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Planning

Regional Care Co-operatives Delivery Partner

Department for Education

F01: Prior information notice

Prior information only

Notice identifier: 2023/S 000-026281

Procurement identifier (OCID): ocids-h6vhtk-03fa52

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Section I: Contracting authority

I.1) Name and addresses

Department for Education

Sanctuary Buildings, 20, Great Smith Street

London

SW1P 3BT

Email

commissioning.csc@education.gov.uk

Country

United Kingdom

Region code

UK - United Kingdom

Internet address(es)

Main address

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education>

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

Education

Section II: Object

II.1) Scope of the procurement

II.1.1) Title

Regional Care Co-operatives Delivery Partner

II.1.2) Main CPV code

- 79000000 - Business services: law, marketing, consulting, recruitment, printing and security

II.1.3) Type of contract

Services

II.1.4) Short description

This PIN is for market engagement only. It does not signify the commencement of any procurement process and does not constitute any commitment by the Department for Education. If the Department for Education decides to commence any procurement process as contemplated by this notice, a separate notice will be published at the relevant time. The requirements and values set out below may be subject to change.

The Department for Education intends to launch a procurement to appoint a supplier to act as the delivery partner for the Regional Care Cooperative (RCC) Pathfinders.

The delivery partner will support the pathfinder areas with the design, set-up and operationalisation of the pathfinders. The exact support required from each pathfinder will vary depending on, for example, existing infrastructure and collaboration between the parties. Therefore, this will need to be discussed and agreed with the successful contractor and pathfinder areas, once selected. The contract will need to be agile, with the flexibility to adapt to an evolving policy area. However, the overarching services that will be required are:

- Project management and oversight
- Design and delivery of the co-design process
- Set-up and operationalisation of the pathfinders
- Provision of specialist and technical expertise

We will be holding 1-2-1 sessions (up to 30 minutes) with prospective bidders to talk

about the service requirements and seek feedback on 11, 14, 15 and 18 September.

For more information, or to arrange a 1-2-1 meeting, please email:

commissioning.csc@education.gov.uk

II.1.6) Information about lots

This contract is divided into lots: No

II.2) Description

II.2.2) Additional CPV code(s)

- 85000000 - Health and social work services

II.2.3) Place of performance

NUTS codes

- UK - United Kingdom

II.2.4) Description of the procurement

In February 2023, the Department for Education published its implementation strategy and consultation on children's social care reform, *Stable Homes, Built on Love*. As part of this, the Department has committed to working with local authorities and key partners to co-design and deliver two pathfinder Regional Care Cooperatives (RCCs) over this Spending Review period to test a new approach to planning, commissioning and delivering care placements for looked after children, with a view to rolling out after evaluating the best approach with the sector. The co-design process with local partners will shape the exact model and approach taken in each pathfinder area.

We plan to procure a delivery partner to support the pathfinder areas with the design, set-up and operationalisation of the pathfinders. The exact support required from each pathfinder will vary depending on, for example, existing infrastructure and collaboration between the parties. Therefore, this will need to be discussed and agreed with the successful contractor and pathfinder areas, once selected. The contract will need to be agile, with the flexibility to adapt to an evolving policy area.

However, the overarching services that will be required are:

- Project management and oversight: the delivery partner will work with the pathfinder areas and Department to develop and agree detailed project plans and project management arrangements. The delivery partner will oversee delivery of both pathfinders, providing the necessary support to keep delivery on track. The delivery partner will also

lead on reporting into the Department.

- Support the co-design process: as part of the Department's commitment to co-designing the pathfinders, we plan to support local Pathfinder Steering Groups to help work through policy and delivery questions and support the design of the pathfinders to ensure they meet the Department's objectives and fit the local context. The delivery partner will play a key role in supporting the local Pathfinder Steering Groups and developing their workplans; ensuring close working with other parts of the co-design process.
- Set-up and operationalisation of the pathfinders: the delivery partner will support with the operational delivery of the pathfinders, working with the parties to put in place structures, agreements and activities to deliver the model agreed through the co-design process. This will be supported by specialist and technical expertise (see below).
- Provision of specialist and technical expertise: it is envisaged that the pathfinder areas will require specialist and technical expertise to support the design and delivery of the pathfinders.

Examples of the type of support required are likely to include legal, HR, commercial, IT, data and capital building expertise.

We plan to commence procurement in early October 2023, with a view to the contract beginning in December 2023/January 2024. The pathfinders are due to launch in Spring 2024; the contract will continue until this date with potential for extension.

Since our previous market engagement on this procurement, we have further developed our plans for the pathfinders and invited local authorities to form clusters and submit proposals.

II.3) Estimated date of publication of contract notice

18 December 2023

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: Yes

Section VI. Complementary information

VI.3) Additional information

Policy Background

In February 2023, the Department for Education published a vision to transform children's social care: *Stable Homes, Built on Love: Implementation Strategy and Consultation*. This strategy set out proposals for reform in response to recommendations from the Independent Review of Children's Social Care (2022), the Child Safeguarding Practice Panel review into the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson (2022) and the Competition and Markets Authority's market study into children's social care provision (2022).

The strategy set out 6 pillars of reform, backed by £200 million of additional investment. The pillars of reform are:

1. Family Help provides the right support at the right time so that children can thrive with their families.
2. A decisive multi-agency child protection system.
3. Unlocking the potential of family networks.
4. Putting love, relationships and a stable home at the heart of being a child in care.
5. A valued, supported and highly skilled social worker for every child who needs one.
6. A system that continuously learns and improves and makes better use of evidence and data.

As part of pillar 4, the strategy committed to testing a regional model for planning, commissioning and delivering children's social care placements, called Regional Care Co-operatives (RCCs). The government's long-term vision for RCCs is that they will:

- Plan, commission and deliver all children's care placements, across fostering, children's homes and secure homes.
- Improve forecasting of demand leading to better informed plans; enabling areas to ensure there are sufficient placements and support available to meet the needs of children who are in care.
- Gain economies of scale, in particular around placements for children and young people

with multiple complex needs and in negotiations with providers, to ensure that every pound spent makes the biggest impact possible for children.

- Have greater collaboration with health and justice commissioners to improve services for children in care.
- Reform foster parent recruitment and retention and, where necessary, create new forms of care to meet local need so that more children in care can stay in family environments and closer to home.

RCCs are part of a broader package of measures to transform the care placement market, including:

- Investing £259 million to support areas to maintain capacity and expand provision in both secure and open children's homes.
- Investing £27m to recruit and retain more foster carers.
- Implementing the CMA recommendations on:
 - o providing national forecasting, procurement, and market shaping support;
 - o introducing a financial oversight regime; and
 - o reforming standards of care.
- Considering changes to ensure that planning requirements, or local interpretation of them, are not a barrier to the creation of more homes for children.

Stable Homes, Built on Love set out that the Department would set up two RCC pathfinders over this Spending Review period to test a new regional approach to providing homes for looked after children, within the current legal framework, ahead of bringing forward legislation when parliamentary time allows.

The Department will work with local authorities and other key stakeholders to co-design the pathfinders, with a view to rolling out after evaluating the best approach in conjunction with the sector. Both a delivery partner and evaluation partner will be procured to support this work.