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Tender

## **Flexible Benefits Portal**

NORTHUMBRIAN WATER GROUP LIMITED

F05: Contract notice – utilities

Notice identifier: 2025/S 000-005780

Procurement identifier (OCID): ocids-h6vhtk-04e3cf

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### **Section I: Contracting entity**

#### **I.1) Name and addresses**

NORTHUMBRIAN WATER GROUP LIMITED

Northumbria House

DURHAM

DH15FJ

#### **Contact**

Holli Crawford

#### **Email**

[holli.crawford@nwl.co.uk](mailto:holli.crawford@nwl.co.uk)

#### **Telephone**

+44 7562260809

#### **Country**

United Kingdom

**Region code**

UKC14 - Durham CC

**Companies House**

02366703

**Internet address(es)**

Main address

<https://www.nwl.co.uk/>

**I.3) Communication**

The procurement documents are available for unrestricted and full direct access, free of charge, at

<https://s1.ariba.com>

Additional information can be obtained from the above-mentioned address

Tenders or requests to participate must be submitted electronically via

<https://s1.ariba.com>

**I.6) Main activity**

Water

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## **Section II: Object**

### **II.1) Scope of the procurement**

#### **II.1.1) Title**

Flexible Benefits Portal

Reference number

NW2893

#### **II.1.2) Main CPV code**

- 79414000 - Human resources management consultancy services

#### **II.1.3) Type of contract**

Services

#### **II.1.4) Short description**

Northumbrian Water Ltd is looking to appoint a supplier to deliver an Employee Flexible Benefits Platform. This platform should offer a range of competitive benefits through an intuitive and user-friendly portal, allowing employees to easily access and choose their benefits.

- Number of colleagues - 3,500
- Workforce: predominately operational/field-based; support and corporate functions office/homebased
- Number of payrolls: 1 per month
- Benefit year runs April to March
- Annual enrolment is a 3-week window currently February/March benefits selected during the main election window need to be effective on 1st April each year. Annual enrolment should allow our colleague's opportunity to make the most of our exclusively negotiated deals and offers. Benefits can also be made from National Insurance and/or tax savings when payments are made through monthly salary.
- Most benefits are 'anytime', so are available throughout the year and can be selected each month. Exceptions, which are only available at main election window are currently Buying Holiday and Private Healthcare.

- Voluntary benefits: Mixture of Gross pay (Salary Sacrifice- either tax and NI, Tax only, NI only) or Net Pay deductions.

### **II.1.6) Information about lots**

This contract is divided into lots: No

## **II.2) Description**

### **II.2.2) Additional CPV code(s)**

- 72212450 - Time accounting or human resources software development services

### **II.2.3) Place of performance**

NUTS codes

- UKC - North East (England)
- UKH14 - Suffolk
- UKH3 - Essex

### **II.2.4) Description of the procurement**

Northumbrian Water Ltd is looking to appoint a supplier to deliver an Employee Flexible Benefits Platform. This platform should offer a range of competitive benefits through an intuitive and user-friendly portal, allowing employees to easily access and choose their benefits. With 3,500 employees accessing the benefits portal every day, we require a robust seamless platform to support their needs.

The tenderer is requested to submit a bid for providing services to host our Employee Benefits offering through a hub or portal. We seek a supplier who can collaborate closely with our internal HR, Payroll, and Communications teams to ensure that all aspects of the portal are accurate, data-validated, and aligned with our branding.

It is crucial that the implementation runs smoothly to avoid any impact on our employees. The procurement process for this tender will be done in advance. We plan to award the contract to the chosen supplier by end October 2025, with the contract commencing end October 2025. This will include up to a 12-month implementation period, with the contract's official go-live commencing no later than end September 2026.

### **NWGs Requirements**

- The solution must provide a single system to search for and engage with all aspects of employee benefits, Providing a consumer grade experience.

