7) formally declined to participate and Seven (7) suppliers registered and attended the Webinar, of which four (4) requested an individual supplier meeting which took place, on 8th august 2022. Five (5) suppliers neither declined or participated.

All 1-2-1 meetings lasted for a maximum of 20 minutes.

Each 1-2-1 meeting was structured around an open forum for the Supplier to ask questions about the presentation and the RFI.

**Outcomes**

The key outputs of this report are to:

* act as a public record of the Supplier Day and RFI;
* document for all interested parties the output of the Supplier Day and RFI identifying the key findings, themes and principles;
* for the NHSBSA and wider Project Team to use the findings of the Supplier Day and RFI to assist in the development of the:
  + Business requirements and specifications;
  + NHS Prescriptions, Print and Cards procurement route;
  + Aggregation or disaggregation of the requirements;
  + Social value benefits which can be achieved via any future agreement;
  + Selection and Award Criteria for the procurement process.

**Report Content**

This report contains the following:

* Part 2 - Commentary on the presentation delivered by the NHSBSA (copies of the presentation slides can be found at Appendix 2 of this report);
* Part 3 - Commentary of the individual supplier meetings; and
* Part 4 - The 11 questions contained within the RFI and a summary of Supplier responses to these.

**Next Steps**

In terms of next steps, the NHSBSA has set out the following indicative, non-binding timetable for the procurement process (please note that this may be subject to change):

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Activity Milestone** | **When** |
| 1. Publication of the Supplier Day and RFI Outcomes (this report) | September/October 2022 |
| 2. Publish Tender Documentation | January 2023 |
| 3. Evaluations | April - June2023 |
| 4. Selection of Preferred Bidder | June 2023 |
| 5. Contract Award and Execution | July -August2023 |
| 6. Implementation (9-12months) | August 2023 – June 2024 |
| 7. Service Commencement | July 2024 |

The NHSBSA does not commit (through the answers given or otherwise) to any particular scope of services for the NHS Prescriptions, Print & Cards agreement requirements, does not commit to any timescales, and may delay the start of any procurement process, or suspend, amend or terminate any procurement process that is started, and is not committing to awarding a contract.

The NHSBSA gives no warranty on the information presented within this document or related documents.

The NHSBSA will not be liable for any costs, expenditure, work or effort incurred by a supplier in proceeding with or participating in the Supplier Boot Camp, any other pre-procurement market engagement or any procurement process, including if any such procurement process is delayed, suspended, amended or terminated by the NHSBSA.

# Presentation: Summary

The Supplier Boot Camp opened with a presentation delivered by 4 members of the project team;

| **Attendee** | **Org** | **Role** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Chris Tempest | NHSBSA – SME Help with Health Costs | Senior Service Delivery Manager |
| Barry Moran | NHSBSA – SME GHIC | Senior Service Delivery Manager |
| Julie Hickling-Walker | NHSBSA, Contract Management | Contract Performance Manager |
| Angela Nixon-Moore | NHSBSA Strategic Sourcing | Commercial Manager |

The presentation was based on the slides set out in Appendix 2 of this Report. The topics highlighted by the NHSBSA during the course of the presentation are outlined below.

The NHSBSA explained that the purpose of the Supplier Boot Camp was to:

* Provide the market with an overview of the NHSBSA’s anticipated requirements for the service;
* Obtain information and insight from the market to help shape the final procurement strategy;
* Identify if the proposed strategy of combining two current contracts into one contract is achievable;
* Explain the procurement process and provide a broad timeline;
* Provide an opportunity for suppliers to ask members of the NHSBSA project team questions in relation to the service
* Understand the market appetite and maximise supplier participation, ensuring we achieve the right level of competition;
* Inform the NHSBSA thinking and procurement approach through supplier feedback.

The key messages the NHSBSA gave to the market through the Supplier Boot Camp are set out below:

* Overview of the Operations– NHSBSA Customer Facing Services, NHS Workforce and NHSBSA Citizen Services;
* Proposed Specification Overview;
* IT Systems and Integration – how this service fits into the bigger picture;

The first part of the presentation focused on the Supplier Boot Camp objectives and the purpose of the 1-2-1 sessions with the NHSBSA and Project Team.

