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Planning

Special Educational Setting (SES) Sight Test Service for Children and Young People

NHS Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board

F01: Prior information notice

Prior information only

Notice identifier: 2026/S 000-000831

Procurement identifier (OCID): ocids-h6vhtk-06006d

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Section I: Contracting authority

I.1) Name and addresses

NHS Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board

PO Box 6483

Basildon

SS14 0UG

Email

amy.wilson@attain.co.uk

Country

United Kingdom

Region code

UKH3 - Essex

National registration number

QH8

Internet address(es)

Main address

www.midandsouthessex.ics.nhs.uk

Buyer's address

<https://attain.ukp.app.jaggaer.com/web/login.html>

I.3) Communication

Additional information can be obtained from the above-mentioned address

I.4) Type of the contracting authority

Body governed by public law

I.5) Main activity

Health

Section II: Object

II.1) Scope of the procurement

II.1.1) Title

Special Educational Setting (SES) Sight Test Service for Children and Young People

Reference number

ACE-0849-MSE-SES Optical

II.1.2) Main CPV code

- 85000000 - Health and social work services

II.1.3) Type of contract

Services

II.1.4) Short description

NHS Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board (the Authority) intends to award an Integrator contract to deliver the Special Educational Setting (SES) Sight Test Service for children and young people through local accredited optometry practices, following the Most Suitable Provider (MSP) process under the Health Care Services (Provider Selection Regime) Regulations 2023.

Children under 16 (or up to 19 in full-time education) are entitled to free NHS eye tests, but pupils in special education schools face barriers to access. A successful NHS England pilot demonstrated benefits of delivering sight tests and advice in school settings. The NHS Long Term Plan committed to this service for residential settings, extended in 2023 to day schools. Funding is now recurrently allocated to ICBs from 2025/26.

The ICB considers an integrator model most suitable, where a lead organisation coordinates and performance-manages local optometrists rather than the ICB holding multiple contracts. This approach supports Essex-specific partnerships, supply chain accountability, integration, measurable value, and social impact. In applying the Process, the Authority has assessed the five Key Criteria and reviewed NHSE pre-market engagement data to confirm provider capability and local connections. Based on this, the Authority believes it can identify the MSP without a competitive process.

The scope of the service is to deliver sight tests for pupils attending special education schools across Essex (including activity associated with the Authority's successor Essex ICB's geographical footprint which covers North East Essex and West Essex also). There

are an estimated 4,400 pupils in total across Essex within these schools and the service is based on an assumed uptake of 80%, equating to approximately 3520 sight tests per year.

Further details are available in sections II.2.4), II.2.14), and VI.3).

II.1.5) Estimated total value

Value excluding VAT: £570,000

II.1.6) Information about lots

This contract is divided into lots: No

II.2) Description

II.2.2) Additional CPV code(s)

- 85100000 - Health services
- 85120000 - Medical practice and related services
- 85121000 - Medical practice services
- 85121200 - Medical specialist services
- 85140000 - Miscellaneous health services
- 85141000 - Services provided by medical personnel

II.2.3) Place of performance

NUTS codes

- UKH3 - Essex

Main site or place of performance

Mid and South Essex

II.2.4) Description of the procurement

The Authority proposes to procure an Integrator organisation via the Most Suitable Provider Process (MSP) in accordance with the Provider Selection Regime (PSR). The contract will be a block contract commencing 9 February 2026 – 8 January 2028.

Scope and Responsibilities

The Integrator will:

- Validate pupil numbers and financial assumptions during mobilisation.
- Establish IT systems and reporting mechanisms.
- Engage schools to promote service uptake.
- Recruit and train subcontractors (optometrists).
- Ensure delivery of annual sight tests for pupils in special education schools across Essex.

Further details are in Docs 3a and 3b – Specification.

Contractual Framework

- The Integrator contract will use the Standard NHS Contract (short form), covering all performance and risk requirements.
- Subcontractor agreements will be governed by the General Ophthalmic Services (GOS) Contract, per the national model.
- Delivered under a block funding model, capped at NHS England allocation. Activity above the cap is at the Integrator's risk; underspend will be reinvested into service improvement.
- Provisions allow permitted modifications under Regulations and NHS Standard Contract change control. Known future modification: geographic expansion beyond Mid and South Essex to the wider Essex ICB footprint.

