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Planning

C014PA Provision of Toxicology Services

Essex County Council

UK2: Preliminary market engagement notice - Procurement Act 2023 - [view information about notice types](#)

Notice identifier: 2026/S 000-001635

Procurement identifier (OCID): ocds-h6vhtk-056bf3

Published 8 January 2026, 5:24pm

Changes to notice

This notice has been edited. The [previous version](#) is still available.

Project Title was change to align with the title of the tender notice

Scope

Reference

C014PA

Description

Essex County Council (ECC) is responsible for providing the coroner services for the Essex Jurisdiction.

HM Senior Coroner for Essex is an independent Judicial Officer whose costs are met by the Council. The Senior Coroner is supported on a full-time basis by the Area Coroner.

Where a death occurs within the Essex Jurisdiction and:

- a. that death is unexpected or violent; or
- b. the cause of death is not known; or
- c. the death has occurred in custody,

HM Senior Coroner for Essex has a duty to investigate the death. Where such a death occurs, part of this responsibility is to instruct that Post Mortems and additional testing in the form of toxicology and / or histology are undertaken to assist with HM Coroner's investigation.

The provision of an effective toxicology service shall support HM Senior Coroner for Essex's compliance with the Coroners and Justice Act 2009, and the Council's continual commitment to the bereaved families of Essex.

HM Senior Coroner for Essex also has a responsibility to act in incidents resulting in mass fatalities. In such cases the Service Provider must be able to respond and support high volume processing in emergency situations. The Service Provider shall support any out of hours processing in urgent situations.

Samples for testing will be coordinated and logistically planned in collaboration with the five Hospital Mortuaries across Essex and one public mortuary in London at:

- a. Colchester General Hospital.
- b. Basildon and Thurrock University Hospital.
- c. Broomfield Hospital.
- d. Princess Alexandra Hospital.
- e. Southend University Hospital.

f. East London Forensic Centre.

The location of each of the 5 hospitals listed above are detailed in Appendix 1 Map of Hospitals and Mortuaries which can be accessed from the ProContract Sourcing portal. More information on ProContract is provided below.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE SERVICE

The Service Provider shall undertake the following tests upon request by HM Senior Coroner for Essex;

- a. Standard Drug Testing;
- b. Alcohol Only Testing;
- c. Standard Drug Testing + Alcohol Testing;
- d. Full Screening

The Service Provider shall also undertake special analytical tests, to test for substances not covered by the tests above.

The Service Provider shall undertake the relevant test and submit the Toxicology Report to HM Senior Coroner within the timescales for Standard Processing or Urgent Processing as indicated by the contract.

The Service will need to be available during Working Hours.

There will be a requirement that samples are collected by a courier from the relevant Mortuary and transported to the Service Provider's Premises.

The forecast and the number of tests required may differ; the number of requests may fluctuate due to the nature and circumstances of the individual case. There is seasonal variation in demand with more toxicology required during the winter, November to February. The Service Provider will support the capacity of request by HM Senior Coroner for Essex. Based on historical data, it is estimated that these will be between 20 and 40 requests per month.

Number of toxicology tests for 2023 - 281 tests

Number of toxicology tests for 2024 - 317 tests

The current contract expires in March 2026 and the estimated planned tender issue date will be around November / December 2025.

The Authority wishes to invite interested parties to complete a market engagement questionnaire using Microsoft forms. A link will be included within the information published on Procontract, the Councils e-tendering system. Responses to this market engagement can only be submitted via ProContract. Further information regarding ProContract is provided below.

ECC uses an e-tendering system, ProContract and you will need to create an account on ProContract to access and respond to both this market engagement exercise and to bid for any future opportunities issued by ECC, including this Toxicology Contract. Please visit <https://procontract.due-north.com/Register> to register an account. It is free to register and use the system.

If you have any questions regarding this exercise, please submit them via the ProContract Portal and we will reply to your questions as soon as possible.

You are also advised to ensure your data on the Central Digital Platform is maintained up to date. Suppliers: How to register your organisation and first administrator on Find a Tender in three easy steps (HTML) - GOV.UK

The closing date for responses is 5pm on 1st September 2025.

This notice is intended as an awareness, communication and information gathering exercise. Participation is no indication of a commitment to partake in any future tendering process, nor does it infer any preferential or special status on those individuals and organisations who participate.

Please also note that this notice is not intended as a call for competition and as such you will need to express your interest in any future tender opportunity once the tender notice is published.

We look forward to your participation and contributions.

Please also note the following regarding the potential impact of Local Government Reform (LGR) and Devolution to this project.

The contracting authority is Essex County Council and any Successor Body meaning one or more entities which assumes any of the Council's functions (as applicable) as a result of Local Government Reform (LGR). Such successor body or bodies may be, without limitation, a local authority, a combined authority, a combined county authority, a strategic authority or any other status determined pursuant to the Devolution and LGR Legislation.

Total value (estimated)

- £1,100,000 excluding VAT
- £1,100,000 including VAT

Above the relevant threshold

Contract dates (estimated)

- 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2028
- Possible extension to 31 March 2031
- 5 years

Main procurement category

Services

CPV classifications

- 85111810 - Blood analysis services
- 85111820 - Bacteriological analysis services

Contract locations

- UKH3 - Essex

Engagement

Engagement deadline

1 September 2025

Engagement process description

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Participation

Particular suitability

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SME)

Contracting authority

Essex County Council

- Public Procurement Organisation Number: PWVM-4844-NRQH

County Hall, Market Road

Chelmsford

CM1 1QH

United Kingdom

Email: ProcurementSandA@essex.gov.uk

Region: UKH36 - Heart of Essex

Organisation type: Public authority - sub-central government