

# Contract Title: Outsourcing of Speech and Language assessments as part of the autism spectrum disorder (ASD) pathway

## ATAMIS Workplan Reference: W170558

This specification document intends to clearly confirm the need and be able to obtain supplier responses to ensure the supplier is fit for purpose, governance has been met, and contract management can be dealt with. This document will be sent to the suppliers for responses. A further checklist will be produced by procurement on the back of this document, along with the financials from finance to support.

## DURATION OF CONTRACT

**Duration of contract:** 12 months  
**Start date of contract:** 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025  
**End date of contract:** 31<sup>st</sup> August 2026  
**Extension period:** 4 months from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2026 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2026  
**Extension notice period:** 8 weeks before expiry of the initial period  
**Termination for convenience:** Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust may terminate for convenience with 4 weeks' written notice.  
**Completion of Services:** Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust reserve the right to terminate the contract early if all requested services within the specification have been delivered.

## SERVICE SPECIFICATION

### Full-service outline

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (LTHTR) seeks to commission a specialist Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) provider to deliver 395 high-quality assessments as part of the autism (ASD) diagnostic pathway for children and young people in addition to 60 MDT attendances spread across 12 months. The provider will deliver SLT observational assessments in educational settings (nurseries/schools) to contribute towards multi-agency diagnostic formulation. The provider is expected to:

- Undertake direct observations of the child within their educational environment.
- Produce a comprehensive diagnostic report within 12 weeks (maximum) from referral.
- Liaise directly with the child's educational setting to arrange visits.
- Attend monthly MDT diagnostic panels virtually or in person to discuss findings.
- Communicate effectively with LTHTR regarding progress, barriers, or issues.
- Maintain accurate and secure records aligned with data protection standards.
- Manage all administrative functions, including booking appointments and handling cancellations.

The service aims to reduce waiting times, support the Trust in meeting national access standards, and ensure assessments are timely, evidence-based, and patient-centred.

### Location of services to be delivered.

Assessments will be delivered on-site in the child's education setting (nursery or school). In instances where this is not possible—such as home-schooled children or exceptional circumstances—the supplier must notify LTHTR. A joint decision will be made regarding an alternative suitable setting (e.g., home visit, clinic, or community setting where peer interaction can be observed).

All assessments must be conducted in environments where functional communication and social interaction can be meaningfully observed.

While the majority of assessments will take place during term time, assessments may be conducted outside of term time in specific circumstances. If a child attends nursery during school holidays, the assessment may proceed within the nursery setting. For high school students or other cases where educational settings are unavailable, assessments may be arranged in the home environment, where appropriate and agreed with the Trust. These flexibilities are intended to minimise delays and ensure assessments are delivered in a timely manner.

The provider will use its own IT equipment and facilities, and all data must be handled in accordance with GDPR and NHS data governance standards. A Data Protection impact assessment must be completed prior to contract commencement in line with the Trust's information Governance procedures.

### **Mobilisation requirements**

- Indicative start date: 01/09/2025
- Patients will be referred to the provider from this date.
- The supplier must submit a mobilisation plan prior to the contract award, outlining:
  - Staffing structure (clinical and administrative)
  - Referral and assessment pathways
  - Capacity to deliver 7 assessments per week from commencement
  - Safeguarding and escalation protocols
  - Contact details for all key personnel
  - Proof of quality assurance, e.g. compliance with national quality metrics

### **Interdependencies with Other Services**

This service operates within the wider LTHTR neurodevelopmental pathway and has interdependencies with:

- Community Neurodevelopmental Paediatrics (CNP) (clinical oversight)
- MDT panel processes, where SLT input is vital to final diagnostic formulation

The supplier must contribute findings to multi-agency meetings and maintain clear communication pathways with these partner services.

### **Any acceptance and exclusion criteria.**

Acceptance:

- UK-based SLT staff only.
- Staff must be HCPC-registered and experienced in neurodevelopmental assessments, with a demonstrable understanding of ASD in children and young people.
- Able to conduct in-setting observations in line with NICE guidance and DSM-5 diagnostic criteria.
- Demonstrate minimum English Language requirements of an Occupational English Test (OET) as described by NHS Professionals. See Appendix 2.

Exclusion:

- Providers who do not use UK-based or HCPC-registered clinicians.
- Providers lacking experience in contributing to multi-agency ASD diagnostic assessments.

### **Service Days Required**

- Days: Monday to Friday
- Hours: 9am to 5pm
- Hours may vary depending on the child's educational setting and availability. Flexibility is required to align with school schedules and term times.

While assessments will primarily take place during term time, they may also occur outside of term time where appropriate—such as in nurseries open during school holidays or in the home for children in high school—depending on the child’s availability and setting access.