Estimated Value

The estimated aggregate value (including known modifications) is £570,000.

Important Notice for Potential Providers

The Authority will only consider organisations that:

- Meet basic selection criteria (Reg 19).
- Are not excluded or excludable (Reg 20).
- Demonstrate capability across the five key criteria (Reg 5).

Basic Selection Criteria

Providers must:

- Have a General Optical Council (GOC)-registered optometrist in senior leadership.
- Hold an existing local contract for ease of mobilisation.
- Demonstrate a proven track record in:
 - o Partnerships with local accredited optometry practices.
 - o Collaboration with independent and national opticians.
 - o Working with the Local Optical Committee (LOC).
 - o Commissioning and managing NHS eye care services, including subcontracting.
- Ensure compliance with specification and contract terms across subcontractors, operating within the fixed tariff of at least £85 per sight test.
- Show strong experience of and understanding of the GOS contract and governance.

Key Criteria Assessment

Providers must demonstrate capability across five areas:

1. Quality and Innovation (20%)

- o Experience delivering large-scale community eye care.
- o Proven model integrating independent and multiple practices with robust assurance.
- o Innovative digital platforms for referral and coordination.
- o Integration with hospital ophthalmology services.
- o Delivery of enhanced services (e.g., MECS, post-cataract care, glaucoma monitoring).

2. Value (20%)

- o Financial model reinvesting into NHS eye care.
- o Leveraging local infrastructure to minimise costs.

- o Centralised contracting and IT systems for efficiency.
- o Evidence of cost savings through reduced hospital reliance.

3. Integration, Collaboration, Sustainability (20%)

- o Strong relationships with local services and LOC.
- o Governance structures to sustain delivery across diverse networks.

4. Access and Health Inequalities (20%)

- o Accessible care close to home, including rural areas.
- o Contracting with independent and multiple practices.
- o Enhanced services for vulnerable groups.

5. Social Value (20%)

- o Commitment to reinvestment, workforce development, and local economic resilience.
- o Funded clinical training for subcontractors.
- o Subcontracting model supporting local economies and sustainable employment.

Providers unable to meet these criteria should not apply. The Authority will only consider organisations evidencing equivalent scale, governance, digital infrastructure, hospital integration, and reinvestment mechanisms.

II.2.14) Additional information

Further details can be found at sections VI.3.

II.3) Estimated date of publication of contract notice

6 January 2026

Section IV. Procedure

IV.1) Description

IV.1.8) Information about the Government Procurement Agreement (GPA)

The procurement is covered by the Government Procurement Agreement: No

Section VI. Complementary information

VI.3) Additional information

The Authority has published a Transparency Notice announcing its intention to follow the MSP process, based on the output of its MSP assessment.

Unless otherwise specified in the MSP timeline available within the procurement portal, there is a minimum 14-day period for other suitably qualified and experienced providers to make themselves known in writing to the Authority.

All Potential Provider(s) who make themselves known to the Authority will be required to complete an MSP Response within the eProcurement Portal (<https://attain.ukp.app.jaggaer.com/web/login.html>), testing whether they meet the Key Criteria, the Basic Selection Criteria and are not excluded or excludable providers under the Regulations. Organisations will need to register on the eProcurement Portal in order to complete an MSP Response.

If more than one provider meets the requirements, the Authority may either re-issue its MSP Process or it may switch to a competitive process.

If the Authority's MSP Process indicates its initial analysis was correct and the Authority is able to identify the most suitable provider without competition, it will proceed to award the contract (following the 14-day standstill period).

In accordance with Regulation 21 of the PSR the Authority is maintaining a Conflicts of Interest Register for this Process and any conflicts / how they are managed will be published alongside the confirmation of the decision to select the MSP in due course.

In accordance with Regulation 13 of PSR, Modification of contracts during their term, the Services covered by the arrangement may change and expand over the Contract Term. Examples of areas that could be varied into the Contract for future delivery are available within the MSP Process Pack.

Any queries regarding this Process (including requests to complete an MSP Response) should be directed to the Named Contact in this Notice and the email address provided herein.