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tameside Metropolitan borough COUNCIL

**Soft Market testing**

Provision of generalist advice, support and information including social welfare, debt, housing, benefits and specialist employment advice to residents of Tameside

Contract Period:

**1 April 2021 – 31 March 2024**

1. **Background**

Tameside Council is committed to providing high quality, welfare advice services. These services will play an important role in maximising people’s independence and help prevent reliance and dependency on more intensive care and support.

Good information and advice (which is current, relevant and accurate) is essential for all who need, or may need support in order to know their rights and to live independently. It should help people make informed choices, enable them to take control and help maintain their abilities, skills and independence well into the future.

Tameside Council is keen to encourage greater independence among its population and it is anticipated that the provider will work proactively to significantly reduce repeat demand for services from customers wherever possible. Strong signposting to online services and to other agencies, particularly to empower the client to help themselves, should be core to the advice. Tameside Council will require the Provider to provide quarterly management information to include total volume of repeat visits.

We would like to take the opportunity to do some `soft market testing’ as outlined below, to determine current interest levels in the market.

1. **Key Aims**

The delivery of generalist advice, which provides independent impartial advice that is efficient and effective in preventing and reducing the problems faced by citizens in relation to (but not limited to):

* Benefits & Tax Credits
* Debt
* Employment
* Health & Social Care
* Housing
* Immigration & Asylum
* Tax
* Relationship & Family
* Discrimination
* The legal system
* Consumer Goods & Services

The delivery of specialist employment advice which helps people to realise their rights, maintain their employment, assist with dispute resolution and provide assistance with Employment Tribunals.

Advice will be accessible to a wide range of individuals and communities; offered in appropriate languages and within a culture of equality and diversity. There will be a collaborative approach in working with other agencies to share what works and to support the development of more co-ordinated services that are responsive to local need.

The Provider will maintain referral pathways with the Council’s Welfare Rights and Debt Advice Service for those residents who require help in appealing negative benefit decisions and for households who are at risk of homelessness due to rent or mortgage arrears.

The Provider will have demonstrable linkages with other appropriate services to support people to develop long term solutions, for example by tackling the root causes of problems including, but not limited to, improving Service Users’ skills in literacy, job search, employment prospects and money management.

The Provider will develop the organisation by bidding for and securing additional external funding in order to ensure that the organisation is sustainable and not entirely dependent upon Local Authority funding and to increase the social value of the organisation to the Borough.

**Project Timescales**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Stage of the project** | **Anticipated deadline** |
| Soft market testing | 18th September 2020 – 13th October 2020 |
| Progress to tender | To be confirmed |
| Closing date for suppliers to have submitted documents | To be confirmed |
| Result of Procurement Process | To be confirmed |
| Contract Start Date | 1st April 2021 |

1. **Soft Market Testing**

**THIS IS NOT A CALL FOR COMPETITION**

The Soft Market Test is intended to allow interested organisations with relevant experience to outline their views and provide information with no commitment to themselves or Tameside Council.

Tameside Council is looking to award a contract commencing 1 April 2021. If a decision is made to tender this service the maximum annual budget is £116,000. It is further envisaged that the initial contract would be for a period of 3 years. The provider will be expected to provide accessible advice through various channels to include digital/on-line, webchat, telephone and also have a main service hub (by appointment and/or drop in) within the Borough. During the Soft Market Test we would like to gauge the level of interest.

**Note: Coronavirus may restrict face to face delivery of services and we would expect the provider to be able to effectively deliver services remotely.**

**Stage 1 -** Interested suppliers are required to complete the following company information form and a short questionnaire (at appendix 1). Suppliers who complete and return the questionnaire ***may*** be invited to meet with Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council representatives to discuss its requirements.

The questionnaire should be returned via The Chest - <https://www.the-chest.org.uk/> by 13th October 2020. **The questionnaire should be returned via the messaging portal to be considered.**

If Suppliers have any questions about this soft market test, such questions should be submitted to the Council using the ‘Question and Answer’ facility within the opportunity advertised on The Chest. A copy of the question and a copy of the written reply may be circulated to all Suppliers, with anonymity of the Supplier preserved. Suppliers must not raise questions through any other channels, including emails direct to the Council or to STAR Procurement. No questions will be responded to, other than those raised through The Chest as described above

**We encourage your participation in this soft market testing exercise, but must emphasise that your involvement in this exercise will not carry any commercial advantage in any ensuing procurement process.**

**No information provided in response to this soft market testing exercise will be used in any evaluation of any subsequent response to a procurement exercise.**

1. **General Information**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **3.1** | Full name of your organisation: |  |
| Contact Details Name: |  |
| Job Title: |  |
| Address: |  |
| Telephone no: |  |
| Fax No: |  |
| Mobile No: |  |
| Email Address: |  |
| Web Address (if any): |  |

1. **Undertaking from the supplier**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name:\* |  |
| Signed: | Duly authorised on behalf of the Supplier  (Electronic signature required here) |
| Position: |  |
| Date: |  |

**Appendix 1 – Questionnaire**

**Please complete the following questionnaire fully, highlighting any information that you consider to be commercially sensitive\***

1. Would you be interested in bidding for this proposed Project? (500 words)

If Yes, why?

If No, why not?

1. Please detail the experience your organisation has in delivering this type of service? (500 words)
2. Please detail how you will meet the current and future requirements as detailed in the service specification? (500 words)
3. When/if TMBC go to tender following the soft market test, is there anything in addition to the information in this brief that suppliers would need to be advised of in order to aid in their response. (500 words)
4. Please can you detail a brief statement to demonstrate what added value your organisation can offer in the market? (500 words)