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Tender

NELFT – Waltham Forest Crisis Alternative Services

North East London NHS Foundation Trust

UK4: Tender notice - Procurement Act 2023 - [view information about notice types](#)

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Scope

Description

The successful provider of the Mental Health Crisis Alternative services will provide the venue. The accommodation will be fit for purpose, and we will also want the provider to make their own premises available in order for this to be a borough wide distributed facility.

A critical factor for the successful operation of the service will be having the right partnerships in place. The venue will become an integral part of the local community and an active player as an effective link to be used in a partnership way across a range of venues, as a multi-site HUB. The provider will ensure their own premises are available in order for this to be a borough wide distributed facility. This will allow for a collaborative joined-up partnership approach in making facilities available while allowing us to have access to the venue.

It will be the providers responsibility to refurbish the venue with an IT infrastructure to support the service. NELFT will provide access to RIO and SystemOne electronic patient record (EPR) enhancing collaboration between services and service outcomes.

The Waltham Forest Mental Health Crisis Alternative services will be co-designed and co-produced by lived experienced servicer users and multiple stakeholders, fostering a culture of shared decision making. We are focussed on outcomes that are meaningful to

those who use our service and in their recovery journey, committed to working collaboratively with the co-production process and the decision making process, such as:

- Discussions around degree of access third sector partners have to RiO and EMIS.
- Discussions on keeping it a confidential space and not sharing of information.
- Discussions regarding the length of stay, volume of service users to utilise the space

NELFT and the crisis teams will be involved in the co-production process so that the provisions can be integrated together. There will be a link to people and key contacts from each of the core NELFT teams (Psych Liaison, Integrated Care Assessment Hub (ICAH), each of the Mental Health Wellness Team) and further integration into the provision should arise out of a series of workshops and co-production.

Waltham Forest is home to a diverse population of approximately 278,000 people, with significant communities from White British (34%), White Other (19%), Asian/Asian British (20%), and Black/Black British (15%) backgrounds. The borough has a large Eastern European community and is the 12th most deprived borough in London, with high levels of deprivation concentrated in the southern areas of Leyton, Walthamstow, and Higham Hill.

There is a growing population of refugees and asylum seekers, many of whom face barriers in accessing mental health services, such as language difficulties and stigma. Waltham Forest also has a history of underrepresentation from its South Asian communities in mental health service presentations, high rates of A&E attendance amongst Eastern European communities, and high rates of hospital admission and detention experienced by Black men. This highlights the need for culturally appropriate outreach and service development, and for this 'crisis alternative' offer to look, feel and operate in a way that noticeably differs from statutory mental health services, so that people might seek support earlier, before a crisis is reached. The mental health needs of the population include common disorders like anxiety and depression, which contribute to emergency department (ED) attendances and require community-based alternatives to prevent escalation.

Service Aims

The primary aims of the Waltham Forest Mental Health Crisis Alternative are to:

- Provide immediate, non-clinical support for individuals experiencing or wishing to prevent a mental health crisis, preventing escalation to statutory services like emergency departments and psychiatric liaison teams.
- Reduce pressure on emergency services by offering a safe, non-medical alternative to

hospital-based crisis interventions.

- Address mental health inequalities by providing targeted support to underserved and underrepresented groups in Waltham Forest, including the Eastern European, Black African and Caribbean, refugee, and Asian/Asian British communities.
- Promote early intervention and de-escalation through crisis listening, safety planning, and peer support, empowering individuals to manage their mental health and avoid future crises.
- Enhance community resilience by offering practical support and linking individuals to appropriate local services, thereby reducing social isolation and promoting long-term mental wellbeing.
- Collaborate with local VCSEs and statutory services to ensure an integrated care pathway, allowing smooth transitions between community and clinical services where needed.

Strategic Context

This service supports the objectives of the North East London Integrated Care Board (ICB) and aligns with the Waltham Forest Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), which emphasises mental health as a key priority. The NHS Long-Term Plan and the North East London Joint Forward Plan highlight the importance of non-clinical, community-based crisis services that reduce the pressure on statutory services, emergency departments, and inpatient facilities. The Crisis Alternative will serve as a critical component of Waltham Forest's mental health crisis pathway, complementing existing services such as the Walthamstow Community Hub.

Service Model

Access and Referral Pathways

- Self-Referral and Third-Party Referrals: The service will be accessible to anyone aged 18+ in Waltham Forest, as well as referrals from family members, carers, VCSEs, and statutory services.
- Hours of Operation: The Crisis Alternative Hub will operate from 5:00 p.m. to 10:30 p.m., five days a week, providing out-of-hours support to residents and then 3:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. at weekends and bank holidays.
- This will be the minimum hours of operation, however outside these minimum hours, we encourage the use of the centre by any other partner by the provider or by any other partner for groups or activities during the daytime which the centre should be used for, if

that is feasible from any provider.

- Locations: The provider will provide the venue in the borough of Waltham Forest and the service will be delivered and accessible for all residents in the borough. The service will be delivered in a non-clinical community venue that offer support in the north, south and central parts of the borough.
- There will be strong pathway links with MIND in Whipps Cross Hospital/ICAH/NHS 111 press 2 and Crest (Charitable Organisation)

There will be several months of collaborative development that is expected before this launches in Winter 2025 that is a vital part of the process where key aspects is clarified so that we can make key decisions together about how this works together as a community.