#### **Number of cases/scans/named activity/ HRG codes to be completed during the contract**

- Target of 395 patients to be assessed over 12 months.
- Referrals will be distributed evenly to maintain consistency and support service planning.
- The provider must maintain an up-to-date tracker of referrals, contact attempts, completed assessments, and expected report return dates.

#### **Patient Booking**

Supplier-led: The supplier is solely responsible for contacting families and schools to arrange visits and for backfilling any cancellations to ensure throughput.

#### **Staffing Availability & Rotas**

- Maintain a consistent workforce with business continuity plans for sickness or leave.
- Ensure clinical staff have up-to-date safeguarding, DBS checks, and are trained/experienced in ASD-specific assessments.

#### **Supplier responsibilities**

From referral to report return, the supplier is responsible for:

1. Receiving referral data from LTHTR securely.
2. Contacting family and educational settings to arrange assessment.
3. Conducting a structured observation and compiling a report (aligned to DSM-5 and NICE standards).
4. Sharing the completed report with LTHTR within 12 weeks of referral.
5. Attending the MDT panel meeting to contribute diagnostic findings.
6. Recording any concerns (e.g., safeguarding) and escalating in line with agreed Trust procedures.
7. Maintaining and regularly updating the appointment tracker
8. Provide Trust with regular performance reports against KPIs

#### **Trust Responsibilities**

1. Provide timely and complete referral documentation.
2. Ensuring patients have received the mandatory consent period (7 calendar days) before sending their referral
3. Share information securely via NHS email or secure systems.
4. Facilitate access to monthly MDT panel meetings.
5. Provide feedback on report quality and performance via monthly contract reviews.

#### **KPIs/ Quality**

<b>KPI</b>	<b>Target</b>
Report Turnaround Time	100% within 12 weeks of referral
Clinical contribution to MDT	100% attendance or written notice given to LTHTR Programme Manager for non-attendance no later than 5 working days before meeting date (exceptional circumstances e.g. staff sickness will be considered on a case by case basis)
Referral Capacity	7 referrals weekly
Quality Audit	100% Compliance with report standards (Audited quarterly)

Patient satisfaction	>90% satisfaction (monitored through patient feedback/complaints) (Written or verbal feedback)
Complaint Rate	<2% of total cases referred
DNA rate	Was not brought (WNB) rate of <5% of total cases with plans to re-book

#### **Governance processes/ workflows**

- Complaints: Provider must have a formal complaints policy. All complaints must be reported to LTHTR within 5 working days.
- Escalation routes: Clear clinical and operational escalation points must be established and shared with LTHTR.
- Internal audits: Quarterly internal audits on quality and timeliness must be shared with the Trust.
- Safeguarding: Any concerns must be escalated within 24 hours via LTHTR's Programme Manager.
- Evidence of information governance training and compliance with GDPR

#### **Staff Experience and Qualifications**

All SLT's must

- Be HCPC-registered
- Have a minimum of 1 years' experience working in paediatric neurodevelopment
- Be trained in ASD observation-based assessment (e.g., experience with ADOS or equivalent frameworks)
- Demonstrate knowledge of DSM-5 criteria

#### **Registrations/ accreditations required**

The supplier must operate under their own CQC registration, not that of LTHTR.

Staff must also hold:

- Up-to-date DBS clearance
- Safeguarding Level 3 training
- Professional indemnity insurance

## **TARIF/PAYMENT TERMS**

Invoices will be submitted electronically to: [438.lth@elfsap.co.uk](mailto:438.lth@elfsap.co.uk) and LTHTR's Programme Manager on a Monthly basis. All invoices must note a valid PO with a description of services detailed for e.g. number of patient appointments completed from DD/MM/YY to DD/MM/YY.

Invoices will be generated monthly in arrears, based on actual activity, e.g. number of assessments conducted and attendance at MDT panels.

Payment will be made in line with the number of Assessments delivered and MDT Meetings attended.

The supplier must provide a price for each, and invoices must detail the numbers delivered each month. Backing data containing the patients assessed and dates of MDT meetings attended must be provided to the Contract Manager at the time any invoice is submitted.

## **ICT & IG REQUIREMENTS**

DPIA to be completed by LTHTR and Supplier prior to contract commencement and any risks mitigated before services commence.

## TERMS OF CONTRACT

The contract will be awarded under the NHS Terms and Conditions for the Provision of Services (PA23).

