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Health & Social Care Network (HSCN) Access Services Dynamic Purchasing System (RM3825)



Start date: 24 November 2017

End date: 23 May 2020

What you can buy through this Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS)?

Public sector bodies will need to connect to the Health & Social Care Network (HSCN). Your organisation may have a need to procure from HSCN-compliant suppliers in line with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (PCR).

The Crown Commercial Service (CCS) HSCN Access Services DPS fulfils this requirement. The DPS has been let in line with the PCR and, upon application to join the DPS, suppliers have confirmed their HSCN compliance status.

Outline Scope	Description
Core	
HSCN connection (Broadband, Ethernet)	Customers can procure a range of connectivity services e.g. Broadband, Ethernet on a range of technologies (e.g. EAD, OSA)
Optional	
HSCN VRF	Customer traffic will be logically separated from other non-HSCN traffic using MPLS VRF's
Equipment (CPE) provision (managed/unmanaged)	Customers can procure managed or unmanaged hardware to terminate their connectivity service
Resilience (active/passive, active/active etc)	Services can be for different levels of resilience
Bandwidth aggregation	Bandwidth aggregation across more than one HSCN service
Quality of Service (QoS)	Quality of Service (QoS) is an advanced feature that prioritizes traffic for specific applications when bandwidth becomes saturated
Managed firewall	Managed Firewall features can be enabled on HSCN CPE equipment
Virtual Private Networks (VPNs)	VPNs establish a secure tunnel between multiple locations enabling the secure transfer of traffic over Internet connections
Security Software	Intrusion Detection System (IDS)/Intrusion Prevention System (IPS) security software implemented on the site CPE equipment
Customer VRFs	Customers may request additional VRFs to separate mission critical traffic
Internet connectivity (outbound)	Outbound connectivity via your HSCN connectivity service (protected by Advanced Network Monitoring)
Internet (In-bound)	Inbound Internet access to Internet facing applications hosted by NHS organisations
Multi-tenancy sites (including Dynamic Bandwidth Allocation)	Provides the ability to share bandwidth amongst multiple tenants where those tenants have agreed to share a HSCN service
Cloud service access	Access to cloud service providers e.g. Microsoft Azure, AWS
DNS	Customers have the option to procure a managed DNS Service
SIP trunking (support for only)	Support for SIP trunking between a customer PABX system or unified comms service and a public domain Internet Telephone Service Provider (ITSP)
PSN services	Customers can procure PSN certified services

Who can use this DPS?

All public sector and government organisations can use this agreement, as can a number of private sector organisations who are providing health and social care services.

Benefits of using the DPS

- **flexible** - new suppliers can apply to join at any point, increasing the potential capacity for HSCN access services
- **simpler, quicker process** - perfect for SMEs looking to access public sector business
- **automated, electronic process** - using existing supplier selection tools and systems available to CCS
- **choice** - increased range of HSCN Complaint suppliers compared to the Network Services framework
- **filtering of supplier offering** - enabling the selection of suppliers capable of meeting your requirements
- **dynamic** - you can build specifications, competitions and contracts in a way to suit you
- **supports social value** - enabling customers to undertake competitions that take social value into account

How the DPS is structured

All suppliers under the DPS can tender to provide HSCN Access Services.

Where you require PSN Services as well as HSCN Services, it is possible to filter for suppliers who are capable of supplying both.

How you can buy through this DPS

Customers are able to access the HSCN Access Services DPS via GOV.UK and undertake a competition amongst suppliers. Customers will need to:

1. Register on [SID4GOV](#)
2. Navigate to the DPS for HSCN Access Services
3. Use filters to reflect contract requirements and filter appropriate suppliers (see Annex 1)
4. Export list of suppliers from SID4GOV

Note: it is recommended that the exported supplier list is used within 2 working days, as new suppliers may be applying to join at any point, thus changing those eligible to compete

5. Create a competition on the customer's chosen eProcurement system, inviting the identified DPS suppliers and detailing the specification, evaluation criteria and contract format
6. Conduct competition and evaluate (allowing at least 10 days for supplier responses)
7. Determine intention to award to supplier/s
8. Return to SID4GOV and request any required evidence from winning supplier/s
9. Supplier/s share evidence through system (recommended to do so within 2 days)
10. If satisfied with evidence, proceed to award
11. Inform CCS of contract award via SID4GOV
12. Where appropriate, issue Contract Award Notice/Contracts Finder notice

