

Community Support Services Tender: Frequently Asked Questions

ID	Question	BCC Response
<i>Tender</i>		
1.	Will the tender timescales allow sufficient time for tender preparation?	In devising the tender timeline the council will consider what is a reasonable timeframe to enable providers to access, read and form a response to the tender. The deadline for tender responses will be confirmed at the point the tender is advertised. Providers should also note that as the CSS framework will be open, bids can be submitted at any time; however, these will be evaluated periodically.
2.	Has BCC given consideration to proportionality in developing the tender questions and devising the application process for the framework?	<p>Yes, the council has considered proportionality when developing the tender process and questions. There are minimum requirements that BCC expects from providers of social care services and must therefore obtain assurance of an organisation's ability to meet these as part of the tender process.</p> <p>BCC recognises that the requirements differ between the lots and the tender questions therefore reflect this. The tender questions only request information that is essential in order to assess the provider's ability to meet the requirements of that particular lot. Where a provider wishes to apply for multiple lots they will be permitted to submit the same response for multiple applications should they choose.</p>

3.	Will providers receive feedback if they are unsuccessful in securing a place on the framework?	Providers who are not successful in their application to join the CSS framework will receive notification of this and receive feedback. This will include why their bid was unsuccessful and how their tender submission could have been improved. Providers who are not successful in their initial application will be able to re-apply for a place on the framework at any time, however, bids will be evaluated on a quarterly basis, or more frequently if deemed necessary by the council.
4.	What information will providers be required to supply as part of the tender process? In particular, what policies will be required?	<p>The tender documents will clearly outline what information is required from providers in order to apply to join the framework. The CSS market engagement event on 17th May provided guidance on the type of information that will be requested from providers. The slides from this event can be accessed on the CSS Commissioning webpage: www.bristol.gov.uk/csscommissioning</p> <p>There will be guidance notes to support the tender questions that will make clear when a policy is required.</p>
5.	How will BCC assess tenders from providers?	As part of the tender documents BCC will publish a CSS specification. This will outline BCC's requirements for the service and the quality standards. The tender questions will assess a provider's ability to meet the key requirements outlined in the service specification. For some lots the tender questions will differ, to ensure that the assessment is proportionate and relevant. For each tender question there will be sub-criteria to provide further clarity about what the submission will be assessed against. The pass mark each question will

		also be published with the tender documents.
6.	Will there be different tender questions per Lot?	<p>The Commissioning Plan will outline the approach to the tender and the different requirements for each lot and we will provide the opportunity for providers to seek any clarification they have on the process.</p> <p>As above, BCC recognises that the requirements differ between the lots and the tender questions therefore reflect this and there are some differences between lots. The tender questions only request information that is essential in order to assess the provider's ability to meet the requirements of that particular lot. Where a provider wishes to apply for multiple lots they will be permitted to submit the same response for multiple applications should they choose. The tender guidance will clearly set out which questions need to be completed in order to apply for each lot.</p>
7.	As the framework will be an open framework, how regularly will there be an opportunity to bid to be on the framework?	Providers will be able to submit an application to join the CSS framework at any point in time. However, the council will evaluate applications at fixed points and not immediately on receipt of an application. The frequency of evaluations is likely to vary based on demand for services and the volume of applications received, however, as a minimum this is expected to be quarterly.
8.	Can you provide a breakdown of service user delivery against the new price bands based on 15/16 activity data?	To date, CSS services have not been commissioned in line with the new proposed bands (standard, intermediate 1, intermediate 2 and enhanced). As part of the implementation of the new CSS contracts the

		council will be reviewing support plans of existing service users and identifying the band that they fall within, to able the package prices to be adjusted accordingly. This exercise has not yet been undertaken so we are not yet in a position to share this information but this will be discussed with providers on an individual basis for the packages they provide.
9.	How will providers be notified that the tender has gone live?	Providers must register on ProContract in order to access the tender documents and submit a bid. All providers registered will receive a notification via the system when the tender goes live. The council also intends to email notification to providers that have registered an interest in the tender process by attending one of the provider forums.
<i>Future Requirements</i>		
10.	Will the provision of core support change in the future?	<p>Initially, core support will continue to be provided in the same way for existing service users. However, all cases will be reviewed to determine whether this is needed going forward. It is anticipated that this will take place within the first three months following the launch of the framework but the timescales for completing this will be dependent on a number of factors that will contribute to review prioritisation.</p> <p>There are some changes expected to core support, to ensure that this is transparent. Core support will only be included in a package of care where this is explicitly identified in the individual's assessment and support plan.</p>

