**Supported Living Procurement FAQs**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Question** | **Response** |
| When will the tender be released? | The tender documents will be released on 3rd August 2020. |
| How long will I have to put together my tender? | Bidders will have 8 weeks to develop and submit their tenders.  The deadline for tender returns is Friday 25th September 2020 at 12pm. |
| What will I be required to complete for the tender? | The tender documents to be completed by the bidders will consist of:   * Standard Selection Questionnaire (SSQ) Bidder Response Pack * Invitation to Tender Bidder Response Pack * Supported Living Scheme Form * Form of Tender Declaration * ITT Freedom of Information Act   Each of these documents will explain the required information to be included by bidders and further information can be found within the Bidder Guidance document that will be published at the time of tender release. |
| What if I have questions during the tender period? | Clarification questions can be raised with Essex County Council directly during the tender process through the message centre on the Proactis e-procurement portal.  Only questions raised through this method will be answered by ECC during the tender period.  However, on receipt of any clarification questions ECC will publish the response to all bidders to ensure a fair spread of relevant information and no advantage to a provider asking the question. |
| Where will I be able to access the tender documents? | All of the tender documents will be made available through the Proactis e-procurement tool.  A link directly to the e-procurement tool will be included in the Contract Notices that will be issued here:  OJEU: <https://simap.ted.europa.eu/>  Contracts Finder: <https://www.gov.uk/contracts-finder>  It will also be advertised on the ECC opportunities listing which can be viewed here: <https://www.essex.gov.uk/supply-the-council> |
| Why are there additional questions for complex provision? | ECC recognise that there are specialised skills and structures required in order to deliver high quality services to our most complex adults with learning disabilities and autism.  In order to differentiate the requirements, ECC has an enhanced complex rate that is paid above the standard hourly rate for supported living. Providers that wish to deliver services at these rates are required to demonstrate their capability to do so by answering the additional questions to allow ECC to assess their suitability.  Providers that do not wish to provide services to enhanced complex adults are not required to complete the questions. |
| What if I am having difficulty in accessing the documents and submitting them? | Should you have difficulty in accessing the documents through the e-procurement tool you should contact ECC directly by phone or email to discuss. Contact details will be provided at the end of this document. |
| Is the tender open to everybody to apply for? | Yes, the tender is open to all providers whether they have existing contracts with Essex County Council or not. |
| What if I miss the deadline? Can I ask for an extension? | In certain situations, an extension can be requested to a tender period, however, the threshold for this being permitted is very high.  If you miss the deadline through your own fault the tender period will not be extended. All bidders are encouraged to complete and upload their tender responses well in advance of the deadline to ensure no last minute issues. |
| How will my bid be assessed and scored? | All bids are assessed and scored by a dedicated evaluation panel assigned to the project.  The evaluation criteria for every scored question is outlined clearly within the relevant document and scored questions can be found within both the Standard Selection Questionnaire Bidder Response Pack and the Invitation to Tender Bidder Response Pack.  The scoring methodology used by bidders is included throughout the tender documents and in the Bidder Guidance.  Each evaluator will score the questions that they are responsible for, with a multiple evaluators per question. This is then collated, and a consensus meeting is held which discusses each bidders response to the question and a final score is agreed in every instance. |
| How will you tell me whether I have been successful or not? | All bidders will receive a letter from Essex County Council confirming the outcome of their bid.  This will be issued directly to all bidders via the e-procurement portal and will detail scores awarded in response to the assessed questions, and the reasoning behind them. |
| What other documents are included at the time of tender? | At the time of tender ECC will issue all of the tender documentation already listed within this FAQ and will also issue the contract documentation that will be applicable.  During the period of the tender bidders must ensure they read the contract documentation included because this will be the contract that is issued and signed post-tender. Any request to change this document must be made during the tender period. |
| How long is the framework contract? | The Supported Living Framework will be in place for 4 years from the date of commencement. |
| How will we receive referrals? | Referrals will be made to providers on the framework only and will follow the defined placement process that is included within the contract documentation.  Adults will be matched to all available accommodation in the area within which they wish to live and will then have a free choice of all suitable schemes. |
| Can we develop new services during the life of the framework contract? | Yes, and this is encouraged by providers on the Framework.  In order to bring forward new accommodation a provider must have a place on the framework, and the accommodation must meet the standards required by ECC as well as passing through the Accommodation Planning Board. |
| How is it decided where an adult will be placed? | The choice of the placement is entirely that of the adult to be supported. All suitable options will be provided to the adult following the application of a filtering tool and they will select where they visit and ultimately where they take up placement. |
| Do I have to bring all of my existing supported living services on to the framework? | No, you can select which supported living schemes you wish to bring on to the framework for ECC to make placements at and one of the tender documents (the Supported Living Scheme Form) will require you to list all of the schemes you are proposing to bring forward to the framework.  Schemes that have not been brought on to the framework will however not be placed at – but they can be brought forward to the framework at any time. |
| What are the framework rates? | The current rates of pay on the framework are:  Standard: £15.92  Enhanced Complex: £17.80 |
| What is a mini-competition process and how would it work? | The framework will allow ECC to conduct a mini-competition process with all providers on the framework where it is considered appropriate.  This takes the form of a tender exercise and bidders will be required to confirm interest and submit their bids in line with the requirements of the mini-competition which will be outlined at the time the documents are released.  All providers that have a place on the framework will be eligible to bid in mini-competitions as and when they arise.  The Mini-Competition Process may be most appropriate in the following circumstances:     * A placement could not be sourced through the standard placement process for any reason; * The adult seeking placement has a high level of need or a level of bespoke service is required either in the delivery of care or modification to existing accommodation; * Multiple adults are seeking placement in a single unit; * A new provider is required for any existing supported living accommodation through supplier failure, handback of packages, or it is otherwise the responsibility of the Council to source; * Sourcing a provider for a new supported living service that ECC are responsible for sourcing; * Emergency placements to be made on a short or long-term basis that require an accelerated placement process. |
| Does this supersede existing contracts we have with Essex County Council for supported living services? | Yes.  Where a provider bids and is awarded a place on the framework the new contract terms will be applied to all existing placements with that provider at the supported living schemes that they have brought forward to the framework. |
| What are the main changes under the new contract? | The new contract includes an updated specification, performance standards, and updates the relevant guidance and legislation from previous contracts inclusive of GDPR, safeguarding and the Care Act. |
| Does my supported living scheme have to be onboarded to come on to the framework? | No, it can be brought forward to the framework however it cannot be placed at until it has been onboarded.  In practice this means that when vacancies arise in existing schemes that are yet to be onboarding an application will be required to be made to onboard the property.  If you have properties that do not meet the standards set out by ECC and are unlikely to be modifiable so they can they should not be brought forward to the framework. |
| I have never completed a tender before – is there further assistance available to me? | Where you require further assistance with tendering please contact ECC with the issues being experienced.  Where the question is related directly to the procurement process and may be of interest to all bidders or confer an unfair advantage, it will be shared on the clarification log. |