This was followed by a high-level overview of the current contracts and anticipated requirements

The final part of the presentation focused on the procurement approach, this covered;

* Procurement Timescales
* Procurement Process – Next steps & Route to Market.

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# Individual Supplier Meetings: Summary

Individual Supplier Meetings with the NHSBSA and Project Team took place with those suppliers which requested meetings following the completion of the NHSBSA presentation. Four meetings took place on the 8th August 2022 following the presentation.

Each meeting was an open forum but structured around the Supplier asking questions about the presentation and RFI.

The questions and answers are set out below in this report.

Individual supplier sessions were structured as follows:

* Duration: 20 minutes
* As indicated in the Supplier Day Information (Appendix 1) sent to suppliers attending the Supplier Day,were taken from each individual supplier session by the NHSBSA, and the questions and responses are included in this report to be shared with all interested parties.

# Supplier Questions themes and NHSBSA Answers

During the individual supplier meetings, suppliers were given opportunity to ask NHSBSA questions relating to the presentation delivered and the RFI. The table below summarises the themes that arose and the NHSBSA answer:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Supplier Questions | | NHSBSA Answers |
| 1 | Would the BSA consider taking on a supplier that would only be interested in the card element of the contract? | We are looking to appoint a single supplier to the framework, however this is one of the reasons for the RFI to understand the market capabilities and if the services/products need to be disaggregated in one or a number of different ways i.e. cards as one agreement and paper elements as another etc. And which can offer best value for money. |
| 2 | Is there a prime contractor that covers the 4.1 and 4.2 card and paper products currently? | Yes, the BSA have a main contract with a single supplier who delivers all products and services and uses their supply chain to support the deliverables |
| 3 | Would the NHS be open to a manager supplier day, where smaller subcontractors would be invited to come in and engage? | It’s not something that has been considered at present. The BSA requires a single supplier framework which delivers all of the products. Some of the products would be purchased directly by the BSA and some of them would be purchased and accessed by other health bodies, including NHS bodies and some private health bodies.  The Single supplier is able to source their own supply chain however are strongly encouraged to use SMEs wherever possible. |
| 4 | Would the BSA facilitate a date as part of the procurement process where smaller subcontractors could receive a list of the larger interested parties in order for the supplier to approach them? | This is not something considered at present however, however if this is an idea that the market feel would be beneficial to the process, the RFI can provide the opportunity to propose this. |
| 5 | What is the process in regards to the Print Products Portal and how the data is transferred to produce the cards? | The BSA do not dictate this in the requirements as it is more of the case of securely sending the supplier a daily file of the data that the BSA wish to use to personalise specific products.  The BSA encourage preferred methods to be proposed by the suppliers when bidding; its likely the BSA would set out constraints and the security features required for securely sending and receiving data. The Supplier would propose their methodology to send and receive securely. Currently there is a mix of API and SFTP. |
| 6 | What Is BSA’s approximate value and annual value of this contract? | The original contract notice prior to the introduction of the Healthy Start Cards was valued at £65 million, including these cards the projection is likely to be £78 million over the 5-year term |
| 7 | Has there been much change regarding the volumes of the prescriptions since COVID? | Yes, there has been growth in prescriptions, especially the dispensing tokens.  BSA are working on changing the behaviours of pharmacists in order to reduce the orders of dispensing tokens as the uptake of real time exemption checking (which removes the requirement for a dispensing token to have a wet signature) has been very good. |
| 8 | Is there still a huge growth in orders for the FP10SS prescriptions and the Dispensing Token’s? | Yes, however the FP10SS prescriptions have reduced in volume significantly due to GP practices moving patients to electronic prescribing.  The volumes in the dispensing tokens for the electronic prescribing increased during the pandemic as it was the safest way to reduce the number of interactions between patients and NHS staff.  The DT’s are not required when a person is found to be exempt through real time exemption checking, however one is required if a person has to pay for their prescription charges. |
| 9 | Is there further information that can be shared with us regarding the specification provided with all of the Healthy Start card products? | The Healthy Start Card is a prepaid transactional, contactless card with a chip and pin technology |
| 10 | Will the service introduce new card products for Healthy Start? | Paper vouchers were originally provided to customers, however introducing the card was the first transitional change to the service and this was implemented into the service a year and a half ago however there is always a drive to improve, develop and to digitise, So there maybe transformational changes in the future but nothing is planned yet.  Volumes and growth in the Healthy Start card are likely to increase due to the cost of living crisis. |