		The tender documents, including the commissioning plan and specification, will outline BCC's future requirements for all types of Community Support Services. This will include outlining the future requirements of what is currently referred to as core support and the process that will be followed to determine the future cost of this to ensure a greater level of transparency and value for money.
11.	How will the price for waking/sleep in nights be calculated?	Further information will be provided within the tender documents. Waking/sleeping nights will not be included within the hourly rates and, where this is identified as a requirement in an individual's support plan, providers will be asked to submit a price for this, in addition to the hourly rate and in line with the price parameters set by the council.
12.	What is anticipated will be delivered as part of day services that could not be part of Community Outreach?	The CSS specification will outline the council's requirements for services, which will include a breakdown of anticipated activities within each category of CSS (day services, community outreach, accommodation based support and 'Time for You' carers services). The key difference is that day services will be provided from a fixed base, whereas community outreach services will not have a fixed base.
13.	What category will support that is provided in an individual's home fall into if the individual is the owner?	The specification will include the requirements for each category of care/support, including a description of each service and the typical tasks involved. If the support provider is not the provider of the accommodation and/or does not have a partnership

		<p>agreement with the landlord and delivers care in the individual's own home, this would fall within the 'support to access the local community' category.</p> <p>In this instance, if a sleep-in/waking night requirement is identified, this will be priced separately to the hourly rate, as outlined above.</p>
Implementation		
14.	Will there be preferred providers on the framework?	No. All providers who successfully secure a place on the framework will have an equal opportunity to bid for packages within their relevant lots.
15.	If successful in securing a place on the CSS framework will providers be expected to offer provision immediately?	<p>Where existing providers are successful in applying to join the framework and already provide a CSS service to an existing service user, a direct award for that service user will be made for up to 12 months, assuming the provider agrees to adjust the hourly rate in line with the new price brackets. In this scenario the provider will be required to continue providing care from the launch of the new framework, to ensure a seamless transition for service users.</p> <p>For new providers and/or providers that have extended their service offer to other lots, the framework will commence from the go-live date, from which point the council will use the framework to make all placements. Successful providers will be informed of opportunities within their lot (s) that match the categories of care that the provider has selected and can apply to deliver care packages from the outset. However, as a place on the framework does not result in guaranteed work, providers are not required to commit to providing a</p>

		service from the launch of the framework, though it will be advantageous to do so at the earliest opportunity to secure contracts.
16.	Will providers be expected to provide the entire support package for an individual service user?	The support plan may stipulate whether the service user has a preference for their needs to be met entirely by an individual provider or if they would prefer to receive a service from more than one provider. Where this applies it will be made explicit when the placement opportunity is offered to framework providers.
17.	How will the future price ranges be determined?	<p>BCC has undertaken financial modelling on the existing CSS prices to identify the range in price, and also considered local and national benchmarking, to determine appropriate price bands. For accommodation based support and outreach there will be four price bands per service: standard, intermediate 1, intermediate 2 and enhanced. For day services there will be three price bands: standard, intermediate and enhanced and for Time for You services there will be a single price band. The price bands will be published in the tender documentation.</p> <p>The council will make a direct award for up to 12 months for existing service users to their existing providers, if those providers are successful in securing a place on the framework and agree to adjust the hourly rate to fall within the new price band. The appropriate price band will be set by BCC and the provider will then be required to confirm the hourly rate within the band set.</p>

		For new packages of care, the BCC support plan will identify the appropriate price band and providers will be required to submit a bid including the hourly rate within this band.
18.	Who will determine which need band (and thus applicable price range) applies for an individual?	<p>The need band for new service users will be identified by practitioners as part of the assessment process.</p> <p>The need band for existing service users will be identified by BCC following discussion with the provider; BCC staff will make the final judgement.</p>
19.	Will service user choice be considered as part of the process?	Yes, service user choice will be considered at each stage in the process. This will include at the assessment stage and in particular in the production of the support plan, in determining how the identified needs are met. At contract award stage, exceptions have been considered to take into account service user choice, for example the option for the service user to request an alternative provider and to pay a top up. The commissioning plan will provide more detail about how service user choice will be integral to the process.
20.	Can existing service users choose to continue receiving support from an existing provider following the launch of the framework or a subsequent review if the provider is not selected via the mini-tender?	Yes, service users can exercise control and opt to continue receiving support from an existing provider by moving to a personal budget or paying a top up.
21.	Will providers be notified of which provider is successful in securing a contract for new packages?	Yes.