- Provide a complete end to end Flexible benefit provision under the 'Tap Into' name including branding, design, transition, project delivery, platform, communications/engagement, brokerage, consultancy, help desk and ongoing administration assistance.
- Provide a fully flexible on-line platform/portal for NWG colleagues - we need to be able to transfer our own benefits NWG are currently contractually committed to and NWG offers alongside your own pool of benefits which you can offer.
- Provision of full benefit administration required, i.e., supplier to organise/administer benefit selections with the benefit providers directly.
- Provide a User-friendly portal accessible from multiple devices which allows colleagues to customise their benefits and view features Including impact on take home pay.
- Provide Flexible/Voluntary Benefits and offers in a way which is relevant and personal to every colleague wherever they work in our business.
- Deliver a rolling enrolment and selection proposition throughout the year rather than once yearly election window (where benefits will allow).
- Provision of branding and design to be used across all areas of the scheme including portal, devices, engagement, communications etc.
- Deliver a robust aspirational communication/engagement strategy for launch and ongoing throughout the year to meet the needs of a predominantly field based and remote work force; with a smaller group working from both home and office based. This should be in the form of both electronic and paper content e.g. will include production and delivery of brochures, z cards emails and more to all colleagues ahead of launch plus on-going engagement, communicating /marketing.
- Provide Management Information on usage, traffic through the site, payroll reports etc.
- Provide regular updates and progression of the scheme throughout the year with NWG Reward Team and recommendations for future development of the scheme via ongoing consultancy and support.
- Ability to review provision of colleague's benefits/offers and update throughout the contract should new initiatives be identified as desirable by supplier and NWG.
- Provision of ongoing consultancy throughout the duration of the contract.
- To provide a solution compatible with and enable to interface with NWG HRIS Oracle System, with real time data synchronisation.

- To be able to show compliance with relevant legislation when handling NWG colleague data e.g. Data Protection Act 2018 and to meet Inland Revenue rules.
- All benefits are required to be compliant in line with HMRC rules and guidelines.
- Suppliers must be able to demonstrate that their data flow provision is secure when sharing confidential information.
- The solution must provide detailed management information and a reporting suite to provide insight, engagement levels, and guide changes to the Flexible Benefit policies.
- Ability to move existing selected benefits into system to showcase full suite and take-home impacts.

### Brokerage

- We would like you to provide a fully compliant brokerage service using your expert knowledge of the benefits market to source the most appropriate benefits and provide recommendations tailored to meet our needs. This will include all due diligence as well as an understanding of our scheme, colleagues, business needs to provide of a cost-effective solution. We expect you to handle the end-to-end process of procurement, contractual arrangements, administration of these benefits.

### Voluntary Flexible Benefit Provision

- Provision of voluntary flexible benefits which are not funded by NWG (with exceptions - see above) which colleagues can choose according to their needs and where appropriate make Tax/NI savings or through salary sacrifice or via net pay arrangements.

### Tax and National Insurance

- The Supplier will ensure that the Salary Sacrifice scheme complies with all relevant tax laws and employment regulations.
- The supplier will provide guidance on how the Salary Sacrifice scheme affects tax liabilities, National Insurance, and pension contributions.
- The supplier will keep up to date with any changes in tax legislation that may affect the scheme and adjust the offerings accordingly.

### Portal

- NWG require to keep the 'Tap Into' name, the successful candidate will need to be able to provide an online portal for NWG and design, brand, build and implement the function

to have availability on all devices including mobile phones, laptops, and tablets.

- All benefits and offers need to be hosted on the portal. Additionally, we need to be able to transfer our own benefits and offers which NWG are currently contractually committed to, alongside your own pool of benefits which you can offer onto the portal.
- A discounts/cashback module is also required to be housed on the portal, we currently have a contract in place with this which will need moved over.
- It is essential that the portal is designed to be the right solution for our colleagues and enable them to see and operate a user-friendly portal showing real time impacts on take home pay.
- An effective communication/engagement strategy needs to be established catering for both an on-line and off-line workforce with different levels of understanding and interest in technology to ensure they can access and use the portal effectively.

#### IT, Data Protection and Data Transfer

- We will require a Single Sign on Platform.
- Data protection is an important factor and it is essential that this is considered. Suppliers must be able to demonstrate that their data flow provision is secure when sharing confidential information.
- Data will be loaded into both ideally this will be through the supplier's portal integrating directly with Oracle HCM, we would like a way that NWG payroll can check the data ahead of it going into Oracle if this method was used.

#### Branding and Design of Communication/Engagement Management

- We want to deliver and give the Tap Into branding a refresh for launch and each year.
- We would prefer the same design feel as our current branding in place as it is suitable and fit for purpose to the NWG culture. NWG own the Tap Into Benefits brand and we do not want to change this name. Branding should be consistent across the whole scheme (portal, devices engagement and communications).

#### Communication and Engagement:

We may require the designs refreshed for launch and updating on an annual basis to deliver a robust aspirational communication /engagement strategy to provide us with both electronic and hard copy content e.g. z cards, emails, brochures leaflets and more which you feel necessary. NWG will provide some visuals for the designs, and we require the

successful candidate to be able to create the content to meet the needs of a predominantly field based and remote work force; with a smaller group working from both home and office based.