| 11 | How do the transactions work on the Healthy Start Card, what is the process? | The Supplier can monitor the balances and financial transactions from the Healthy Start Card.  The cards are loaded every 4 weeks, however the customer does not need to use the amount credited within that time frame, some may use the card on a weekly, or monthly basis. |
| 12 | What are the additional security checks for the secure products in the contract? | BSA run checks prior to issuing a card to a customer to ensure that the customer is entitled and to ensure confirmation of their identity.  There are restrictions on the actual use of the card to ensure it is only used with certain merchants. |
| 13 | Is the GHIC card plastic? | Yes, however the difference in the card since the contract went out to the market is that the GHIC card now has a hologram adhered to the front. |
| 14 | Who has ownership of the Hologram on the GHIC Card? | DH own the Hologram presented on the GHIC card, however BSA license the use of the hologram to the supplier on the FPECE contract. |
| 15 | Is there just one Hologram? | Yes, there is only one Hologram across all of the cards |
| 16 | What is BSA’s approach regarding CCS frameworks? | The BSA are looking to procure a single supplier framework as the BSA are directed to discharge a number of products and services which are required by wider health bodies therefore a framework to allow others to access it is required, this could not be facilitated if the BSA entered into a call off direct with the CCS framework (i.e. we cannot set up a framework under a framework).. |
| 17 | The amount of users given in the presentation was 7,517, however can the BSA confirm if the amount stated is licensed users or are there additional users? | The 7,517 is the total amount of registered users, as it is a secure website. The customers are required to register with the BSA to gain access.  It is a large volume of users because there are a lot of provider organisations that now provide services to the NHS and they do not have access to order through NHS hubs.  The vast majority are GP practices who order through NHS England and NHS Wales. |
| 18 | Can you register as a shared user or as an individual user? | No, for security reasons it must be an individual user as the shared users are not permitted. |
| 19 | What is the process in terms of daily updates provided for the registered users? | There is a daily update regarding the prescriber data, which is the information that is provided for prescriptions, however the database of users is incorporated into the platform that’s provided by the supplier.  BSA provide authorisation to users to access the Portal which is hosted by the supplier on the BSA’s behalf. |
| 20 | Is the registration request sent to BSA or directly to Current Supplier? | At the moment the registration requests are sent directly to the Supplier as there are certain products provided that do not have any security associated with them.  If the customer would like access to the secure catalogue, which means they require access to secure prescriptions, the BSA has the authority to accept or reject the registration request. |
| 21 | If you were to go to market, would you require an ordering platform from the supplier? | Yes, it would be a requirement for the supplier to provide an ordering platform. |
| 22 | Will there be a technical specification in the ITT that covers the requirements for the ordering platform? | The BSA’s requirements would be detailed within the specification contained within the invitation to tender |
| 23 | In relation to Overseas Health will some of the products be in scope for the procurement exercise? | The products that are in scope are EHIC/GHIC Cards |
| 24 | How are the BSA going to pitch what the volumes are for EHIC/GHIC post COVID? What are your thoughts on the parameters of that? | It is very difficult for the BSA to be able to provide a prediction on volumes at the moment as the BSA are essentially experiencing two years’ worth of renewals due to the public being able to travel again post COVID.  In five years’ time as cards expire, there may be a peak in application requests and the BSA are doing as much work as they can on modelling that and analysing the information as it becomes available to attempt predicting what the impact will have on the future. |
| 25 | Are the BSA looking at or would the BSA expect to have a sole supplier overseeing the whole of the contract or to have a supply chain beneath the supplier? | The BSA are looking at what suppliers could deliver based on a single supplier agreement whilst providing best value, therefore BSA are encouraging open and transparent responses to the RFI to inform the strategy. |
| 26 | What are BSA’s views on including digitalisation alternatives in the contract scope? | The BSA are obliged to undertake GDS assessments and follow GDS principles and the government digital standards . There may be an opportunity if the BSA wish to outsource an element of digitalisation to a supplier with digital capability, however the BSA would require certain spend approvals for different categories of spend such as digital.  It is not something that the BSA currently anticipate including in the agreement. |
| 27 | Is the ability to add different products, digital or other over time a useful strategy for the BSA? | The BSA try to future proof scope as much as possible to accommodate for any change in the term; such as different products without making the scope so wide and overarching it creates cause for challenge, therefore it has to be linked and relevant to the service. |
| 28 | In terms of the current contract with being 5 years, how did that work for BSA as a timeline/length of contract? | As part of the RFI suppliers have been asked to advise what length of agreement could offer best value.. |
| 29 | What route to market will the BSA use? | As a single supplier framework is required it is likely to be a find a tender process, however until the PT|ME is concluded the strategy is not finalised and whether it would be an open, restricted or CPN as is yet to be determined. |