### 1. Liability & Insurance

- The supplier must maintain appropriate levels of professional indemnity, public liability, and employer liability insurance.
- Minimum insurance cover levels required:
  - Professional Indemnity: £5 million
  - Public Liability: £5 million
  - Employer Liability: £10 million
- Evidence of insurance must be provided on contract signature and annually thereafter.

### 2. Termination Notice Period

- Either party may terminate the agreement by providing 3 months' written notice.
- The Trust reserves the right to terminate the contract with immediate effect in the case of:
  - Serious breach of contract
  - Safeguarding failure
  - Data breach
  - Repeated KPI failure (see section 5 below)

### 3. Offboarding Requirements

- At the point of contract expiry or early termination, the supplier must:
  - Provide a full handover of outstanding cases, including report progress and contact history.
  - Return or securely destroy all patient data in accordance with NHS data protection policy.
  - Confirm removal of all NHS data from their systems within 30 days.
  - Return any physical materials or paperwork provided by the Trust (if applicable).
  - Provide a named contact for the offboarding period for up to 6 weeks post-termination to ensure continuity of care and communication.

### 4. Subcontracting & Personnel Changes

- The supplier must not subcontract any part of the service without prior written approval from LTHTR.
- All staff changes must be communicated to the Trust within 10 working days, and any new staff must meet the same qualification and safeguarding requirements.

### 5. Persistent Breaches & Service Credits

- To ensure service quality, the following will apply:
  - Breach Thresholds
  - Failure to return 95% of reports within 12 weeks of referral for two consecutive months constitutes a breach.
  - Failure to attend MDT panels or submit written contributions for more than one month is considered a breach.
  - Complaints exceeding 2% of caseload without resolution will trigger a quality review.
- Service Credits (if applicable)
  - Where used, service credits (i.e., financial deductions) may be applied if KPIs are consistently unmet.
  - Values to be agreed during contract finalisation; suggestions:

- Where the supplier fails to submit a completed report within 12 weeks of the referral date, the following surcharge structure will apply:
    - Reports received between 12 and 16 weeks post-referral: payment will be reduced to 75% of the agreed cost per report
    - Reports received between 17 and 21 weeks post-referral: payment will be reduced to 50% of the agreed cost per report
    - Reports received after 22 weeks post-referral: payment will be reduced to 25% of the agreed cost per report
  - A formal performance review will be triggered if 3 or more breaches occur in a rolling 6-month period.
- 6. Contract Review and Dispute Resolution
  - A formal contract review will take place quarterly, with KPIs reviewed monthly.
  - Any disputes will follow the LTHTR escalation protocol, with resolution sought initially through internal negotiation and, if unresolved, escalation to senior Trust (Procurement) and supplier leadership.
- 7. Attendance
  - Attendance at approximately 60 MDT Meetings. Standard session time is: 3.5 hours.
  - Short-notice DNA's
    - Cancellations made with less than 12 working hours' notice by a parent or school are classified as a short-notice DNAs.
    - These will be invoiced at 50% of the agreed assessment rate, capped at 10 such charges over the contract term.
    - Any further short-notice cancellations beyond the cap will be treated as non-chargeable.

## STAKEHOLDER MAP/ RACI

Task/Area	Responsible (R)	Accountable (A)	Consulted (C)	Informed (I)	Frequency	Location/Format	Contact Info
Contract mobilisation	Benjamin Croasdale (Programme Manager)	Benjamin Croasdale (Programme Manager)	Supplier Lead	ICB / CNP Leads	Once – pre-go-live	MS Teams / Email	Benjamin Croasdale: <a href="mailto:Benjamin.croasdale@lthtr.nhs.uk">Benjamin.croasdale@lthtr.nhs.uk</a>  Supplier Lead: TBC  ICB Leads: <a href="mailto:Lauren.Jackson13@nhs.net">Lauren.Jackson13@nhs.net</a>  CNP Leads: <a href="mailto:Alysia.Parkin@lthtr.nhs.uk">Alysia.Parkin@lthtr.nhs.uk</a> <a href="mailto:Rebecca.Cullen@lthtr.nhs.uk">Rebecca.Cullen@lthtr.nhs.uk</a>
Referral submission	LHTR Admin Team	Benjamin Croasdale (Programme Manager)	Sharmi Gupta (Clinical Director)	Supplier	Ongoing	Microsoft teams	LHTR Admin: <a href="mailto:GreaterprestonASD@lthtr.nhs.uk">GreaterprestonASD@lthtr.nhs.uk</a> <a href="mailto:ASDreferrals@lthtr.nhs.uk">ASDreferrals@lthtr.nhs.uk</a>  Benjamin Croasdale: <a href="mailto:benjamin.croasdale@lthtr.nhs.uk">benjamin.croasdale@lthtr.nhs.uk</a>  Sharmi Gupta: <a href="mailto:sharmi.Gupta@LHTR.nhs.uk">sharmi.Gupta@LHTR.nhs.uk</a>  Supplier: TBC
Assessment delivery	Supplier SLT	Supplier Clinical Lead/Director	Benjamin Croasdale (Programme Manager)	Sharmi Gupta (Clinical Director)	Weekly	In education setting	Benjamin Croasdale: <a href="mailto:benjamin.croasdale@lthtr.nhs.uk">benjamin.croasdale@lthtr.nhs.uk</a>  Sharmi Gupta: <a href="mailto:sharmi.Gupta@lthtr.nhs.uk">sharmi.Gupta@lthtr.nhs.uk</a>  Supplier: TBC
Report completion & submission	Supplier SLT/Supplier admin team	Supplier Clinical Lead/Director	Sharmi Gupta (Clinical Director)	Benjamin Croasdale (Programme Manager)	Per case (within 12 weeks)	Microsoft Teams	Benjamin Croasdale: <a href="mailto:benjamin.croasdale@lthtr.nhs.uk">benjamin.croasdale@lthtr.nhs.uk</a>  Sharmi Gupta: <a href="mailto:sharmi.Gupta@lthtr.nhs.uk">sharmi.Gupta@lthtr.nhs.uk</a>  Supplier: TBC

