

ICB Primary Care Commissioning Committee

Date of meeting	10 October 2024
Title of paper	Dental Electronic Referral Management Service – Market Engagement Outcome Report
Presented by	Peter Tinson, Director of Primary & Community Care David Armstrong, Senior Delivery Assurance Manager
Author	Leanne Fawcett, Dental Delivery Assurance Manager
Agenda item	5
Confidential	No

Executive summary

The dental Referral Management Service (RMS) provides a single point of access for the processing of referrals from primary care dentists and orthodontists, ensuring a consistent quality of referrals, ability to monitor volumes, support demand management and triage referrals.

There is currently a contract in place until 31 March 2025.

This report details the results of the market engagement exercise to inform future commissioning arrangements for the RMS which was approved by the Primary Care Commissioning Committee (PCCC) at its meeting held on 13 June 2024. This has been conducted in line with the Public Contract Regulations 2015 (as amended).

The market engagement has identified there are a number of potential organisations who would be prepared to submit a formal application if the ICB was to undertake a formal procurement of the Dental Referral Management service.

The ICB must therefore consider initiating a competitive procurement process to secure the service beyond the current contractual term.

The current service specification must be thoroughly reviewed, with the views of all stakeholders considered to ensure the services procured are fit for purpose into the future.

In order to achieve the best outcome from the procurement process and thorough stakeholder engagement to improve and develop the service specification, a single tender waiver to extend the current contract is required.

The development of the Procurement Evaluation Strategy (PES) will be undertaken with the full engagement of the service stakeholders and will be presented for approval by the Committee, at a future date, prior to the formal initiation of the procurement process.

Advise, Assure or Alert				
Assure – that the Request for Information exercise has been completed.				
Advise – that 8 providers completed the Request for Information Questionnaire in response to the advert.				
Recommendations				
The Committee is requested to:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the results of the market engagement (RFI) which was conducted to support the commitment to determine the market capacity and capabilities of potential providers; Agree that a competitive procurement process should be initiated; Agree to consider the Procurement Evaluation Strategy (PES) at a future meeting, in order to commence a formal competitive procurement process. The development of the PES, and Service Specification, will include consideration to the risks and mitigating actions contained within the Market Engagement Analysis Report; Note that a wide range of stakeholders will appropriately be involved in the redrafting of the service specification to ensure it covers recent innovative service redesign, particularly in relation to the orthodontic pathway. The procurement timeline will therefore need to allow sufficient time for this engagement. Agree that a Single Tender Waiver application can be made to request a contract extension for up to a maximum of 24 months to align with the procurement timeline, noting that the current timeline is draft and ICB dates for governance sign off have yet to be scheduled for 2025. 				
Which Strategic Objective/s does the report contribute to				Tick
1	Improve quality, including safety, clinical outcomes, and patient experience			X
2	To equalise opportunities and clinical outcomes across the area			X
3	Make working in Lancashire and South Cumbria an attractive and desirable option for existing and potential employees			X
4	Meet financial targets and deliver improved productivity			X
5	Meet national and locally determined performance standards and targets			X
6	To develop and implement ambitious, deliverable strategies			X
Implications				
	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Associated risks		X		
Are associated risks detailed on the ICB Risk Register?			X	
Financial Implications		X		
Where paper has been discussed (list other committees/forums that have discussed this paper)				
Meeting	Date		Outcomes	
Dental Services Group	26 September 2024		Group recommended approval of the papers contents and recommendations	

Conflicts of interest associated with this report

Any parties interested in providing this service in the future or affiliated to the current provider, FDS Consultants Limited or any subsidiary companies.

Impact assessments

	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Quality impact assessment completed			X	
Equality impact assessment completed			X	
Data privacy impact assessment completed			X	

Report authorised by:

Craig Harris, Chief Operating Officer

ICB Primary Care Commissioning Committee

10 October 2024

Dental Electronic Referral Management Service – Market Engagement Outcome Report

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The dental Referral Management Service (RMS) provides a single point of access for the processing of referrals from primary care dentists and orthodontists, ensuring a consistent quality of referrals, ability to monitor volumes, support demand management and triage referrals.
- 1.2 There is currently a contract in place until 31 March 2025.
- 1.3 This report details the results of the market engagement exercise to inform future commissioning arrangements for the RMS which was approved by the Primary Care Commissioning Committee (PCCC) at its meeting held on 13 June 2024. This has been conducted in line with the Public Contract Regulations 2015 (as amended).

