

INVITATION TO TENDER

**Development Partner for the NHS Race and Health Observatory (RHO) Website
and Health Action Resource Platform (HARP)**

Date: March 2026

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1 About the NHS Race and Health Observatory

The NHS Race and Health Observatory (RHO) is an independent organisation established to investigate ethnic inequalities in healthcare access, experiences, and outcomes. Our mission is to illuminate racial health disparities and outline effective interventions to improve equity. We are evidence-driven and solutions-focused, providing recommendations that inform policymaking and facilitate change. The RHO is supported by NHS England and hosted by NHS Confederation.

The Health Action Resource Platform (HARP) is a vital new digital tool developed by the RHO to address these critical racial health disparities within the NHS (<https://rho-harp.org>). Launched on June 11th, 2025, the HARP aims to be the definitive source for data, good practice, and resources on ethnic and racial inequalities in health. It provides a digital platform for users to explore NHS performance data by ethnicity, region, and healthcare system, alongside examples of replicable good practice case studies.

The HARP's core goals are to:

- I. **Raise awareness:** Become the trusted source for data on ethnic and racial inequalities in health and good practice.
- II. **Enhance utility:** Ensure published data and insights are relevant, applicable, and empower audiences to act.
- III. **Drive impact:** Facilitate collaborative and innovative solutions to address racial and ethnic inequalities in healthcare.

2 Scope of the Work

The NHS Race and Health Observatory seeks a highly capable software development organisation to take over the maintenance of the NHS RHO website (<https://nhsrho.org/>) and ongoing development, maintenance, and strategic evolution of the Health Action Resource Platform (HARP, <https://rho-harp.org/>). This partnership is critical to maximizing the RHO's potential and ensuring its long-term impact.

2.1 Contract Duration

The initial contract term is until March 2027, with the option to extend, subject to satisfactory performance and budget availability.

2.2 High-Level Deliverables

2.2.1 RHO Website

- I. Ongoing maintenance and security updates for the website.

2.2.2 The HARP (Next 6-18 Months)

The strategic goal is to release one major and one minor update per quarter. The roadmap includes:

Continuous

- II. Ongoing maintenance and security updates for the platform
- III. Bi-yearly data updates

Next Mid to Long Term Priorities

- I. **User login and profile management:** Essential for personalized experiences, secure collaboration, and tracking user behaviour.
- II. **Engagement & collaboration tools:** Automated content subscriptions & alerts.
- III. **Enhanced digitised case study submission and review process:** Digital form to directly submit, upload, and tag case studies, replacing manual emails, and a hosted review process to manage case study submissions.
- IV. **Replicable practice execution guide:** Interactive digital guides for implementing proven health interventions.
- V. **Image library:** Development of resources to host and browse the image library.
- VI. **Workforce data:** Development of a visualisation tailored to ethnicity pay gap & progression data.

2.3 Target Audiences

The RHO website and the HARP serve a diverse range of stakeholders, with an initial focus on:

- I. **Primary stakeholders:** Policy leaders, change managers, researchers, and frontline healthcare staff.
- II. **Secondary stakeholders:** Non-profits, industry, healthcare students, individuals receiving care, and caregivers.

The successful partner will need to demonstrate an understanding of these varied user needs and how to design solutions that cater to them effectively.

2.4 General Technical Requirements

The RHO website and the HARP platform are built on modern web technologies. The successful bidder will be responsible for

2.4.1 Platform Core & Development

- I. **Scalable architecture:** Ensuring the platform can handle increasing user loads and data volumes.
- II. **WordPress expertise:** Extensive knowledge and experience in developing, customizing, and maintaining WordPress-based platforms.
- III. **Cross-browser and device compatibility:** Ensuring full responsiveness and optimal performance across all major browsers and devices (desktop, tablet, mobile).
- IV. **Maintainability and documentation:** Providing clean, well-documented code and adhering to best practices for long-term maintainability.

