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Award

Pilot for Identifying Unmet Needs between Local Authorities and Probation Services

Ministry of Justice

UK5: Transparency notice - Procurement Act 2023 - [view information about notice types](#)

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Scope

Reference

prj_15654

Description

The Secretary of State for Justice ("MOJ") has a strategic objective to reduce reoffending and improve public protection by enabling more effective, data-informed decision-making within probation services. HMPPS have expressed the need for a pilot in which a supplier will test the hypothesis that access to Local Authority data will add capacity into the probation system and enable frontline staff to perform their feasibility of surfacing cross-system data to probation officers and commissioners. The insights generated will support risk and needs assessments, sentence planning, and commissioning decisions.

The Ministry of Justice intends to award a contract to Newton Consulting Limited (the "Supplier") for 9 months (6 + 3 months) at a maximum of £800k to test whether: (a) Local Authorities ("LA") hold data on unmet need that can drive effectiveness in sentence management for use by probation practitioners; and (b) HMPPS can serve that data to probation services.

The supplier is required to design and deliver a pilot that enables probation services to access cross-system data such as mental health, housing, education, and substance misuse indicators; to identify unmet needs among people on probation. The pilot will involve 5-10 local authorities or equivalent data holders and their corresponding Probation Delivery Units (PDUs).

Contract 1

Suppliers

Supplier not yet selected

Contract value

- £800,000 excluding VAT
- £960,000 including VAT

Above the relevant threshold

Earliest date the contract will be signed

2 February 2026

Contract dates (estimated)

- 4 February 2026 to 4 August 2026
- Possible extension to 4 November 2026

- 9 months, 1 day

Description of possible extension:

The Authority may utilise the optional 3 month extension, where the trial period of the data-sharing prototype has not yet delivered full benefit realisation.

Main procurement category

Services

CPV classifications

- 72300000 - Data services

Contract locations

- UK - United Kingdom

Other information

Conflicts assessment prepared/revised

Yes

Procedure

Procedure type

Direct award

Direct award justification

Prototypes and development

Prototypes and Development

The Ministry of Justice has a strategic objective to reduce reoffending and improve public protection by enabling more effective, data-informed decision-making within probation services. At present, probation officers continue to rely on incomplete or delayed information, which undermines their ability to assess risk, plan interventions, and commission services effectively.

HMPPS have expressed the need for a pilot in which a supplier will test the hypothesis that sharing data between HMPPS and Local Authorities will add capacity into the probation system and enable frontline staff to perform their feasibility of surfacing cross-system data to probation officers and commissioners. The insights generated will support risk and needs assessments, sentence planning, and commissioning decisions.

This contract is for researching the data held by Local Authorities and HMPPS which could be shared between both parties to assess whether such data would be useful to share and to understand the viability of procuring a solution to share data between HMPPS and Local Authorities. This contract will deliver a prototype to understand the feasibility for a data solution.

The contracting authority ("MOJ") is relying on the prototypes and development direct award justifications set out in Procurement Act 2023, Schedule 5, clause 2 for Direct Award:

- The public contract concerns the production of a prototype, or supply of other novel goods or services, for the purpose of-
 - (a)testing the suitability of the goods or services,
 - (b)researching the viability of producing or supplying the goods or services at scale and developing them for that purpose, or
 - (c)other research, experiment, study or development.

This is further backed up by guidance set out in paragraphs 15 and 16 of Schedule 5 in the Procurement Act 23 Direct Award guidance regarding Prototypes and Development:

- 15) This justification allows for direct award when procuring a prototype or other novel good or service that is designed or developed at the request of the contracting authority. For example, procuring a solution to enable data to be shared securely between different agencies.
- 16) The public contract must be limited to the early stages of design and development and aimed only at testing the suitability of the goods or services, understanding the viability of production or supply in quantity or other research, experiment, study or development. This means it must not include quantity production or supply beyond that necessary for these purposes, for example, to produce or supply the contracting authority with the goods or service on a commercial basis.

The explanations for why the justifications apply are as follows.

This discovery pilot needs to be done at pace, to fit with longer term strategic digital development as an enabler for the Our Future Probation Service, which is tasked with liberating 25% of probation practitioner time. To delay will miss the opportunity to build on the work completed for Kent County Council ("KCC") and would require a greater financial commitment if HMPPS were to attempt to commission this work from scratch.

This justification applies because the pilot contract is for researching and developing a prototype to share the data held by Local Authorities and HMPPS to assess whether such data would be useful to share between the parties and to understand the viability of procuring such a. This is very similar to the example set out in paragraph 15 of the guidance. This contract is to understand viability and configure a prototype so is similar the circumstances set out in paragraph 16 of the guidance.

Newton Consulting Ltd. have been identified as the most appropriate supplier on the basis they have an existing delivery model and relationships with the HMPPS and Kent County Council (KCC). This builds on the work already undertaken by the supplier with KCC, and involving HMPPS at a Probation Delivery Unit (PDU) level, but to pivot this to offer HMPPS a national view on how data sharing with Local Authorities could work across England and Wales, supported by draft designs and recommendations based on small-scale user testing with probation practitioners in the Kent, Surrey & Sussex Probation region.

Contracting authority

Ministry of Justice

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