****

**8896**

**TAMESIDE Council**

**Soft Market testing**

**Early Years Application**

1. **Background**

All three and four-year-olds in England are entitled to 15 hours of free early education each week over a minimum of 38 weeks of the year (570 hours per year), Some parents/carers of three and four-year-olds who meet criteria (via Her Majesties Revenue and Customs, HMRC) are entitled to 30 hours of free early education each week over a minimum of 38 weeks of the year (1140 hours per year)

Some two-year-olds who meet eligibility criteria are also eligible and entitled to 15 hours of free early education each week as described above.

The specific duties surrounding this entitlement are set out in the Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on the Delivery of Free Early Education and Childcare (DfE, June 2018).

1. **Key Aims**

TMBC would like to ensure we have value for money with the system. We are keen to continue improving service delivery, and improved integration with other existing systems within Children’s Services, supported by efficient end to end processes. Within this document is a summary of the required functionality. We welcome suppliers’ solutions to demonstrate how this functionality can be supported.

A new specification is under development however any system we purchase will need to provide the following functionality:

1. To enable the Early Education Funding team to administer and make electronic payment for all early years entitlements including, but not limited to:
   1. To facilitate the funding of the 15 hour Entitlement for eligible 2 year olds, including flexible application methods and the ability to perform electronic eligibility checks for 2 year funding with instant access to the DFE Eligibility Checking Service (ECS) to provide an instant decision response and subsequent application of this additional funding entitlement within the system once a provider submits its headcount funding claims.
   2. To facilitate the funding of Universal 15 hour Entitlement for all 3 and 4 year olds to a broad range of early years providers.
   3. To facilitate the funding of Extended Entitlement (30 Hours) for eligible 3 and 4 year olds with access to the DFE Eligibility Checking Service (ECS) to provide an instant decision response and application of this additional funding entitlement within the system.
   4. To facilitate the funding of Early Years Pupil Premium including the ability to perform automated electronic eligibility checks via the DFE Eligibility Checking Service (ECS) to provide an instant decision response and application of this additional funding entitlement within the system.
   5. Ability to apply Disability Access Fund premium, electronically to all eligible children including the ability for the system to facilitate the upload of any supporting documentation supplied by early years providers and retention on the child’s record.
   6. Funding payments – ability to produce tailored payment files in a format that can feed directly into Tameside's locally configured Financial Systems. Ability to provide flexible payment methods for each provider.
   7. Ability for a secure online gateway for all early years providers to submit funding claims electronically including, 2 Year funding, Universal and Extended Entitlements for 2, 3 and 4 year olds, Funding adjustments, Early Years Pupil Premium and Disability Access Fund.
   8. the solution should hold the details of all children accessing free early years education including; name; address; DOB; ethnicity; SEND details; criteria under which the child is eligible (two-year-olds); name/address change history; setting(s) attended by the child; Funding Type (2, 3 or 4 year old funding); hours/sessions attended; DAF, EYFF supplement indicators (including IMD); Stretched Offer details.
2. The solution should be able to accurately calculate payments that are to be made to providers based upon the number of hours/sessions attended by each child multiplied by the relevant funding rate. Calculations should account for; the maximum number of hours allowed – including any funding supplements; different funding rates for different provider types and/or age ranges; additional (ad hoc) payments for providers, for example adjustments
3. Pop-ups within the system should indicate any potential 'over funding' of children i.e. if a child is to exceed the maximum number of hours or if a child is attending more than one setting. Date of birth validations against funding types should also take place and pop-up warnings should appear where a DOB range is invalid
4. To enable the Families Information Service to provide comprehensive and up to date information about all childcare and early education services within the borough to fulfil the Statutory Guidance as indicated above. To be able to provide advice and information to families within Tameside including access to online information and childcare searches.

1. General Requirements
   1. ability to migrate data to other IT systems
   2. inbuilt mechanisms for auto archive to ensure data can be deleted in line with the teams document and retention policies
   3. ability for transfer of information/documents from and to all providers securely
   4. ability to extract detailed information for analysis e.g. to inform the statutory duty to secure sufficient childcare and other DFE financial returns
   5. Ability to conduct the DFE annual early years census
   6. Ability to provide a consistent address matching infrastructure e.g. NLPG

**Project Timescales**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Stage of the project** | **Anticipated Timeline** |
| Soft market testing Start Date | 15th April 2021 |
| Clarification Deadline | 4th May |
| Closing date for suppliers to have submitted documents | **6th May 2021** |
| Progress to chosen procurement | TBC following Soft Market Test |

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 the Council.

**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 Council representatives to discuss its requirements.

The questionnaire should be returned via The Chest - <https://www.the-chest.org.uk/> by 6th May 2021 at 5pm

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\* Please ensure each question is in line with the indicated maximum word count.**

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

If Yes, why?

If No, why not?

Response:

1. Please detail the experience your organisation has in delivering this type of service? (Max 500 words)

We will consider the following:

* Proven track record of delivery
* ability to meet changing demands and in line with statutory requirements
* commitment to ongoing system development and improvement

Response:

1. Please detail how you will meet the current and future requirements as detailed in the service specification? (Max 500 Words)

We will also consider the following:

* Timeframe required to initiate project start date and suggested timescale required from implementation to live date,
* Ability to integrate and share data with other IT systems.
* Ability to meet GDPR and tailor archive functions to the councils own policies

Response:

1. When/if the Council 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. (Max 500 words)

Response:

1. Please can you detail a brief statement to demonstrate what added value your organisation can offer in the market? (Max 500 Words)

Response:

1. Please give some indicative costs/ structures, assuming you can meet all of the requirements in section 2 of this form (word limit: 500).

Please consider the following:

* Upfront costs e.g. Purchasing the Software or Licence Costs
* Project Management Costs/Professional or Technical Installation Costs
* Training Costs including team members and end users
* Ongoing Support or Annual Maintenance costs including regular upgrades to the system
* Any other relevant costs e.g. integration with other systems, data archive

Response:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

THANK-YOU