2.4.2 Data & Analytics

- I. **Data analytics and data science capabilities:** Proven ability to handle complex data, perform data analysis, and apply data science principles.
- II. **Data visualisation:** Enhancing and maintaining interactive data visualisation capabilities.
- III. **API integration:** Ability to integrate with various data sources (e.g. NHS England data) and potentially other third-party services.

2.4.3 Security & User Management

- I. **Robust security:** Implementing and maintaining high standards of data security and privacy, compliant with NHS and GDPR regulations.
- II. **User management:** Developing and managing user authentication, profiles, and access controls.
- III. **GDPR and UK Data Protection Act 2018:** Implementing and maintaining high standards of data security and privacy in full compliance with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

2.4.4 Operational & Domain Expertise

- I. **UK-based preference and time zone alignment:** Prioritizing a UK-based company facilitates communication, local context understanding, and adherence to UK regulations (e.g. data protection, NHS standards). Additionally, the development team must be in an appropriate time zone that allows for effective and collaborative working hours with the RHO team.
- II. **NHS experience:** Demonstrates understanding of the NHS operational environment, data governance, and security protocols.
- III. **Advanced data capabilities:** Proven expertise in data analysis and developing impactful data visualisations.
- IV. **Experience with training platforms/LMS (preferred but not essential):** Experience in building training platforms or Learning Management Systems (LMS) is preferred, demonstrating your ability to develop interactive learning environments.

2.4.5 Accessibility

- I. **WCAG 2.1 Level AA Compliance:** The successful bidder must ensure all new and updated features meet this standard and provide an updated accessibility statement upon delivery.

2.4.6 Content Management System

The RHO website and the HARP require a user-friendly Content Management System (CMS) that enables RHO staff to:

- I. Easily upload, edit, and publish blogs, press releases, research outputs, case studies, and other learning resources.
- II. Manage website content, including text, images, and documents.
- III. Update data visualizations and associated contextual information.
- IV. Handle user-generated content (e.g., case study submissions) with appropriate moderation workflows.

2.5 Incumbent Supplier and Transition

The RHO website and the HARP are currently maintained by two developers. The successful bidder will be required to manage a structured transition from the existing development teams, including:

- I. A formal knowledge transfer period of 4 weeks before going live.
- II. Receipt of all code repositories, documentation, and access credentials.
- III. Review and acceptance of the existing codebase and any outstanding technical debt.

2.6 Dedicated Strategic and Delivery Lead

The RHO requires the successful partner to provide a dedicated individual/s who is embedded within the RHO team. They must have sufficient capacity to be a consistent, integrated presence throughout the contract.

This individual/s will act as the primary point of contact between the RHO and the development team. Their responsibilities will include, but are not limited to, the following:

- I. Develop a deep understanding of the HARP platform, its users, and the RHO's strategic objectives
- II. Translate RHO requirements into clearly defined, buildable tasks for the development team
- III. Maintain and prioritise the development backlog, ensuring the team always has well-defined work to progress
- IV. Write detailed briefs, epics, and tickets, broken down into granular tasks and sized with the team
- V. Run discovery phases before new features are scoped – validating problems before solutions are proposed
- VI. Write and maintain acceptance criteria for each piece of work – defining exactly when something is done
- VII. Review and sign off completed features against agreed criteria before release
- VIII. Coordinate user acceptance testing (UAT) – ensuring real users validate features before they go live
- IX. Work with the RHO to continuously research user needs and identify new opportunities for the roadmap
- X. Understand the healthcare landscape – including existing tools, platforms, and initiatives – to inform product decisions and avoid duplication
- XI. Ensure that every feature proposed solves a real, evidenced problem – and challenge scope that does not
- XII. Communicate progress, risks, and roadmap changes clearly and proactively to the RHO
- XIII. Facilitate planning and review sessions with the development team
- XIV. Create wireframes and UX flows where needed to communicate requirements visually

Bidders should clearly outline in their proposal how they would approach this role, the seniority and background of the individual/s they would assign, and how they would ensure strategic alignment with the RHO throughout the contract.