Undertaking a competition

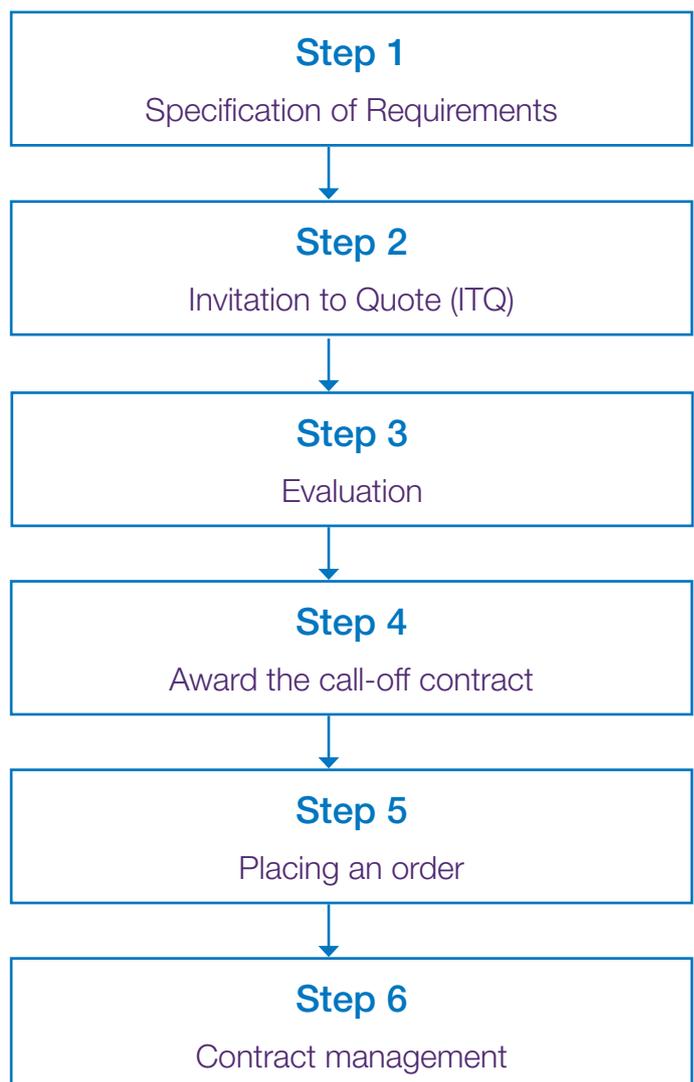
Once customers have drawn down their list of relevant suppliers to invite to competition from the system, it is important that they initiate the competition within 2 days of identifying the suppliers capable of meeting your requirements from the DPS. Customers are able to carry out the competition on the eProcurement system of their choosing.

What have CCS already done?

Via the [Supplier Registration Service](#), CCS has already invited suppliers to populate their responses to the [Standard Selection Questionnaire](#). CCS has not mandated suppliers to provide evidence up front, rather, they are self-certifying that they are able to meet the required standards. When customers have completed their competition and intend to award to a supplier, they can request selection questionnaire evidence from the relevant supplier and review. This evidence can be requested and viewed via the [SID4GOV](#) system.

How do I structure the competition?

Under a DPS, customers are able to determine how they structure their contract, competition and evaluation criteria to best suit their requirement, in accordance with public procurement regulations. This gives you flexibility dependent on your requirement, for example you may want a short or long term contract, or you might want different levels of resilience and bandwidth at different sites. In any case, best practice for competitions would include the following steps:



Step 1: Developing a specification

The specification sets out a full and accurate statement of what is required and forms part of the documentation that is sent out to all suppliers when inviting them to quote.

It has 3 main aims:

- To communicate to potential suppliers what is required
- To provide clear and transparent evaluation criteria for proposals to be measured against
- Ensure that open competition is achieved

A good specification should:

- Provide a clear and concise description of what is required
- Highlight the features that are essential to you
- Provide an opportunity for suppliers to offer technical solutions
- Allow potential suppliers to provide a price for the services they offer

Pricing/cost model

Customers should design a pricing schedule that best fits the end requirement, ensuring clarity and fairness. Best practice would be to consider using whole life cost or total cost of ownership models.

Evaluation criteria and weightings

Evaluation should concentrate on the supplier's ability to best meet the outlined requirements and pricing/cost model. The evaluation weightings should be issued upfront and follow what was set out in Schedule 5 of the DPS agreement; under this DPS, you have the flexibility to determine the specific weightings and measures.

Delivery - Customers should carefully consider delivery and timescales requirements. Ensure that timescales factor in the ordering and delivery of the connection and, where needed, time to transition from existing services.

