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**National Staff Mental Health Support Service 2026-2027**

**(****with options to extend to a maximum period/s up to 2029)**

**ATAMIS REFERENCE: C346803**

**PRELIMINARY MARKET ENGAGEMENT (PME) – REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI)**

1. **Background**

* NHS England (NHSE) are undertaking a preliminary market engagement exercise to gain market interest and feedback from experienced organisations that provide clinical assessment and treatment services to healthcare staff who are experiencing mental health and/or addiction issues.
* A provider was commissioned in 2022 to provide free to access and confidential mental health assessment and treatment services for health professionals (as service users) with complex needs and circumstances, and with the current contract due to end March 2026, we are considering our options to appoint a new contract from April 2026 for 1 year until March 2027, with the options to extend up to a maximum period/s up to 2029 in 12 month contract variations.
* The service requires providers to operate in a unique space where there is a crossover between the professional and regulatory environment in which a clinician or health professional works, and their mental health treatment needs. The service requires the ability to manage confidentiality associated with accessing health care, taking responsibility for the service user accessing the service but also the professional and patient responsibilities and risks associated with the health professional’s role.
* An understanding and experience of the mental health presentation of health professionals, especially where there is a high risk of suicide is a crucial requirement.

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 and legislation (provider selection regime)
* In the event of a change of Supplier, TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981) may apply however this will be confirmed at the tender stage and any information will be shared with interested bidders following signature of non-disclosure agreement. NHSE are working with the current supplier to ensure an exit strategy is in place by September 2026. In the event of a change of Supplier, NHSE will work with the outgoing and incoming Suppliers for this service and use this exit strategy to protect the continuity of the National Staff Mental Health Support Service and the safe transition for patients.
* NHS England is looking to award a contract for 12 months; 1 April 2026 – 31 March 2027, with the option to extend for further 12-month periods up to a maximum date of 31 March 2029
* The NHS is undertaking significant work to explore ways to better support staff health and wellbeing at national, system and local levels to maximise impact, and value for money, and staff wellbeing and therefore productivity/capacity to deliver patient care. We are looking for a supplier who can work alongside us on this journey to maximise contract value and who can therefore demonstrate how they will work with us flexibly (through negotiation) throughout the duration of the contract. This could include how they can flex capacity and capability of the service to meet our NHS staff needs as they evolve over the next (up to) 3 years to maximise impact of the contract, as aligned to the evolving NHS staff support landscape. Any changes will be agreed through formal contract variation. The contract is due to be awarded in September 2025, with service delivery beginning on 1 April 2026, with the key initial tasks of:
  + During this period, we expect any implementation plans and if TUPE applies, consultation, between the outgoing and incoming providers to take place.
  + Working closely with the outgoing service provider to ensure a safe transition for patients between providers.
  + Any data transfers will be in line with data protection principles and regulations.
* The maximum available budget for this contract is £11,000,000 per annum.

We anticipate that the pricing model will involve:

* Two elements, Fixed costs and Variable costs. The Fixed costs are monthly running costs required to support all aspects of the provider. The Variable costs are for specialist and/or treatment package costs.
* The rest of the requirements included in the Specification will be charged at a fixed price. Performance related payment may be considered.

1. **Specification Summary**

Current working assumptions about the National Staff Mental Health Support Service 2026-2027 contract are outlined below. The primary objective is the delivery of confidential mental health assessment and treatment services for health professionals (as service users) with complex needs and circumstances.

**Overview of Requirements**

The Supplier service would comprise the following elements:

* To ensure a nationally consistent offer to NHS staff with complex mental health issues.
* To ensure patient choice and the ability to be seen anywhere across England i.e. out of area services, due to not being able to access local services as a result of confidentiality issues e.g. staff who are likely to be well known by local services.
* To maintain a good level of standards and good service quality, patient experience and outcomes.
* To minimise any disruption to service users and ensure continuity of access to mental health services.
* Attendance at Contract Management meetings.
* Skills and knowledge transfer and exit strategy.

**Reporting and demonstrating impact**

Reports for the service must be provided to support contract monitoring, demonstrating impact and return on investment, and improvement. The Provider must evidence the usage and success of the service, and where possible demonstrate outcomes e.g. leading to increased staff capacity and productivity. Clear and simple metrics must provide assurance, these would focus mainly on the clinical metrics, particularly user-reported wellbeing measurements and longer-term outcome measures.