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# 4. NHSBSA Request for Information (RFI) Questions and Supplier response themes

The NHSBSA posed 11 questions within the RFI issued to each of the suppliers who registered. Each of the questions and the insight provided by the answers can be found below:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **NHSBSA Question** | **Supplier Answers (Themes)** |
| 1 | Would you be interested in bidding for all or part of this opportunity in the future and if so what is the optimum time you would require from receipt of the Invitation to Tender (ITT) to submitting your bid? If not what discourages you from bidding? | * Of the 7 Suppliers who completed the RFI all suppliers advised they would be interested in bidding for the requirement. (albeit in contrast to this in, later questions within the RFI some suppliers state they would prefer the products to be disaggregated) * The Optimum time to bid ranged between: * 4 – 6 weeks. * Most suppliers advised 8 weeks or a minimum thereof. |
| 2 | With regard to the duration of the framework agreement can you advise the preferred minimum term which would enable you to recover any return on investment whilst providing maximum value for money | * Based on ROI |
| 3 | Please advise which combination of products you could provide whilst offering value for money including specific details around yours/your supply chain’s ability to provide FCA regulated products such as the Healthy Start Prepaid Cards if you are able to provide them  3.1 **Printed Paper Products**  Secure Products  Non Secure National products  Non secure Pension Employers Products  Pensions Payroll Products  Non Secure NHSBSA products  Help with Health cost Products  3.2 **Card Products**  EHIC & GHIC Cards  Healthy Start Prepaid Cards (FCA Regulated Product) | * All suppliers advised they could provide all products, however some suppliers who stated they could supply all products then detailed they would prefer if the products were lotted/disaggregated * All Suppliers advised they would require supply chain involvement for some and/or all of the products * Suppliers advised they may need large capital investment to produce some of the products * Two suppliers suggested disaggregating the framework into lots in order to reduce risk by alternate suppliers potentially appointed to each lot and or as the value of the whole agreement could change their SME status-   - Paper products - card products - secure/FCA cards   * One Supplier stated they could supply all products and listed the products they could provide but did not list prepaid cards. |
| 4 | Would you be able to meet the requirement to produce and distribute the following products/services within the volume ranges per year as set out below? Would you have the flexibility to meet both increases and decreases in these volumes.  4.1 **Paper Products**  Secure Products 1,120,669,060 units (a unit being 1 prescription form)  Non Secure National products 50,253,650 units (a unit being 1 individual item)  Non secure Pension Employers Products 3,318,193 units (a unit being 1 individual item)  Pensions Payroll Products 4,843,829 units (a unit being 1 item)  Non Secure NHSBSA products 3,956,250 units (a unit being 1 envelope)   1. Help with Health cost Products   **4.2 Card Products**  EHIC & GHIC Cards 4,014,386 units (a unit being 1 card)  Healthy Start Prepaid Cards 802,793 units (a unit being 1 card)  Healthy Start Prepaid Cards transactions 5,755,375 units (a unit being 1 transaction)  Tax Credit Certificates 1,242,540 units (a unit being 1 certificate)  Maternity Exemption Certificates 1,030,245 units (a unit being 1 certificate)   1. Medical Exemption Cards | * All suppliers stated they can meet the requirements to produce the volumes stated * Some Suppliers stated flexibility on demand would depend on capital investment levels required, i.e. if there was an increase and more kit was needed this would be the capital investment required * Some suppliers were explicit and stated they could meet increases and decreases in demand for the products stated currently. * A number of suppliers stated they would rely upon their supply chains for increases in demand |
| 5 | Do you have capacity to hold storage of the following products in the following quantities throughout the Term, (please note average quantities may change through the term but data included in this RFI is based upon latest quantities available)  Prescription paper reel stock: 435 tonnes (3 months stock)  FP10SS, FP10DT & WP10SS ready to dispatch: 56,000,000 prescription forms in total (1 month's stock)  NEO2: 300,000 cards (3 months stock) plus 3 months on order with the supplier   1. Health Insurance Card Holograms: 500,000 holograms | * Suppliers confirmed they could store the products listed within the quantities stated * Some suppliers advised they would need to utilise their supply chain for any increase in storage requirements |