2. Background

- 2.1 The electronic referral management service was originally procured by NHS England in 2015, with Greater Manchester leading the contracting process. The current total value of the contract is £440,292 plus VAT to manage approximately 69,000 referrals.
- 2.2 On 8 March 2024, the ICB's Chief Finance Officer approved the request to proceed to direct award of a 1-year contract to the current provider of the RMS contract in Lancashire and South Cumbria as the contract was due to expire on 31 March 2024.
- 2.3 The direct award was for a period of 1 year, to 31 March 2025.
- 2.4 The purpose of awarding a contract to the current provider was to allow sufficient time to run a procurement process, the first step being the initial market engagement using the Request for Information (RFI) process.
- 2.5 Following the contract direct award, it was identified that a review of the General Practice (GP) RMS was underway and it was explored whether there were any opportunities to secure a combined GP and Dental RMS.

- 2.6 The review of the GP RMS was not scheduled to report until September 2024, as a result it is not feasible to consider the feasibility of a combined single RMS service that could be procured and implemented by 1 April 2025.
- 2.7 The ICB intends to undertake a further review of all referral management services at a later date and consider the options for future service provision.
- 2.8 The impact of the GP RMS review and exploration of the feasibility of a combined single RMS service has created a delay in the dental RMS procurement timeline, and commencement of the market engagement process.
- 2.9 It was agreed that the pre procurement planning for a dental RMS should commence, noting that any resulting contract term should align with the end date of the GP RMS contract.

3. Market Engagement Process

- 3.1 The main aim and objectives of the market engagement were to determine the market capacity and capabilities of potential providers regarding:
- Service model and delivery.
 - Capacity and capability of potential providers.
 - Contractual model.
 - Service model and delivery.
 - Contract length.
 - Finance.
 - Mobilisation
 - Premises.
 - Barriers to bidding.
 - Whole service risk.
 - Social Value impact including outcome target to support NHS Net Zero goal by 2045.
- 3.2 Historically there has been few providers of this service.
- 3.3 A Prior Information Notice (PIN) was published on Find a Tender, and an Early Market Engagement notice was published on Contracts Finder on 24 June 2024 to alert providers to a market engagement exercise, highlighting that the RFI documentation was available via the NECS e-tendering portal and that RFI returns were required by 12:00 Noon on 08 July 2024.

4. Provider Interest – Request for Information

- 4.1 The RFI was viewed by 21 organisations who registered on the NECS e-tendering portal of those organisations 4 indicated that they would not be submitting a return by "opting out" and 8 indicated that they would be submitting a return.

- 4.2 At the closing time and date of 12:00 noon on 08 July 2024 the 8 organisations who had opted in to submit an RFI response did submit a completed RFI response.
- 4.3 Table 1 below provides a breakdown of those organisations who responded to the RFI.

Table 1

Organisation Name	Organisation Type
Respondent 1	Limited Company
Respondent 2	Social Enterprise
Respondent 3	Limited Company
Respondent 4	Part of NHS England
Respondent 5	Limited Company
Respondent 6	Limited Company
Respondent 7	Limited Company
Respondent 8	Limited Company

- 4.3 The market engagement exercise has demonstrated that there is a definite awareness within the marketplace for referral management services although it is somewhat limited, as 50% of respondents are currently delivering a dental referral management service, whilst the other 50% are providing some other form of referral management service.

5. Conclusions – Request for Information

- 5.1 The RFI questionnaire has achieved its main aim in identifying the capacity and capability of the market in delivering a Referral Management Service for Dental Services across Lancashire and South Cumbria within the proposed financial envelope of £440,292 excluding VAT. The market has indicated there are at least 4 potential providers who are interested and are currently delivering Referral Management Services for Dental Services with another 3 to 4 potential providers who have indicated they are interested in delivering the required services.