Best practice will require the development of an Implementation Plan for each service to be connected with milestones.

Financial standing - CCS has tested the financial standing of appointed suppliers, at the point of them joining the DPS, and will monitor them through the life of the DPS. A threshold Dunn and Bradstreet (D&B) score of 45 is set, so all appointed suppliers have met/exceeded this threshold, or their accounts have been reviewed and sufficient financial assurance has been provided.

Insurances

In order to join the DPS, suppliers have confirmed that they comply with all statutory requirements surrounding insurances. Customers can determine levels and types of insurances they require as part of their contract, and test through competition.

Subcontractors

It is advisable that customers seek detail and assurances of any subcontractors that will be used by the supplier they appoint. This can be asked as part of the competition, and the contract terms can reflect the requirement to keep the customer updated as to any subcontractor changes.

Does your Call for Competition include sensitive or confidential information?

Customers may wish to protect the content of their competition from being released into the public domain. Whilst there are confidentiality clauses in place within the contract template under this DPS, these do not apply until a contract is signed between the customer and the successful supplier.

Therefore, customers may choose to include an additional layer of confidentiality to protect their brief and the information contained within it during the further competition phase, by using a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA).

Step 2: Call for Competition

To ensure compliance with current procurement regulations, customers must issue the Call for Competition to ALL capable suppliers. Under a DPS, this means all suppliers on the shortlist obtained after filtering against specific customer requirements.

Details of the procurement process, timeline, award criteria and evaluation procedure must be published to all capable suppliers at the same time the Call for Competition is published.

If suppliers ask any questions during the Call for Competition process, all suppliers must be treated fairly and equally without discrimination. Any questions received must be anonymised, making sure that they do not reveal the identity of the originator, or reveal any potentially commercially sensitive information relating to the originator. Appropriate responses must be issued, sharing both the question and answer to all participating suppliers, at the same time.

Customers should allow a reasonable amount of time for proposals to be submitted. Under a DPS, at least 10 calendar days must be allowed for suppliers to submit their bids.

You may use whichever eProcurement system you deem suitable. Customers are also able to make use of the CCS [eSourcing Suite](#) which enables them to:

- respond to supplier clarification questions
- track bid responses
- send reminders to bidders
- communicate to successful and unsuccessful suppliers
- provide feedback to all parties

For information on how to do this, please refer to the [eSourcing Suite user guidance](#).

Step 3: Evaluation

After the closing date, responses need to be evaluated in accordance with the evaluation criteria and procedures that were set out.

Customers must ensure that they maintain a fully documented audit trail of the results and final award decision. Information on criteria and weightings for competitions under this DPS can be found in Schedule 5 of the DPS Agreement.

Step 4: Award

Following evaluation, customers can then proceed to request access to supporting evidence from the supplier/s intending to be awarded. This evidence can be accessed via the system, using the original transaction used to shortlist the suppliers. Suppliers will receive notification via the system, and can choose to share documentation they have already uploaded to the system, or to add new evidence which may be relevant to a specific contract. Once satisfied with the evidence provided, and with the outcome of the competition, customers can proceed to award by notifying suppliers through the eProcurement system used to undertake the competition, and also informing CCS of the award by using the system.

