

Online service launch to help NHS providers and suppliers

An online advertising service that will help 'hook up' NHS commissioners with healthcare providers was announced on 16th September 2008 by Health Minister Ben Bradshaw.

Speaking at the Laing and Buisson Independent Healthcare Convention, he set out how the new website, NHS Supply2Health will make it easier for Primary Care Trust (PCT) commissioners to advertise health and social care services they require and for suppliers to identify business opportunities within the NHS.

From Wednesday 1 October 2008, all NHS commissioners will be required to post information about tendering opportunities and contract awards on the site, making it easier for suppliers to track down single opportunities and understand exactly what PCTs want. For commissioners, Supply2Health will help meet their legal requirements to advertise and potentially increase the number of suppliers responding to their adverts by reaching a wider audience.

It will also offer services, including emailing subscribers where new opportunities are posted that match the health and social care services they provide.

Health Minister Ben Bradshaw said:

"We are committed to make it easier to do business with the NHS. And in complex healthcare market we realise it's not easy to find the perfect match.

"Talking to providers of all types, what was keeping people awake at night was the thought they may have missed an opportunity. That there was a PCT out there in need of exactly what they had to offer, but they simply didn't know about each other.

"With no one place for PCTs to advertise, contract or tendering ads can appear in all number of places, and can be easily missed. The new online service NHS Supply2Health will ensure well matched suppliers and contractors can hook up.

"NHS Supply2Health will sit alongside existing regulations and make it easier to comply with European Union procurement regulations."

Notes to editors:

1. The EU Procurement Directives set out the legal framework for public procurement. These Directives are implemented in UK law by Regulations. Health care services come under Part B of EU advertising rules, where only

some of the EU procurement rules apply. More information can be found from the Office of Government Commerce website (<http://www.ogc.gov.uk>).

2. PCTs are being supported in the rollout of NHS Supply2Health, including training and have been asked to provide two nominated leads on NHS Supply2Health, one of which must be a board level member of staff. Five training events will take place across England during September 2008 to ensure that PCTs can use the system. Supply2Health system has been piloted in PCTs in the South Central SHA region since June 2008.

3. NHS Supply2Health covers both health and social care services. The latter may be commissioned jointly with the local authority; however, use of NHS Supply2Health is required only where the PCT is the lead contracting authority.

4. NHS Supply2Health is currently hosted by the NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency (NHS PASA). The website (<http://www.supply2health.nhs.uk>) will be accessible to the public from 1 October 2008.