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# Soft Market Test

For

Proposal to recommission the Augmentative and Alternative Communication service within Northamptonshire.

West Northamptonshire Council

Ref: [XXX]

# Section 1: Introduction

## General Requirements

* 1. The purpose of this exercise is to briefly explain to suppliers our requirements and the expected scope of the Augmentative and Alternative Communication service within Northamptonshire with a view to obtaining responses which will allow us to understand current interest and capability to deliver our requirements within the supply market. We therefore request interested prospective suppliers to carefully read and then complete this document, returning it in accordance with the instructions provided in the sections below.
  2. **Please note:** this market testing exercise is **not** an invitation to tender or a request for formal expressions of interest. This document does not form any part of an invitation to tender. West Northanptonshire Council (WNC) is issuing this request for **information only**. Any supplier invited to present to WNC is doing so to support market research only and to help make any potential procurement process more focused and efficient. No supplier selection or supplier preference is implied.

## Confidentiality and Freedom of Information (FOI)

* 1. **Please note:** all information included in this Soft Market Test is confidential and only for the recipients’ knowledge. No information included in this document or in discussions connected to it may be disclosed to any other party without prior written authorisation.
  2. All responses will be treated confidentially. However, please be aware that we are subject to the disclosure requirements of the FOI Act and that potentially any information we hold is liable to disclosure under that Act. For this reason, we strongly advise that any information you consider to be confidential is labelled as such. In the event that a request is subsequently made for disclosure under FOI the request will be dealt with in accordance with the legislation.

## Background

Northamptonshire has previously commissioned a successful Augmentative and Alternative Communication service (AAC) at Greenfield’s school. This contract is due to end on the 31st of August 2023. Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) refers to high-tech communication aids and a range of techniques that are used by individuals who have little or no speech. The AAC team is a multi-agency team who assess children with complex communication needs in Northamptonshire for high tech communication aids. AAC supports expressive communication and can also support the development of language. This service is available to all Northamptonshire pupils from pre-school to year 13. There are currently around 60 to 90 students who receive AAC support from the service. This fluctuates on a month by month basis. West Northamptonshire Council are working with North Northamptonshire to recommission the AAC service within a school in West Northamptonshire. We are looking for a maintained special school who have knowledge of young people with severe or profound learning difficulties, communication and physical difficulties, pupils on the autistic spectrum, and children who may have a multi-sensory impairment and complex medical difficulties. We wish to understand the interest that there might be for a school to host the AAC service for just over a year.

## Soft Market Test Timetable

Please read this document and if you feel that your organisation is able to contribute to this exercise please complete the questionnaire at the end of this document and return, via email to [Eloise.Heneghan@westnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:Eloise.Heneghan@westnorthants.gov.uk) by **01.05.2023**.

* 1. Following receipt of the questionnaires, a maximum of 3 respondents will be invited to attend separate workshop sessions to present and discuss their responses. A decision will then be made internally on the best procurement approach. The timetable is provided below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Stage** | **Date** |
| Deadline for potential providers to ask clarification questions | 25.04.23 |
| Deadline for receipt of responses to Soft Market Test. | 01.05.23 |
| Workshop Week. | 02.05.23 |
| Decision on way forward. | 09.05.23 |

# Section 2: Identification of Requirement

## Current Situation

The current contract sits within Greenfields school in West Northants and will be delivered by them until 31.08.23

West Northants would like the new contract to begin 01.07.23 so that there is an overlap and a positive handover.

The current staff within the service are, (All year around)

A specialist Speech and Language teacher x1 day per week

An AAC technician x5 Days per week To which TUPE will apply

A specialist AAC Speech and language therapist x2 days per week

West Northants would like to keep the same levels of staffing within the new service.

The service has 91 cases open, we would expect that this will be similar through out the length of the contract.

the AAC team uses TOMS (Therapy Outcome

Measurements) to reflect the child’s improvement as a result of the AAC intervention.

## Our Requirements

The new providers will need to have room for the AAC to work from, and also room for AAC equipment to be stored.

The New providers will be a ‘Host’ school, they will need to manage the contract and ensure that the provision described above can be provided.

The new contract will end 31.08.24 (14 Months)

The new provider will need to commission the SALT teacher and therapist as described.

TUPE will apply for the AAC technician should they wish to move with the service.

The host school will need to have knowledge and experience of delivering speech and language education. – It is desirable that they have knowledge of AAC.

* 1. We are looking for a solution that will:
* Suport the students who use Augmentative and Alternative Communication technology and their families.
* The solution will be short term lasting just over a year where further research will take place to understand the AAC offer for Northamptonshire going forward.
* The new provider must be a maintained special school who have knowledge of young people with severe or profound learning difficulties, communication and physical difficulties, pupils on the autistic spectrum, and children who may have a multi-sensory impairment and complex medical difficulties
* The new provider will be able to work closely with other schools and settings to deliver the AAC service.
* The new provider will also work with health collegues to ensure that they provision is delivered successfully and so that more complex referrals can be made to health services should they be needed.
* The new provider must have an indepth knowledge of speech and language provision and a good understanding of Augmentative and Alternative Communication and the technology it supports.
* The new provider must be willing to use the current service model, however can adapt it if suitable. (more information can be provided regarding the current service model)
* The solution must include a positive handover with the surrent host setting.

# Section 3: Supporting information

Please note: you do not need to resize the table; it will automatically adjust to fit your response.

## Section A: Organisation and Contact Details

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Question** | **Response** |
| Name of your organisation |  |
| Registered office (if applicable) |  |
| Trading address (if different from office) |  |
| What if any local connections do you have with the authority? |  |
| Name of person whom an queries relating to this questionnaire should be addressed |  |
| Telephone Number(s) |  |
| Email |  |
| Address if different to above |  |

## Section B: Questions

Please note: you do not need to resize the table; it will automatically adjust to fit your response.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Question** | **Response** |
| What is the name of the solution you propose? |  |
| How will your proposal provide the AAC service with the required members of staff? |  |
| Would your proposal be ready for 01.07.2023 |  |
| Please detail the level of knowledge you have of the AAC service? |  |
| Are you a specialist setting? |  |
| Please provide any further information you feel may be of relevance in terms of how you could meet our requirements? |  |

## Clarification Questions

* 1. Please note if you have any questions about our requirements or the process please email Eloise.Heneghan@westnorthants.gov.uk by no later than 25.04.2023. Responses will be published to the Contracts Finder advert for this exercise shortly after this date.