22.	What will the service user pathway be for Community Support Services?	The CSS strategy outlines the future pathway for new service users. Further detail will be provided within the tender documentation about the implementation process.
23.	If a service user has a personal budget can they choose their own provider or do they have to go through the framework?	<p>Service users will be involved in the development of their support plan. During this process they will input into what they feel their needs and strengths are and the outcomes that they want to achieve. Information from the support planning process will inform the service that needs to be commissioned.</p> <p>If a service user has a budget that is managed by BCC, the service users will be informed of the most suitable service available that meets their needs. In this case the provider will be selected via the framework unless an exception applies.</p> <p>If a service user has a direct payment which is either managed by themselves or a third party, the service user will be able to be choose independently the service that they want to support them to meet their needs and outcomes. The service user will not have to use the framework, however, if they approach the council for a recommendation they will be directed to providers on the CSS framework who meet the specified quality standards.</p>
24.	How will bids be evaluated at the mini-tender stage? If a number of providers submit a bid at exactly the same price, which provider will be selected?	Providers will be assessed against their ability to meet the individual's needs whilst offering best value (assessed as a balance between economy, efficiency

		<p>and effectiveness. The provider offering best value for money and demonstrating that they can meet an individual's needs will then be selected and recommended to the service user. The commissioning plan will outline any exceptions that apply to this.</p> <p>If multiple providers are assessed as being able to meet an individual's needs and have submitted an identical price, then the service user will be asked to make a selection from those providers identified as being able to meet their needs and offering best value.</p> <p>If the service user wishes to use an alternative provider to those shortlisted and the exceptions outlined in the commissioning plan do not apply, they will be entitled to receive a personal budget and select a provider that was not shortlisted.</p>
25.	Will the information gathered via the Performance Management Framework be reviewed?	Yes. The council has devised the Performance Management Framework to provide a mechanism for obtaining information about the quality of services, so this can be monitored throughout the life of the framework. This will highlight any performance issues and enable the council to take action to correct this to safeguard the quality of the services.
26.	Will the Council support providers to complete the Performance Management Framework?	The council will provide guidance to providers, to outline the requirements and timescales for submissions. Providers will be expected to gather and populate information about their services.
27.	Can providers select which type of placements they are	Providers will be required to identify which lot(s) they

	notified of?	are applying for as part of the tender process and select the opportunities they wish to be notified of (for example all learning disabilities placements within outreach). When the framework is live providers will receive notifications for all opportunities within the lot that they have applied for and the selections they have made. Providers will be responsible for updating the council if their preferences change.
28.	Will the process be able to respond to urgent cases?	Yes. The process has been designed to be flexible and to enable the council to commission packages of care in short timescales where this is required. The mini-competition stage can be undertaken in 24 hours if required. Where the case is urgent this will be clearly indicated in the tender documents and the timescales for response will be indicated for each package advertised via the e-procurement system. It is anticipated that the timescales for response at the mini-competition stage will vary from package to package and be dependent upon the individual circumstances.
29.	Will the framework be used for all new packages of care?	As a principle, the framework will be used to commission all new packages of care. However, in exceptional cases the council may choose not to use the framework if an urgent placement is required or if using the framework is considered likely to have a detrimental impact on an individual's wellbeing. The commissioning plan will provide more detail about this.
30.	Will practitioners be made aware of the new commissioning model?	Yes, care management representatives have been engaged throughout the process. Engagement with care management will continue to ensure that all practitioners are aware of the new commissioning

		model prior to its launch. This will include written updates and dissemination of updates at face to face meetings. Online forms and guidance will also be updated to support the process.
31.	Will the process be the same for accommodation based support services?	Yes. The process will be the same for all services within CSS and will involve a conversation with the service user and their family. However, it is recognised that there may be additional complexities to be considered for accommodation based support service users if the provider is their landlord as well as service provider, so exceptions may apply to the use of the framework or the award of the contract; this would be considered on a case by case basis.
32.	What consideration has been given to the release of confidential information at the mini-competition stage?	At the mini-competition stage information will be shared with providers via the e-procurement system, in order to enable providers to assess whether they can meet an individual's needs and if so, submit a bid. The information shared will be anonymised and if there is particular sensitive information this will be withheld and any providers interested in applying will be invited to contact brokerage for further detail on this.
33.	Has the impact of the National Living Wage been considered on the initial price ranges and to address future potential increases?	<p>The council is reviewing the price ranges to assess whether National Living Wage can be accounted for within the range or if the range needs to be extended. The price ranges will be finalised prior to the point of tender and will be set at a level the council considers sufficient to incorporate the National Living Wage.</p> <p>The approach to subsequent price reviews linked to</p>

		National Living Wage is still being finalised. The commissioning plan will outline the mechanism for reviewing the price ranges on an annual basis, to account for annual increments but also any changes to external factors, such as the National Living Wage.
34.	If an individual requires supported living and receives the accommodation from outside Bristol, will Ordinary Residence apply?	The CSS re-commissioning process will not impact on the way in which Ordinary Residence is determined.
35.	At what stage can providers assess individuals and what happens if the provider has a different view regarding the individual's needs to that identified in the support plan?	<p>Typically the shortlisted provider will be invited to assess an individual following the mini-competition. This is to avoid potential disruption to the service user arising from visits from a number of providers, therefore the assessments will be limited to just the shortlisted provider in most cases.</p> <p>Following the assessment the provider and the individual will be required to confirm if they wish to go ahead with the placement. The commissioning plan will provide more detail about the process that will be followed if the provider considers the individual's needs to be different, thus requiring a change to the volume of hours or to the level of need. If the level of need is deemed to be significantly different the individual will need to be re-assessed and the package re-advertised on the framework in the interests of transparency and fair competition. If the change is within the specified tolerance (outlined in the commissioning plan) then providers may be able to adjust their hourly rate without the need to re-advertise the package.</p>

