

Procurement Plan for North Kent and Medway

Procurement Summary

1. Family Services

We intend to invite bids for approximately **2,970** NMS for the provision of face-to-face Family advice within the procurement area of North Kent and Medway. The area currently has a good level of service in the family category and we anticipate that this will continue to be the case. However, to ensure that we continue to operate the breadth of work across the whole procurement area we will invite tenders under **Service Specification B**.

- Providers will be allowed to bid for either the full range of private Family work and/or public law children work.
- Providers will need to have a permanent presence in the PA.
- Where providers wish to undertake private family work they will be required to tender for and undertake a minimum of **100** Legal Help cases per year.
- Those wishing to undertake public law children cases must commit to undertake at least **5** public law certificated cases per year.

2. Family and Housing (Combined Service)

We will set aside a proportion of the available NMS in housing for providers wishing to deliver a combined housing and family service.

There has been little demand for this combination in the procurement area and as a result we will set aside **100** Housing NMS to be delivered as part of this combination.

Providers wishing to deliver housing as part of this service combination will be required to tender for and undertake a minimum of **50** Housing NMS per schedule year.

3. Social Welfare Law Services

We intend to invite tenders for **3,170** NMS across the core Social Welfare Law (SWL) categories of Housing, Debt and Welfare Benefits advice, **100** in Community Care and **210** in Employment.

The area has a good level of service in social welfare law but while there is a good level of access to the core 3 SWL categories, we do not consider the market to be sufficiently developed in the full range of services to tender at the highest specification. We will therefore advertise for tenders under **Service Specification B**.

Housing Welfare Benefits and Debt will be tendered together and providers will be required to both tender for and provide services in all three categories.

- Providers will be able to bid to deliver Housing, Debt and Welfare Benefits services either as a single legal entity or as part of a consortium.
- Housing, Debt and Welfare Benefits providers will be required to have a permanent presence in the PA.
- In addition, providers delivering debt, housing and welfare benefits will be required to undertake a minimum of **100** NMS in each of these categories per schedule year.
- Providers wishing to deliver services in employment will be required to bid for and undertake a minimum of **30** NMS in each schedule year.
- Providers wishing to deliver services in community care will be required to bid for and undertake a minimum of **20** NMS in each schedule year.
- Community Care and Employment providers will be required to have a part-time presence in the PA.
- As SWL tenders are invited under **Service Specification B**, the requirement to employ an authorised litigator in Housing and Community Care will not be an essential criterion.

However, in the Service Specification B areas where a competitive process is necessary to decide between tenders, as part of the selection process we will prefer providers who can provide the best access to an authorised litigator. This might mean giving preference to those with an employed authorised litigator. We will also consider alternative arrangements but providers are advised that this may score lower in the ranking.

For Debt, Housing and Welfare Benefits, we will divide the available NMS for the PA between the three categories as follows:

PA	Debt	Housing	Welfare Benefits
North Kent and Medway	1,070	1,490	610

4. Access

There are few potential access issues within North Kent and Medway as good public transport links are available across most of the procurement area. However, the Isle of Sheppey is more isolated than the rest of the PA and we need to ensure services there are maintained. We are therefore considering the use of selection criteria that prefer tenders from providers able to deliver services in the harder to reach areas.

5. Budget

Current spend in this area is higher than that which we would expect to spend in Family services according to the Indicative Spend Budget Model. It is

therefore unlikely that we would wish to actively increase the provision of Family services and matter starts will be carefully managed with the aim of remaining within the level of current spend.

Current spend in this area is lower than that which we would expect to spend in SWL Legal Help according to the Indicative Spend Budget Model. Therefore, the total number of NMS available in this area will be increased from that which is currently being delivered to enable an increase in access to services which moves closer to that suggested by the Model.

6. Current Supply (September 08 – August 09)

Category	No. of Providers	NMS opened	Certificates issued
Family (public)	15	3,295	582
Family (private)	19		938
Debt	4	1,068	9
Housing	4	1,588	40
Welfare Benefits	3	590	3
Employment	2	208	0
Community Care	1	23	0

	Total providers	Current SWL Services: number of providers delivering combinations of categories						Current Family Services: number of providers delivering public/private	
		5 core SWL cats	4 core SWL cats	3 core SWL cats	2 core SWL cats	1 core SWL cat	Housing & Family	5+Public law certs	Family private only
Solicitor	19	0	0	1	0	0	0	8	4
NFP	3	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0