North London Partners

Rapid Compliant Procurement

The Challenge

North London Partners (a collaborative spanning 6 CCGs and multiple NHS provider organisations in North Central London) had been successful in applying for central funding to support an area-wide Health Information Exchange and Population Health Management solution. The team had engaged with a number of potential suppliers, evaluated potential solutions, and received quotes. However, in November 2017, no formal procurement had commenced, and time was running out with significant funding tied to FY17/18.

There were also a number of significant risks to the process:

- The existence of incumbent suppliers raised the risk of challenge if the procurement was not explicitly compliant

- The number of stakeholders made governance and decision-making complex

- Recent high profile media interest in data breaches had resulted in due caution about embarking on a large data sharing programme

The Solution

Nautilus was appointed to lead the definition and execution of a rapid, compliant procurement of an HIE and PHM solution, which was achieved in 4 key steps:

- Reset and close-off previous market engagement activity

- Identify and agree the procurement process

- Execute the procurement

- Finalise contracts and governance to support signature

Step 1: Reset and close-off previous market engagement activity

The first step was to ensure that all parties (customer and potential supplier) understood that the previous activities had only served as market engagement, and could not be used as part of the formal procurement process. This required extensive stakeholder engagement and clear briefing to ensure consistent messaging to potential bidders; and thereby mitigate the risk of a subsequent challenge.

Step 2: Identify and agree the procurement process

Nautilus identified and assessed a number of procurement options which balanced the needs for speed, compliance and solution choice. We worked with Trust and CCG senior management (IT, Finance and procurement) to review the options, and selected the QE (Gateshead) Framework as providing the most effective mechanism to deliver the desired outcome.

As the solution was to integrate with that of one of the local acute trusts, Nautilus also identified the need for a Contract Change to that Trust's core EPR contract. Working with the Trust team and supplier to agree the wording of the change.

Step 3: Execute the procurement

Nautilus re-used documentation developed as part of the previous market engagement process to rapidly develop an ITT aligned to the QE (Gatehead) Framework. Suppliers were briefed in advance, so that their teams were ready to respond quickly; and guidance was provided that enabled them to re-use much of the material that they had already developed. As a result, the timetable for both responses and evaluation could be compressed. Nautilus delivered an Evaluation Outcome report that was reviewed and approved by the Programme Board (including representatives from all participating organisations).

Step 4: Finalise contracts and governance to support signature

Nautilus led the finalisation of the contract, ensuring that the key commercial and technical concerns of all the programme parties had been recognised, and where appropriate addressed by the contract. Nautilus supported the governance process via a number of briefing papers and stakeholder engagement with both signatories and service recipients. Questions and concerns to be addressed ranged from charging models, to information governance assurance, and questions of liability in relation to the costs and use (and potential mis-use) of the solution.

Final contracts were developed, and final governance across the many participating organisations expedited, to enable signature.

The Outcome

The procurement was defined, completed and contracts signed within 9 weeks to enable initiation and licence purchase before the end of the financial year.

Whilst one of the incumbent suppliers did choose to 'complain', their letter was easily rebuffed with the clear compliance audit trail, and caused no delay to the process.