Service Delivery

Crisis Support: The service will provide a safe, non-stigmatising environment for immediate emotional support. The core interventions include:

- Crisis listening and de-escalation: One-to-one sessions to help individuals manage their distress and reduce the intensity of their crisis.
- Safety Planning: Development of personalised crisis management plans, including practical coping strategies and signposting to other services.
- Peer Support: Trained individuals with lived experience will offer non-clinical, empathetic support.
- Practical Support: Assistance with housing, financial, and employment-related issues that may be exacerbating the crisis.
- Outreach and Culturally Sensitive Support: Proactive outreach to Eastern European communities, refugees, and individuals facing language barriers, ensuring communication in culturally appropriate ways through partnerships with local VCSEs.
- The cultivation of relationships over short or long periods of time should be at the heart of this work and the entire endeavour should be oriented towards a very strong relational focus.

Staffing

The Crisis Alternative will be staffed by a combination of:

- Peer Support Workers from diverse backgrounds, trained in crisis management.

- For complex case management and oversight Mental Health Practitioner support will be provided by NELFT on an informal and ad hoc basis depending on demand and the co-production design process.
- Volunteers, particularly from local communities, including those with multilingual capabilities to support non-English speakers.
- Particular care will be taken to encourage applications from people with local connection to the area, and who represent the diverse communities of Waltham Forest.

Crisis Alternative staff, and NELFT staff who will be interfacing with this service, will undertake Compassionate and Relational Enquiry (CARE) training offered by NELFT as well as the possibility of full Open Dialogue training provided for key staff members and regular workers in the unit. Additionally, interfacing NELFT staff will receive training from Crisis Alternative colleagues around understanding and working alongside peer workers and understanding the ethos and practices of the organisations delivering the crisis alternatives. This will support a more consistent approach and stronger working relationships.

All staff will be paid in alignment with London Living Wage and required to complete a DBS check dependent on the role, if required.

Total value (estimated)

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

Above the relevant threshold

Contract dates (estimated)

- 17 November 2025 to 16 November 2027
- Possible extension to 16 November 2029
- 4 years

Description of possible extension:

The initial contract term shall be two (2) years with the potential for two (2) twelve (12) months in Contract extension periods by election of the Contracting Authority, on such notice and for such periods as is specified by the Contract.

Main procurement category

Services

CPV classifications

- 75200000 - Provision of services to the community

Contract locations

- UKI53 - Redbridge and Waltham Forest

Participation

Legal and financial capacity conditions of participation

Please see associated Tender documentation.

Technical ability conditions of participation

Please see associated Tender documentation.

Particular suitability

- Small and medium-sized enterprises (SME)
- Voluntary, community and social enterprises (VCSE)

Submission

Enquiry deadline

22 September 2025, 12:00pm

Tender submission deadline

1 October 2025, 12:00pm

Submission address and any special instructions

The Contracting Authority is utilising an electronic Tendering system ("E-Tendering Portal") to manage this procurement and communicate with Tenderers. Accordingly, there will be no hard copy documents issued to Tenderers and all communications with the Contracting Authority, including the submission of Tender responses will be conducted solely via the following link:

<https://health-family.force.com/s/Welcome>

Contract Ref: C385499

Tenders may be submitted electronically

Yes

Languages that may be used for submission

English

Award decision date (estimated)

31 October 2025

Award criteria

Name	Description	Type	Weighting
Technical Questionnaire	50% weighting dedicated towards technical capability	Quality	50.00%
Commercial Questionnaire	40% weighting dedicated towards technical capability	Cost	40.00%
Social Value Questionnaire	10% weighting dedicated towards technical capability	Quality	10.00%

Other information

Payment terms

The payment profile for this Contract shall be monthly in arrears.

The Contracting Authority will pay correctly addressed, valid and undisputed invoices within 30 days of the day on which the invoice is received or, if later, the day on which the payment falls due in accordance with the invoice in accordance with and subject to the requirements of the Contract. Service Providers to the Contracting Authority must ensure comparable payment provisions apply to the payment of their sub-contractors and the sub-contractors of their sub-contractors. General requirements for an invoice for the Contracting Authority include:

A description of the good/services supplied is included.

The Contracting Authority's reference number/Purchase Order number is included.

It must be addressed to the following:

North East London NHS Foundation Trust, ELFS Shared Services, Unit 2, PO Box 4418, Swindon, SN4 4RW

Invoices should be emailed to be sent to: elfs.395nel@cloud-trade.com

It must contain the relevant Contract Reference number (issued upon Contract Award).

It must include any contract deductions as part of the Service Credit Regime.

Description of risks to contract performance

Unanticipated Population Growth: Population growth exceeds projections, resulting in increased demand for services that cannot be met.

Capacity Issues: Existing services may not have the capacity to meet rising demand, leading to delays in access and increased pressure on emergency services.

Service Utilisation: The service may not be utilised as intended, with individuals continuing to rely on emergency services instead.

Operational: The service may face operational challenges, such as staffing shortages or logistical issues (venues), impacting its ability to provide timely support. Operational hours may not align with the needs of the community, limiting access to support during critical times. Insufficient staff to meet demand, impacting the ability to provide timely and effective support.

Training Needs: Managing volunteers and staff, including ensuring they are adequately trained and supported with further training requirements.

Commissioning: NELFT's funding may increase or decrease over the length of this contract to suit ICB requirements.

Applicable trade agreements

- Government Procurement Agreement (GPA)

Conflicts assessment prepared/revised

Yes

Procedure

Procedure type

Open procedure

Contracting authority

North East London NHS Foundation Trust

- Public Procurement Organisation Number: PHHT-9556-BWJJ

CEME Centre - West Wing, Marsh Way

Essex

RM13 8GQ

United Kingdom

Contact name: Dominic Caddle

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Website: <https://www.nelft.nhs.uk>

Region: UKI52 - Barking & Dagenham and Havering

Organisation type: Public authority - central government