

Our Ref: PW/AKB/FOI/0424/814

Stafford Education & Enterprise Park
Weston Road
Stafford
ST18 0BF

3rd May 2024

Telephone: 0300 123 1461

Sent by email

Dear

FOI-0424-814

Your request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000

Thank you for your request for information received on the 22nd April 2024. We can confirm that the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board can provide the following information.

An anonymised copy of this response will be made publicly available on the ICB website.

Please see our responses in blue below:

Please could I request the following information under the Freedom of Information Act.

1. Overview of Communication Services Funding and Providers:

- Could you provide a detailed overview of the current communication services (including SMS, email, and patient engagement platforms) funded by the ICS for use in GP practices within your jurisdiction?
- Please list all providers currently contracted to supply these communication services, specifying the nature of the services they provide in full?

The ICB purchase an email platform through an aggregated IM&T contract via a 3rd party. Specific costs associated with the email platform cannot be disaggregated.

The ICB commission a patient engagement platform for use in General Practice from Accurx. This includes two-way SMS messaging, batch messaging (targeted group messaging) and questionnaires.

The ICB has a contract with British Telecommunications PLC to fund SMS charges associated with a Smart Messaging tool used in general practice. This contract covers SMS activity only.

2. Procurement and Contract Details:

- Can you detail the procurement process followed for selecting communication service providers, specifically mentioning any open tenders or frameworks used?
- For each contract awarded for communication services in the last five years, please provide:
 - The name of the awarded provider,
 - The value and duration of the contract,
 - The specific services covered under the contract.

Patient Engagement Platforms:

Accurx was commissioned with guidance from the National and Commercial Procurement hub via the NHS Digital Services for Integrated Care Catalogue (DSIC) in September 2021-September 2023. In September 2023 ICB procured these services from NHS CCS G-Cloud 13 Framework due to GP IT Futures framework closing (with guidance from the National and Commercial Procurement team).

September 2021- September 2022

Fixed Licensing costs £162,273.52 (excluding VAT) associated SMS messaging variable costs charged at 0.0175 price per fragment.

- Stafford and Surrounds 05V - £20,269.52
- Stoke on Trent 05W - £38,903.15
- SESSP 05Q - £36,121.75
- Cannock 04Y - £18,201.22
- East Staffs 05D - £19,751.46
- North Staffs 05G - £29,026.42

Accurx - September 2022 – April 2023

Fixed Licensing costs £132,060.47 (excluding VAT) associated SMS messaging variable costs charged at 0.0185 price per fragment.

- Stoke on Trent 05W - £33,627.37
- Stafford and Surrounds 05V - £17,188.42
- SESSP 05Q - £24,657.07
- North Staffs 05G - £24,490.01
- East Staffs 05D - £16,751.70
- Cannock 04Y - £15,345.90

Accurx October 2023- September 2024 (initial contract term 6 months with provision to extend for 12 months)

Licensing costs £269,177.88 (excluding VAT, 12 months) associated SMS messaging variable costs charged at 0.0199 price per fragment.

Specifics:

Contracts include two-way SMS messaging, batch messaging (targeted group messaging) and questionnaires.

SMS Contract associated with Smart Messaging tool used in general practice:

Purchased off the following frameworks:

2021/23 - G-Cloud 12
2023/24 - CCS Network Services 2
2024/25 - CCS Network Services 3

Provider:

British Telecommunications PLC.

Values:

All values below are inclusive of VAT.

2021/2023:

Contract length: 23/03/2021 to 22/03/2023.
Stoke on Trent CCG - £120,000.00
Stafford & Surrounds CCG - £48,000.00
Cannock Chase CCG - £66,000.00
South East Staffordshire and Seisdon Peninsula CCG - £96,000.00
East Staffordshire CCG - £66,000.00
North Staffordshire CCG - £60,000.00

2023/2024:

Contract length - 01/04/2023 to 30/04/2024.
Staffordshire & SOT ICB - £250,536.00

2024/2025:

Contract length - 01/05/2024 to 30/04/2025.
Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent ICB - £121,209.60

Specifics:

Smart Messaging is a web-based tool that simultaneously supports the composition and execution of outbound and inbound SMS campaigns. Enterprises will be able to build contact databases, personalise messages, schedule campaigns and manage opt-in and opt-out of lists to ensure regulatory compliance.

3. SMS/Text Messaging Specifics:

- Regarding contracts awarded, could you provide the rationale for the selection, particularly in terms of cost-effectiveness, service comprehensiveness, and any unique features or benefits that influenced the decision?
- Were any contracts directly awarded without a competitive tender process? If so, please provide the reasons for this approach and any documentation justifying the decision.

The SMS Contracts associated with Smart Messaging tool used in general practice were selected via the appropriate approved framework.

Details below:

2021/2023 - G-Cloud 12

2023/2024 - CCS Network Services 2

2024/2025 - CCS Network Services 3

4. Future Procurement and Innovation Opportunities:

- Are there any upcoming opportunities for new providers to bid on communication services within the ICS?
- How does the ICS support innovation in patient communication and digital health solutions? Are there specific criteria or challenges you are looking to address with future procurements?

Future patient engagement platforms will be purchased via the forthcoming Digital Pathways Procurement framework which is currently being prepared for July 2024 Launch.

There are no current opportunities in relation to text messaging solutions that are currently planned.

5. Compliance and Framework Agreements:

- Please confirm whether the contracts with current communication service providers, adhere to NHS procurement guidelines and framework agreements.

All contracts listed above adhered to NHS procurement guidelines and framework agreements.

- If there have been any deviations or exemptions in following standard procurement protocols, could you provide details and justifications for these cases?

Not applicable.

Should you require any further information or clarification regarding this response please do not hesitate to contact us. If you are dissatisfied with the response, you are entitled to request an internal review which should be formally requested in writing and must be within two calendar months from the date this response was issued.

To request an internal review

You can request an internal review by contacting the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board FOI team by emailing the team at StaffsStokeFOI@staffsstoke.icb.nhs.uk or by post to the address at the top of this letter.

If you are not content with the outcome of your internal review, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board's FOI complaints procedure.

The ICO can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

www.ico.gov.uk

Yours sincerely

Paul Winter
Associate Director of Corporate Governance