| 6 | The current supplier of paper for Prescription forms is Drewsen Spezialpapiere GmbH & Co KG. Can you advise if you can supply this specification of paper, and/or if you have any alternative suppliers who can meet this specification highlighting any associated risks/benefits of alternative suppliers | * One supplier did not answer this question * Six of the suppliers advised they could source the current (Drewsen) paper for prescription forms * A number of the suppliers advised they could source alternative suppliers/mills with a comparable specification |
| 7 | Are you able to provide a helpdesk function to support users with queries in respect of products ordered via the online ordering portal and provide a secure online ordering portal with access for different user levels and multiple organisations? | * Six suppliers advised they can provide a helpdesk function and online ordering portal with access for different user levels and multiple organisations * One supplier advised they would require an initial scoping documents to understand the requirement before being able to confirm. |
| 8 | Are you able provide hybrid mail/Royal Mail Wholesale account services for the products which are to be printed and posted under the agreement? | * All suppliers confirmed they could provide hybrid mail * All suppliers confirmed they could provide Royal Mail wholesale accounts/optimise postage efficiencies |
| 9 | Suppliers are invited to highlight the key risks and/or considerations the NHSBSA should factor in and how they can be mitigated. This may include:   * Transition and implementation of the new contract * Delivery of the service | Key risk suppliers identified:   * Transition & implementation  - Stock transfer/purchase/handover - Transfer of plant/kit if applicable - Parallel running - Testing of all products & dispatch/delivery * Inflation  - fluctuations in the paper market - RPI increases - Postage increases * Digitisation - impact upon volumes/impact of RTEC etc * Cost of change * Ensuring buy in from incumbent during exit * Data transfer links –  - set up and testing time & resource must be available  - info security standards in place * TUPE risks – ensure early and accurate information   Environmental & Quality Management systems in place |
| 10 | 1. Please indicate what areas of the Social Value Model you could deliver through this service linking to one or a number of the 5 Policy Themes/Outcomes set out by the Cabinet Office.   Theme 1: Covid Recovery   * Policy Outcome: Help local communities to manage and recover from the impact of COVID-19   Theme 2: Tackling economic inequality   * Policy Outcome: Create new businesses, new jobs and new skills * Policy Outcome: Increase supply chain resilience and capacity   Theme 3: Fighting Climate Change   * Policy Outcome: Effective stewardship of the environment   Theme 4: Equal opportunity   * Policy Outcome: Reduce the disability employment gap * Policy Outcome: Tackle workforce inequality   Theme 5: Wellbeing   * Policy Outcome: Improve health and wellbeing * Policy Outcome: Improve community integration | * A number of suppliers advised they could deliver against all 5 Policy themes/outcomes * Some suppliers advised they could deliver a mix of Themes 2, 3, 4 and 5 |
| 11 | Provide any additional commercial considerations for the NHSBSA to consider in addition to the questions set out above: | * One supplier suggested alternative approaches to the application of security features for the secure products may offer improvements/efficiencies * One supplier suggested that clauses for RPI/PPI/postal increases are included * One supplier advised that fixing the price from submission to the first anniversary of the contract may not be achievable in the current economic climate * One supplier suggested splitting the agreement into lots to spread risk across multiple suppliers |

# Appendix 1 - Pre Tender Market Engagement Documents

Please see below the embedded documents which were provided to suppliers which registered an interest in taking part in the pre-tender market engagement (double click to open).











# Appendix 2 - Supplier Day Presentation Slides

Please see below the embedded Supplier Day Presentation slides from the 8th August 2022 (double click to open).



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**Document Ends**

1. <https://www.find-tender.service.gov.uk/Notice/019522-2022> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. <https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/d94e8225-e07a-4f2e-b1bb-2f15fdbc2489> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)