36.	Can providers continue to make brokerage aware of voids rather than having to apply via the framework?	No, the process for filling voids will need to change to ensure transparency and equal competition. All packages will be awarded via the framework (unless an exception applies and further detail can be found in the commissioning plan), so if a provider has a vacancy they will need to pro-actively view the opportunities that are advertised via the framework and submit a bid.
37.	How will day services be purchased?	Initially spot contracts will be awarded for all categories of care and will relate to specific individuals. The commissioning model offers the flexibility to award block contracts for some/all service types and this will be considered at a later date and be informed by market trends. If a block contract opportunity arises, only providers on the CSS framework will be able to apply.
38.	Will the pricing tool replace the Resource Allocation System?	No, the pricing tool will not replace the Resource Allocation System. The pricing tool will be the mechanism by which to identify the most appropriate band of need for CSS service users, so services can be commissioned at within the appropriate price range to align cost and need.
39.	Will the council manage the development of consortiums?	The new commissioning model enables individual providers and/or consortiums to secure a place on the framework and submit offers for packages of care. If providers wish to partner with other organisations, this will need to be co-ordinated and pursued by those organisations directly, however, Voscur may be able to offer some support to this process.
40.	Will smaller providers be expected to submit bids for	Yes, the new commissioning model will apply to all

	packages in the same way as larger organisations?	CSS services and providers on the framework. This is to ensure consistency and equity of opportunity.
41.	Have the Finance and Contracts team been engaged and have they committed to make payments to providers in line with the contract terms?	Yes, colleagues from Finance and Contracts have been engaged throughout this process. The back office processes will be reviewed in order to support the effective operation of the new commissioning model.
42.	Will service users have the option to select an alternative provider to that shortlisted and pay a top up?	Yes, service users will be entitled to select an alternative provider to that shortlisted if they wish and are prepared to pay a top up. Further detail about this will be included in the commissioning plan.
43.	Does the entire package need to be provided by a single provider or can providers apply to deliver part of a package?	In some instances there may be a requirement for the entire package to be delivered by the same organisation, whereas in others there may be flexibility for the package to be delivered by multiple providers. This will be determined by the individual's needs and their preferences regarding how needs are met. The documentation issued at the mini-competition stage will clearly outline the requirements.
44.	What will be the approach to individuals in receipt of supporting people funding?	The funding stream of the individual will not impact on the way services are commissioned and it is anticipated that packages funded from other sources will follow the same process. The commissioning plan will provide more information about the approach to individuals in receipt of supporting people funding and further conversations will be held with providers as required.
45.	Can providers request that packages are re-advertised through the framework, for example, if an individual in	If a provider considers an individual's needs to have changed they can request a review. If the outcome of

	supported living is ready to move to alternative accommodation?	the review is that the individual's needs have significantly changed, the package will be advertised on the framework in order to identify a suitable provider.
46.	What if a provider cannot deliver care and support within the identified price ranges?	If a provider cannot deliver the required care and support within the identified price range they should not submit an offer for the package of care. All future contract awards following the launch of the framework must fall within the identified price range, to achieve the aims of better aligning need and cost, delivering value for money services and ensuring consistency.
47.	If a provider is unable to agree to the new price ranges what price will be applied for the existing package of care until a new provider is identified and the transition completed?	If the scenario arises whereby an existing provider does not agree to provide the care and support within the identified price range, the council will seek to negotiate a temporary arrangement with that provider until an alternative provider has been identified.
48.	How will reviews be prioritised during the first 12 months?	<p>The council intends to review the needs of all existing service users within 12 months of the framework launching. The reviews will be prioritised and the timescales for each reviewing cohort will be determined post tender when the number of placements that fall within each category is known.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cohort 1 – packages with an existing provider that fails to secure a place on the framework/does not apply. • Cohort 2 – packages with an existing provider that secures a place on the framework but does not agreed to adjust their hourly rate.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cohort 3 – packages that currently include core support. • Cohort 4 – packages for which a direct award was made at the point the framework launched. <p>Further detail about the prioritisation of reviews will be included within the commissioning plan.</p>
49.	<p>If there is a temporary change in need, will the existing provider be requested to provide an additional level of support for a time limited period or will the additional hours be advertised via the framework?</p>	<p>The approach will be determined on a case by case basis depending on the needs and preferences of the individual and the extent of the additional support required.</p>