5. Procurement Timeline

- 5.1 The procurement of the Dental Referral Management Service would need to be undertaken in line with the National Health Service Public Contract Regulation (PCR) 2015 (as amended). The Provider Selection Regime (PSR) introduced 1 January 2024 would not apply as the service is not categorised as health care, there is no clinical element to the service, therefore the original procurement regulations must be applied.
- 5.2 In recognition of the recent market engagement exercise, it is considered that a competitive procurement procedure will therefore need to be undertaken.
- 5.3 It is anticipated that the new Procurement Act 2023 will come into effect on 24 February 2025, and therefore this process will need to be followed for this

procurement. This new act is specific to the UK only following Brexit.

5.4 A high level procurement timeline is provided as Table 2 below:-

Table 2

	Start Date	End Date
Obtain approval of Procurement & Evaluation Strategy Report	28/02/2025	28/02/2025
Publish advert on Contracts Finder/Find a Tender Service	31/03/2025	31/03/2025
Publish Tender on eTendering platform	31/03/2025	31/03/2025
Tender Submission Deadline	01/05/2025	01/05/2025
Evaluation Period (including evaluation of FMT)	12/05/2025	09/06/2025
Consensus Meetings (TBC- location/times)	16/06/2025	15/07/2025
Draft Recommended Bidder Report	28/07/2025	08/08/2025
Obtain approval of Recommended Bidder Report	01/09/2025	31/10/2025
Send Successful/Unsuccessful Bidder Letters	03/11/2025	07/11/2025
8 Working Days Standstill Period	10/11/2025	21/11/2025
Send Contract Award Letters / End of Standstill Letters to Bidders	24/11/2025	28/11/2025
Finalise Contract Signature(s)	01/12/2025	01/12/2025
Mobilisation/Transition Phase - 9 months	01/12/2025	31/08/2026
Contract Commencement	01/09/2026	
Contract Expiry Date		

5.4 As the current contract is due to end on 31 March 2025, an application for a Single Tender Waiver to extend the current contract will need to be submit to the ICB's Chief Finance Officer to ensure provision of services for patients and to mitigate against patient safety issues.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 The market engagement has identified there are a number of potential organisations who would be prepared to submit a formal application if the ICB was to undertake a formal procurement of the Dental Referral Management service.
- 6.2 The ICB must therefore consider initiating a competitive procurement process to secure the service beyond the current contractual term.
- 6.3 The current service specification must be thoroughly reviewed, with the views of all stakeholders considered to ensure the services procured are fit for purpose into the future.
- 6.4 The timeframe detailed in Table 2 above has highlighted that, in order to achieve the best outcome from the procurement process and thorough stakeholder engagement to improve and develop the service specification, a single tender waiver for approximately 18-24 months to extend the current contract is required.
- 6.5 The development of the Procurement Evaluation Strategy (PES) will be undertaken with the full engagement of the service stakeholders and will be presented for approval prior to the formal initiation of the procurement process.

6. Recommendations

The Committee is requested to:

- Note the results of the market engagement (RFI) which was conducted to support the commitment to determine the market capacity and capabilities of potential providers;
- Agree that a competitive procurement process should be initiated;
- Agree to consider the Procurement Evaluation Strategy (PES) at a future meeting, in order to commence a formal competitive procurement process. The development of the PES, and Service Specification, will include consideration to the risks and mitigating actions contained within the Market Engagement Analysis Report;
- Note that a wide range of stakeholders will appropriately be involved in the redrafting of the service specification to ensure it covers recent innovative service redesign, particularly in relation to the orthodontic pathway. The procurement timeline will therefore need to allow sufficient time for this engagement.
- Agree that a Single Tender Waiver application can be made to request a contract extension for up to a maximum of 24 months to align with the procurement timeline, noting that the current timeline is draft and ICB dates for governance sign off have yet to be scheduled for 2025.

Leanne Fawcett

September 2024