Task/Area	Responsible (R)	Accountable (A)	Consulted (C)	Informed (I)	Frequency	Location/Format	Contact Info
MDT panel attendance	Supplier SLT	Supplier Clinical Lead/Director	Benjamin Croasdale (Programme Manager)	Admin (notes)	Monthly	Virtual (Teams) or in -person	Benjamin Croasdale: <a href="mailto:benjamin.croasdale@lthtr.nhs.uk">benjamin.croasdale@lthtr.nhs.uk</a>  Supplier: TBC
Clinical quality assurance	Supplier Clinical Lead	Sharmi Gupta (Clinical Director)	Benjamin Croasdale (Programme Manager)	Supplier	Quarterly	Virtual & Reports	Benjamin Croasdale: <a href="mailto:benjamin.croasdale@lthtr.nhs.uk">benjamin.croasdale@lthtr.nhs.uk</a>  Sharmi Gupta: <a href="mailto:sharmi.Gupta@lthtr.nhs.uk">sharmi.Gupta@lthtr.nhs.uk</a>  Supplier: TBC
Safeguarding concerns	Supplier SLT	Supplier Clinical Lead/Director	Sharmi Gupta (Clinical Director)	Benjamin Croasdale (Programme Manager)	As required	Phone/email	Benjamin Croasdale: <a href="mailto:benjamin.croasdale@lthtr.nhs.uk">benjamin.croasdale@lthtr.nhs.uk</a>  Sharmi Gupta: <a href="mailto:sharmi.Gupta@LTHTR.nhs.uk">sharmi.Gupta@LTHTR.nhs.uk</a>  Supplier: TBC
Complaints management	Benjamin Croasdale (Programme Manager)	Benjamin Croasdale (Programme Manager)	Supplier Manager	Families	As required	Email / Datix	Benjamin Croasdale: <a href="mailto:benjamin.croasdale@lthtr.nhs.uk">benjamin.croasdale@lthtr.nhs.uk</a>  Supplier: TBC
Performance reporting	Supplier Project Lead	Benjamin Croasdale (Programme Manager)	Sharmi Gupta (Clinical Director)	ICB	Monthly	Reports	Benjamin Croasdale: <a href="mailto:benjamin.croasdale@lthtr.nhs.uk">benjamin.croasdale@lthtr.nhs.uk</a>  Sharmi Gupta: <a href="mailto:sharmi.Gupta@LTHTR.nhs.uk">sharmi.Gupta@LTHTR.nhs.uk</a>  Supplier: TBC



Task/Area	Responsible (R)	Accountable (A)	Consulted (C)	Informed (I)	Frequency	Location/Format	Contact Info
Financial monitoring	Benjamin Croasdale (Programme Manager)	Benjamin Croasdale (Programme Manager)	LTHTR Finance (if applicable)	ICB	Quarterly	Email	Benjamin Croasdale: <a href="mailto:Benjamin.croasdale@lthtr.nhs.uk">Benjamin.croasdale@lthtr.nhs.uk</a>  ICB Leads: <a href="mailto:Lauren.Jackson13@lthtr.nhs.uk">Lauren.Jackson13@lthtr.nhs.uk</a>  LTHTR Finance: <a href="mailto:finance.queries@lthtr.nhs.uk">finance.queries@lthtr.nhs.uk</a>