Such input, process, output and outcome measures may include:

* Is the service responsive, using evidence-based treatment, and supporting employment and wellbeing, and getting patients back to work?
* Contact times would need to be defined and measured
* Proportion of service users who stay in or return back to work
* Percentage of addiction patients who remain abstinent
* The length of and number of spells of absence (e.g., via MED3s)
* Measures of symptoms and function, e.g. PHQ-9, Gad-7 or CORE10
* Appraisals and training of the team. Patient feedback using established ‘patient experience questionnaires’ or equivalent
* Outcomes, such as reduced days sick, return/maintained ability to work, increased productivity etc.

All reporting measures and performance monitoring as set out in the contract and may be subject to being published publicly.

1. **Expectations of the Supplier**

- Proactive outreach and engagement with staff groups to promote the service as a safe, confidential space for health care staff, through workforce wellbeing resources, apps, hosting events, webinars, podcasts, social media etc.

- Central access through website, email, phone and apps to make it easy for health and wellbeing to access services

- Initial clinical assessment, and through consultation, identifying what support the service users may need.

- Developing a treatment plan in conjunction with multidisciplinary teams (MDTs), providing a variety of NICE recommended treatment options, including but not limited to, talking therapies e.g., CBT, Prescribed medication, Psychiatry, Individual and group interventions, In-patient addition rehabilitation.

- Provide ongoing case management supporting service users through their treatment plan as lead clinician maintaining the important therapeutic relationship with the patient throughout, and coordinating across other support the service user might be accessing

- Provide professional advice and support to service users who are experiencing professional regulatory action and establish good working relationships with health care regulators to ensure confidential treatment can be provided to patients.

1. **Request for Information (RFI)**

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 into or award any contract in relation to this RFI and that all costs incurred by responding to this RFI should be borne by the respondent.

Timings for the PME and RFI are as follows:

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| Publish PME and RFI | 13th March 2025 |
| Deadline for Supplier to ask clarification questions | 20th March 2025 |
| Deadline for authority to respond to clarification questions | 24th March 2025 |
| RFI response deadline for Supplier | 27th March 2025 |

Clarification questions and RFI responses must be submitted via the NHS England’s e-Tendering portal, Atamis.

Any procurement conducted as a result of this notice will be advertised separately and any / 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 6 Procurement Overview.

1. **Procurement Overview**

* It is anticipated the tendering process will be run as a Competitive Process for a period of approximately 25 days under The Health Care Services (Provider Selection Regime) Regulations 2023.
* The intention is to establish a contract with one supplier.
* 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 Services.

**Procurement Timescales**

Subject to final approval of business case.

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| **Indicative Procurement Activity** | **Estimated timeframe** |
| Tender Publication Date | 1 May 2025 |
| Tender Closing Date | 27th May 2025 |
| Evaluation, Moderation & Approvals | June-August 2025 |
| Final Award Confirmation | 28th August 2025 |
| Issue Final Contract | 8th Sept 2025 |
| Anticipated Contract Start Date (or before if an implementation phase is required)(this date may vary depending on the winning bidder) | 1 April 2026 |
| Anticipated Service Commencement Date | 1 April 2026 |

1. ****
2. **National Staff Mental Health Support Service**
3. **ATAMIS REFERENCE: C341053**
4. **REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI)**

Please consider the questions below and submit your written response by no later than 12 noon on **27th March 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. Please try to answer all questions where possible.

If you have any clarification questions, you can submit these to NHS England by **20th March 2025.** NHS England will respond to clarification questions by **24th March.**

**Q1. Please advise of any potential barriers to bidding for the National Staff Mental Health Support Service you foresee and what steps the Authority 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 National Staff Mental Health Support Service.**

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**Q3. 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, including performance related pay.**

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**Q4. Are there any British/Industry standards and/or qualifications you would anticipate that would need to be upheld to deliver the service by the provider and their staff?**

**Q5. Please can you identify any SMART outcome measures for this service**

**including key performance indicators.**

**Q6. 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.**

**Q7. Do you intend to bid for the National Staff Mental Health Support Service contract? Please provide information on the reason for your answer.**

**Q8. Do you have any further questions or feedback on the Request for information (for example any aspects that require further detail or clarification in the ITT)?**

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