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Planning

East Sussex Welfare Benefits Service NHS/SOEPS/21.823 RFI

NHS East Sussex CCG

F21: Social and other specific services – public contracts

Prior information notice without call for competition

Notice identifier: 2021/S 000-026184

Procurement identifier (OCID): ocds-h6vhtk-02edb5

Published 19 October 2021, 6:13pm

Section I: Contracting authority

I.1) Name and addresses

NHS East Sussex CCG

Sackville House, Brooks Close

Lewes

BN7 2FZ

Contact

Andrew Elliott

Email

aelliott1@nhs.net

Country

United Kingdom

NUTS code

UKJ2 - Surrey, East and West Sussex

Internet address(es)

Main address

www.eastsussexccg.nhs.uk

I.3) Communication

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

<https://in-tendhost.co.uk/soepscommissioning/asp/Home>

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

East Sussex Welfare Benefits Service NHS/SOEPS/21.823 RFI

Reference number

NHS/SOEPS/21.823 RFI

II.1.2) Main CPV code

- 85000000 - Health and social work services

II.1.3) Type of contract

Services

II.1.4) Short description

East Sussex CCG is reprocurring the East Sussex Welfare Benefits Service.

The contract for this service was originally set up by East Sussex County Council in 2013 to deliver a welfare reform phone helpline. The service was then developed further to offer specialist welfare benefits advice. This current service delivery model and contract have been in place since April 2016.

The NHS contract ending on the 30th of September 2022 has had the service specification updated.

The current contract arrangement has a contract arrangement with a single provider who sub-contract to three advice sector partners to deliver the service.

It is anticipated that the service would be offered for tender under a standard NHS contract for a period of 3 or 4 years commencing on the 1st October 2022 with option to extend for a maximum of a further one or two years.

The purpose of this RFI is to gauge market interest and feedback via the RFI response form for the provision of the East Sussex Welfare Benefits Service and provide the CCGs with valuable information to help update and improve the current service specification.

If you would like to discuss any aspects of the requirements, please send a portal message suggesting a date/time for a telephone conversation

Please return the questionnaire as fully as you can via the e-tendering portal by 5pm Friday 5th November 2021.

II.1.5) Estimated total value

Value excluding VAT: £2,000,000

II.1.6) Information about lots

This contract is divided into lots: No

II.2) Description

II.2.3) Place of performance

NUTS codes

- UKJ2 - Surrey, East and West Sussex

Main site or place of performance

Across East Sussex.

II.2.4) Description of the procurement

East Sussex CCG is reprocuring the East Sussex Welfare Benefits Service .

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II.2.14) Additional information

Key Aims and Objectives

The Welfare Benefits Service is commissioned to provide the following for East Sussex residents:

- To reduce the burden of individual and household financial insecurity and the negative consequences for them, their communities, and the county

- To help people access the benefits they are entitled to and challenge unjust decisions where they have occurred.
- To help those in need to manage their finances, avoid further debt and find a route out of unmanageable debt
- To ensure that those who are likely to be most impacted by financial insecurity have access to specialist case work and advice
- To help promote and protect mental health and wellbeing particularly for those with lower socio-economic status

In addition to delivery of the above, overall project management is commissioned to provide:

- Service development, communications and briefings
- Financial and budgetary control and reporting
- Management information reporting
- Services that raise awareness of the project and available benefits
- Services that strengthen the relationship with health and social care professionals

Supporting Information

The pandemic has led to a huge increase in the number of people claiming benefits, as incomes have fallen, and people were unable to, or restricted in their, work because their workplaces have been closed or they have been isolating, shielding, or living with someone vulnerable and so unable to work. While some people continued to draw some salary because they were covered by one of the Government's income support schemes, many made claims for benefits. A sample of the headline data from last financial year from the existing service in East Sussex has identified the following:

? £ 4,239,215 annualised benefit income realised for residents

? 8,147 people received benefits advice

? 77% of respondents reported improved mental wellbeing

? 14,115 household members benefitted from benefits and debt advice

? 60% of callers to the helpline lived in the most deprived wards

? 79% of callers had long term health conditions

? 82% of casework clients lived in the most deprived wards

? 87% of casework clients had long term health conditions

Unprecedented numbers of people are claiming benefits, and this is likely to increase:

- Private tenant evictions for rent arrears have recommenced.
- £20 addition to UC ended on 30 September 2021.
- The total debt allowable in a Debt Relief Order (DRO) goes up from £20,000 to £30,000. This will make more people eligible for a DRO and therefore increase demand. Only an approved DRO intermediary can action a DRO and there is a limited supply of accredited, registered, specialist advice in East Sussex.
- Mental Health Breathing Space came into place from the beginning of May. People experiencing mental health difficulties can request a 'breathing space' which pauses their debts for 60 days allowing time to explore their options. These need to be accessed through an accredited, registered, specialist debt adviser.
- The EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) has closed. Concern is that some people were not aware of the need to apply and could have their right to work, claim benefits or rent accommodation removed. It will be possible for some people to make a late application in certain circumstances, such as domestic abuse or lack of capacity which have prevented them from applying previously.

II.3) Estimated date of publication of contract notice

1 January 2022

Section VI. Complementary information

VI.3) Additional information

This is a process designed to help the Commissioners form a view of the best way to commission the Service and is not the beginning of a tender exercise. A further tender advertisement will be issued at the appropriate time as/if required. You will not be disadvantaged in any subsequent tender process if you choose not to respond to this RFI but the Commissioners will use the level of response received as part of the supporting evidence for any next steps taken. The Commissioners wish to understand your views at this early stage, so you are encouraged to respond and complete the RFI form as fully as you can.