2.7 Digital Marketing and SEO Requirements

While development and ongoing support will be the primary remit, to streamline operations, preference will be given to partners with proven experience in developing and implementing a comprehensive digital marketing and SEO strategy. This includes:

- I. **Search engine optimisation (SEO):** Optimizing the RHO website and the HARP for key search terms to drive organic traffic and establish credibility as an authoritative source.
- II. **Digital marketing campaigns:** Strategically aligned campaigns for feature launches and key health events, utilizing various digital channels.
- III. **Analytics and reporting:** Providing regular reports on website traffic, user engagement, and SEO performance.

2.8 Intellectual Property

All intellectual property rights in deliverables produced under this contract — including code, data visualisations, content, and documentation — shall vest in the NHS Race and Health Observatory (or its hosting body, NHS Confederation) upon payment. The supplier may retain rights to pre-existing tools, frameworks, or methodologies used in delivery, provided these are identified in the proposal. Open-source components must be clearly documented, including licence type.

3 Tender Submission

Bidders are requested to submit their proposals addressing the following:

3.1 Examples of Similar Tenders

Provide examples of at least one similar tender you have won and successfully delivered, preferably those that have resulted in significant impact or outcomes for ethnically diverse people and communities, or complex data platforms within the healthcare sector.

Your examples should include:

- I. A previous project that included complex data analysis and visualization.
- II. Preferably a project where learning materials were delivered, such as a learning management system (LMS).

For each example, please include details of the project scope, your role, challenges faced, and measurable outcomes.

Please include the details of two previous clients (preferably not for profit) that we can contact for reference purposes (references will be taken up for firms shortlisted).

3.2 Proposal for Services

Outline your proposed approach to taking over the development and maintenance of HARP. This should include:

- I. Your understanding of the brief.
- II. Your proposed methodology for development, including agile practices, quality assurance, and project management.
- III. A declaration of any conflicts of interest, or confirmation that none exist.
- IV. How you plan to manage the transition from the current development teams.
- V. Your approach to user research and incorporating user feedback into the development cycle.
- VI. Details of key personnel who will be involved in the project, including their expertise and skills relevant to this scope.
- VII. Key risks identified for the project and your proposed mitigating actions.
- VIII. An indication of the input and capacity that would be required from the RHO team.
- IX. How you propose to ensure GDPR and information guidance compliance, as appropriate
- X. Detail any elements of the scope that would be provided by another company/freelance staff.
- XI. Explain the unique benefit you will bring to this work.
- XII. Your approach to collaborating with the existing HARP product manager and providing any supplementary product management support required to ensure strategic alignment and effective delivery.

3.3 Fee Proposal

Provide a detailed fee proposal, clearly outlining:

- I. Costings for the entire scope of work, including VAT.
- II. A detailed budget covering both personnel costs (e.g., daily rates, roles, estimated hours) and any non-pay expenses.
- III. The costs of any elements of the work that would be provided by another company/freelance staff (if applicable).

3.4 Equalities Questionnaire (Schedule 1)

Complete the Equalities Questionnaire provided in Schedule 1 of this ITT. Please highlight or delete as applicable to indicate your responses. Refer to the guidance provided within Schedule 1 for comprehensive completion.

4 Selection Criteria

Tenders will be ranked based on the following criteria:

- I. **Fit to requirements of the brief:** How well the proposed solution and approach align with the outlined scope of work and the RHO's strategic objectives.
- II. **Your approach to the project:** The feasibility, and innovation of your proposed methodology, project management, and user engagement strategies.
- III. **Value for money:** The overall cost-effectiveness of your proposal relative to the quality and scope of services offered.
- IV. **Robust processes:** Evidence of robust development, quality assurance, security, and maintenance processes.
- V. **Collaboration with host organisation's teams:** Your proposed approach to working effectively with the NHS Confederation's teams and the RHO.
- VI. **Relevant experience:** A proven track record of delivering similar projects successfully, particularly within the healthcare/NHS sector, and demonstrating cultural competence and understanding of health inequalities.
- VII. **Approach to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion:** Your commitment to and demonstrated practices in equality, diversity, and inclusion within your organisation and in your project delivery

5 Reservation of Rights

The NHS Race and Health Observatory reserve the right to:

1. Reject any or all tenders at any stage of the process, without obligation to accept the lowest priced or any tender
2. Cancel or withdraw this ITT at any time without liability for any costs incurred by bidders in preparing their submissions
3. Request additional information, clarification, or amended proposals from any bidder during the evaluation process

The RHO is not bound to accept the most economically advantageous tender if other considerations – including but not limited to risk, capability, or strategic fit – make an alternative outcome more appropriate.