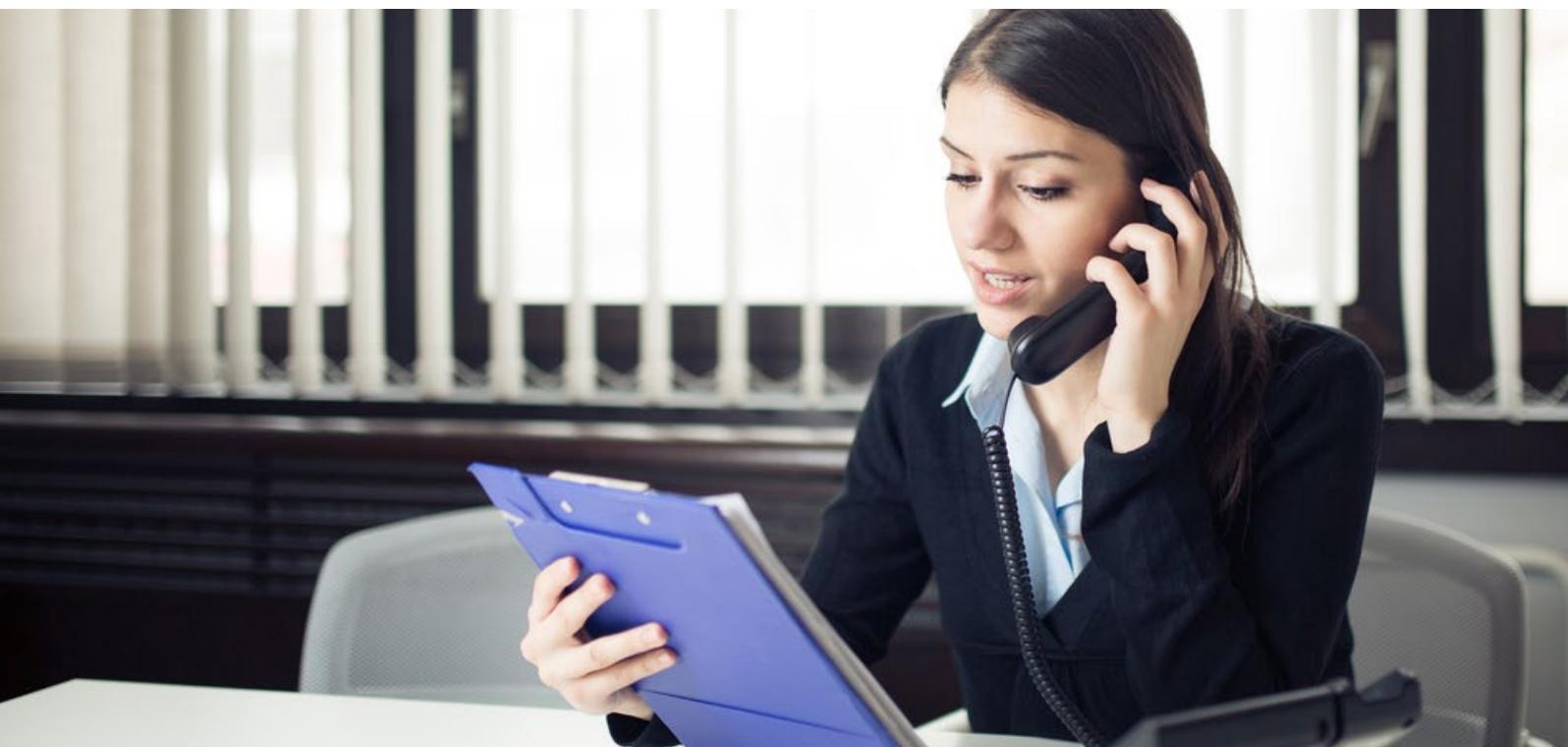
Certain customers are also obliged to publish details of their award within Contracts Finder; the customer should follow their own organisation's guidance on this, and also refer to the relevant [Procurement Policy Note 07/16](#).

Step 5: Placing an Order

This DPS includes a standard set of suggested contract terms and conditions (Schedule 4 of the DPS Agreement); this contract sets out the legal relationship between the customer and the supplier. At the time of ordering, the supplier will need to send a signed copy of the contract to the customer, to confirm that the project has been accepted.

Step 6: Contract management

Once the supplier has been awarded, customers should manage them to ensure they are performing to meet requirements. CCS can be used as an escalation point to support, if customers have any issues with under performance during the life of the contract.



FAQs

Can direct awards be made under a DPS?

No, direct awards cannot be made under a DPS.

How do new suppliers join the DPS?

Simply by registering on the [Supplier Registration Service](#), and completing the additional relevant questions for the DPS they wish to be appointed to.

Are supplier numbers restricted?

No, supplier numbers cannot be restricted under a DPS.

How long will the DPS operate for and how long can resulting contracts last?

The HSCN Access Services DPS will be established for an initial 30 month period, with the possibility to extend it out to 78 months. It is expected that the DPS will be terminated once a successor procurement vehicle is in place. The termination of the DPS agreement does not affect contracts for services let under it – they can continue to run on.

Will the HSCN Access Services DPS support SMEs and [social value](#)?

Yes, the very nature of a DPS with its electronic, automated and standardised approach to selection supports SME access. Social value is a valid award criteria under the DPS, and so can be built into procurements.

Can customers determine their own specification, evaluation and contract terms?

Yes, customers can decide upon their own specification, how they wish to evaluate and the contract format they require (number of years, turnkey supply or a single service).



Help and advice

If you would like help deciding which service or buying option will best meet your specific needs please get in touch with our category experts:

 info@crowcommercial.gov.uk

 0345 410 2222

You can also learn more about what we offer online:

 www.gov.uk/ccs

 [@gov_procurement](https://twitter.com/gov_procurement)

 [Crown Commercial Service](https://www.linkedin.com/company/crown-commercial-service)