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Circulation: Contract Managers, DES Programme Leads, Local Authority Directors of Public Health, GPs, Hospital Eye Services, Optometrists, STPs and CCG Medical Directors

27th March 2018

Dear Colleagues,

Re-commissioning NHS England Diabetic Eye Screening Programmes (DESP) across the South West

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of our plans to re-procure the DESP programme across the South West of England (Cornwall & the Isles of Scilly, Devon, Plymouth, Torbay, Somerset, North Somerset, Bristol, South Gloucestershire). Gloucestershire will be included in the procurement as a standalone lot to achieve economies of scale in the procurement process across the NHS England South West and South Central Public Health footprints.

All current contracts for DESP programmes will expire on 31st March 2019. European Union procurement regulations were introduced in 2015 which altered the way public bodies could offer contracts to their Providers. Contracts that may have previously been awarded on a rolling basis can no longer continue to be guaranteed and these contracts should be offered to the Market for competent providers to compete for them. NHS England therefore intends to procure Diabetic Eye Services to secure the ongoing delivery of this national screening programme post 2019 and act in accordance with procurement legislation.

A recognised potential risk of the re-procurement process is uncertainty and service disruption to incumbent providers while it is under way. We are committed to ensuring that where possible this is minimised as much as possible and aim to keep stakeholders and current providers as informed as much as we legally can throughout the process. To ensure that views are heard during the planning phase and we avoid unintended negative consequences we plan to undertake a number of actions as detailed below.

Firstly, the planning of the final model will be informed by a wide ranging consultation process including patient representatives, GPs, service leads and practitioners, CCG's plus a wide range of other stakeholders including Public Health England and Quality Assurance. Two surveys are currently being circulated:

- the first a stakeholder survey running to the end of April 2018 is looking at which geographies we should base future services on. This is attached at the end of this letter alongside an options

- analysis including further background to the procurement, and,
- the second a service user survey which closes on 13th May 2018, looks at accessibility and responsiveness of future services which can be accessed on the following link
<https://surveys.phe.org.uk/TakeSurvey.aspx?SurveyID=I8KH38201>

We would welcome your response to the stakeholder survey and your support in circulating this and the service user survey via your networks, contact lists and social media, to help encourage as much feedback as possible – the more responses the better informed the procurement.

Secondly, we aim to ensure the procurement steering group and scoring panel is as representative as possible and aim to include Service User, CCG, Local Authority, HES / Optometry, Public Health England, NHS England and Primary Care representatives. We are unable to include representatives from existing local DESP programmes owing to conflicts of interest, but as in other procurements will aim to engage programme managers from other areas in the scoring process. This will enable us to identify, monitor and manage potential risks if and when they arise throughout the procurement time-table and ensure bidder responses are evaluated by a panel with wide ranging expertise and perspective.

Timescale wise, the new contract for DESP will commence on 1st April 2019 thus the actual procurement process will start in full in early June following two market engagement events – one in the south of the patch, one in the north. Scoring of bids will occur in August / September with announcements of the preferred bidders to be made in November. We should therefore have a minimum 4 month hand-over period for existing providers to transfer the service arrangements to new providers should this be necessary. Documents related to the tendering exercise will be published at the Contracts Finder website <https://online.contractsfinder.businesslink.gov.uk/>

Over the coming weeks we will aim to be in touch with key stakeholders to discuss the procurement and any aspirations or concerns you may have. Please feel free to contact Kirstyedlin@nhs.net, Public Health Commissioning Manager, should you have any immediate questions or observations about the procurement or you would be interested in being involved in the procurement process.

Once again we would welcome your engagement in completing the stakeholder survey attached and helping influence the future of local Diabetic Eye Screening Services.

Thanking you in advance.

Yours sincerely



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