All bidders will be notified of the outcome of the procurement process in writing. The preparation and submission of a tender does not constitute or imply any form of contract or commitment between the bidder and the RHO.

6 Key Dates

| | |
|--|----------------|
| Invitation to tender published | 13/03/2026 |
| Tender documents to be received by end of | 29/03/2026 |
| Confirmation of selection for shortlist (References will be taken up at this stage) | 07/04/2026 |
| Presentations to selection panel (Online) | w/c 14/04/2026 |
| Organisation chosen | w/c 14/04/2026 |

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Contract negotiations complete and sign-off | w/c 27/04/2026 |
| Project start date | 04/05/2026 |

7 Instructions for the Return of Tenders

Tenders should be submitted by email to: info@nhsrho.org

Tender Reference: RHO_WEB_HARP_DEVELOPMENT

Tenders must be received by **29/03/2026** Tenders received after this date will not be considered.

It is incumbent on tenders to ensure they have all the information required for the preparation of their tenders.

8 Confidentiality

By accessing this Invitation to Tender, all prospective bidders agree to treat its contents – and any supplementary information provided during the procurement process – as strictly confidential.

Bidders must not:

1. Disclose any information contained in this ITT, or shared during clarification, to any third party without prior written consent from the RHO
2. Use any information received during this process for any purpose other than preparing their tender response
3. Share platform architecture details, roadmap information, or technical documentation with individuals not directly involved in preparing the bid

These obligations apply from the date of accessing this document and remain in force regardless of whether the bidder submits a proposal or is awarded the contract.

The RHO reserves the right to require shortlisted bidders to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) before receiving supplementary technical documentation about the HARP platform. Any such requirement will be communicated at the point of shortlisting.

Breach of these obligations may result in disqualification from the procurement process and may give rise to legal liability.

9 Further Information

Further information about this tender can be obtained from:

Name: Dr Deji Oloko

Title: Senior Research Manager

Email Address: deji.oloko@nhsrho.org

Phone Number: 07485911481

10 Questionnaire

10.1.1 Schedule 1

Equalities questionnaire

This questionnaire must be completed satisfactorily in order for any company to be considered to tender for this NHS Confederation contract. The equality legislation consists of the Race Relations Act 1976, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Equal Pay Act 1970, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003, the Employment Equality (Religion/Belief) Regulations 2003, all amendments to these Acts and all relevant regulations made under them.

1. Is it your policy as an employer and as a service provider to comply with your statutory obligations under the equality legislation, which applies to Great Britain, or equivalent legislation in the countries in which your firm employs staff?

Yes No

2. Accordingly, is it your practice not to discriminate directly or indirectly in breach of equality legislation which applies in Great Britain and legislation in the countries in which your firm employs staff:

- In relation to decisions to recruit, select, remunerate, train, transfer and promote employees?

Yes No

- In relation to delivering services?

Yes No

3. Do you have a written equality policy?

Yes No

4. Does your equality policy cover:

- Recruitment, selection, training, promotion, discipline and dismissal?

Yes No

- Victimisation, discrimination and harassment making it clear that these are disciplinary offences?

Yes No

- Identify the senior position for responsibility for the policy and its effective implementation?

Yes No

5. Is your policy on equality set out:

- In documents available and communicated to employees, managers, recognised trade unions or other representative groups?

Yes No

- In recruitment advertisements or other literature?

Yes No

- In materials promoting your services?

Yes No

Please evidence all questions.

If you answered NO to any part of questions 4 or 5 can you provide (and if so, please do) other evidence to show how you promote equalities in employment and service delivery.