### Helpdesk

Provision of help and support is required to offer guidance on both portal, benefits, and services to be able to answer colleagues' queries. A helpdesk function is required to provide this support from Monday to Friday, ensuring both phone and online support is being provided to all NWG colleagues within this time. We would also require including the ability to submit online queries anytime to be responded to within 48 hours.

### Account Management

To ensure the management of the contract is being run at its best ability, we would require the following continuous improvement actions to be put in place:

- Management Information & Dashboard Reports - Monthly reporting delivered to view as an online dashboard.
- During implementation a weekly teams call.
- Supplier's Account Manager, Named point of contacts. Monthly Teams Call
- Supplier will be required to meet their own costs in relation to travel etc to all client meetings/visits.

### Customer service

One of our ambitious goals is to deliver world class service and unrivalled customer experiences for our customers - getting the things that matter most to them right first time, fast time, every time. To support this, we've introduced a training programme based on the Six Pillars of customer experience excellence which have been developed by KPMG Nunwood and are regarded as a best practice Customer Experience (CX) model used by companies across the world. The Six Pillars provide a framework for customer experience excellence that supports leading companies around the world in driving positive change in their businesses. We use them and our own take on the language that best enables us to speak to our customers. We would expect vendors customer service to align with our ideals.

### **II.2.5) Award criteria**

Price is not the only award criterion and all criteria are stated only in the procurement documents

### **II.2.7) Duration of the contract, framework agreement or dynamic purchasing system**

Duration in months

36

This contract is subject to renewal

No

### **II.2.10) Information about variants**

Variants will be accepted: No

### **II.2.11) Information about options**

Options: Yes

Description of options

The period of any contract(s) resulting from this procurement will be 36 months from the contract start date.

The length of the contract may be extended by negotiation with the supplier for a further 36 months following by a further 24 months (8 years in total).

It is anticipated that we will need up to 12 months implementation and this will be included in the initial 36 months of the contract.

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## **Section III. Legal, economic, financial and technical information**

### **III.1) Conditions for participation**

#### **III.1.1) Suitability to pursue the professional activity, including requirements relating to enrolment on professional or trade registers**

List and brief description of conditions

As stated in the procurement documents

#### **III.1.2) Economic and financial standing**

List and brief description of selection criteria

As stated in the procurement documents

Minimum level(s) of standards possibly required

As stated in the procurement documents

#### **III.1.3) Technical and professional ability**

List and brief description of selection criteria

As stated in the procurement documents

Minimum level(s) of standards possibly required

As stated in the procurement documents

#### **III.1.4) Objective rules and criteria for participation**

List and brief description of rules and criteria

As stated in the procurement documents

#### **III.1.6) Deposits and guarantees required**

As stated in the procurement documents

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## **Section IV. Procedure**

### **IV.1) Description**

#### **IV.1.1) Type of procedure**

Negotiated procedure with prior call for competition

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

The procurement is covered by the Government Procurement Agreement: No

### **IV.2) Administrative information**

#### **IV.2.2) Time limit for receipt of tenders or requests to participate**

Date

19 March 2025

#### **IV.2.4) Languages in which tenders or requests to participate may be submitted**

English

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## **Section VI. Complementary information**

### **VI.1) Information about recurrence**

This is a recurrent procurement: No

### **VI.3) Additional information**

Applicants are asked to note that this procurement process will be conducted electronically with all documents and communication being managed through the Northumbrian Water eSourcing Spend Management portal called 'Ariba'.

Expressions of interest for this tender must be sent to the e-mail address [holli.crawford@nwl.co.uk](mailto:holli.crawford@nwl.co.uk) before the deadline date of 19th March 2025 at 12 noon. Once expression of interest has been received that contains the details below, applicants will be given access to the Ariba portal within 48 hours from request. This portal will contain all the tender documents associated with this procurement that are available at the time. An email link will also be provided to the email address you provide to access the portal.

The deadline for return of the completed PQQ is 31st March 2025 at 12 noon. When

sending expression of interest, applicants must provide the following information:

- 1) Full company name
- 2) Main contact details of the person who will be given access to the Ariba portal - Name, job title, email address and phone number.

#### **VI.4) Procedures for review**

##### **VI.4.1) Review body**

NWL Legal Department

Northumbria House

Durham

DH15FJ

Email

[holli.crawford@nwl.co.uk](mailto:holli.crawford@nwl.co.uk)

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+44 7562260809

Country

United Kingdom