6. In the last three years, have any findings of unlawful discrimination been made against your firm by the Employment Tribunal, the Employment Appeal Tribunal or any other court or in comparable proceedings in any other jurisdiction?

Yes No

7. In the last three years, has any contract with your organisation been terminated on grounds of your failure to comply with:

- Legislation prohibiting discrimination; or

Yes No

- Contract conditions relating to equality in the provision of services

Yes No

8. In the last three years, has your firm been the subject of formal investigations by the Commission for Racial Equality, the Disability Rights Commission, The Equal Opportunities Commission or a comparable body, on grounds of alleged unlawful discrimination?

Yes No

9. If the answer to question 6 and 7 is YES, or, in relation to question 8, a finding adverse to your organisation has been made, what steps have you taken as a result of that finding? Please summarise the details below and provide full details as an attachment.

10. If you are not currently subject to UK employment law, please supply details of your experience in complying with equivalent legislation that is designed to eliminate discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity. List any attached documents.

10.1.2 Guidance in answering the equality questionnaire.

When completing the questionnaire, all companies must answer each question fully and supply any documentary evidence requested. Failure to fully answer each question or failure to submit any documentary evidence required may lead the NHS Confederation to consider the answer unsatisfactory.

Question 1 and 2

If your firm has implemented an effective equality policy, you will be able to answer yes to these questions. You will be able to confirm your answers by submitting your equality policy and supporting evidence as for as part of this section.

Question 3 and 4

You will need to submit a copy of your firm's equality policy. You will need to ensure that your policy covers:

- Recruitment, selection, training, promotion, discipline and dismissal
- Victimisation, discrimination and harassment
- Identifies the senior position responsibly for the policy

Question 5

Documents available and method of communication to staff. You will be required to submit examples of any documents, which explain your firm's policies in respect of recruitment, selection, remuneration, training and promotion outside of the equality policy asked for in Question 3 and 4.

You will also need evidence of how your firm has communicated this document to staff i.e. notice boards or issue individual employees with a copy. There is no prescribed evidence here. You will need to submit whatever documents your firm uses for these purposes.

In recruitment advertisements or other literature, you will need to submit evidence that makes public your firm's commitment to equality in employment and service delivery.

Small firms may not have detailed procedures, but you must ensure that evidence is provided which demonstrates that personnel operate in accordance with a written equality policy that includes:

- Open recruitment practices such as using job centres and local newspapers to advertise vacancies
- Instructions about how the firm ensures that all job applicants are treated fairly.

In material promoting your services This relates to how your firm provides information in materials promoting your services e.g. in different languages, making information accessible to people with hearing and visual impairment and physical access for disabled users.

Question 6

This question's concern is whether any court or industrial tribunal has found your firm guilty of unlawful discrimination in the last three years. It is important to be honest with your answers. The NHS Confederation may check your responses. If the answer is yes, you may wish to insert additional information which details the actions your firm has undertaken to prevent a repeat occurrence.

Answering yes will not automatically mean that you do not get the contract; you need to ensure that the NHS Confederation feels confident that you have sufficient measures put in place to prevent a re-occurrence.

Question 7

This question's concern is whether your firm has ever had a contract terminated for noncompliance with equality legislation or equality contract conditions. If the answer is yes, your firm may wish to submit additional information which details the actions they have taken to prevent a repeat occurrence.

Question 8

This question asks whether your firm has had any investigation carried out, whatever the outcome. The NHS Confederation can check a contractor's answer from lists that the CRE and EOC produce, so please be honest. The NHS Confederation is aware that because a firm has been investigated does not mean that it is guilty of discrimination. The result of the investigation will be taken into account when assessing your firm's answers to the questionnaire.

Question 9

If your firm has been found guilty of unlawful discrimination, you will need to provide evidence that details the steps your firm has taken to correct the situation. The Court, Industrial Tribunal or CRE will have made recommendations about steps your firm should take to eliminate the discrimination. If no action or inadequate action has been taken in this respect, only then will your firm be considered refusal onto the tender list.

Question 10

If your firm is not subject to UK employment law you must ensure that you supply details of equivalent legislation that you adhere to.