

[News story: SMEs encouraged to form new health and social care marketplace](#)

The Government is encouraging technology-based small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to supply to the public sector via a new marketplace for health and social care providers.

NHS Digital and Crown Commercial Service (CCS) have created a new Dynamic Purchasing System to provide consumers access to companies that supply Health and Social Care Network (HSCN) services. The DPS is now live, and will continue to grow as suppliers join throughout the term.

HSCN enables health professionals from NHS Trusts, hospitals, GPs, social care organisations and non-public sector bodies to communicate and share information, delivering efficient, effective public services that meet the needs of citizens.

A new network

For the last 13 years, a network previously known as N3 (New National Network) connected the NHS. N3 will be succeeded by HSCN – a network for all health and social care organisations, allowing any supplier that can become HSCN-compliant to provide services.

HSCN could be worth up to £500 million over the next six and a half years.

Niall Quinn, CCS Strategic Director for Technology said:

We aim to create a vibrant and dynamic marketplace that increases choice for health and care providers while encouraging competition between a greater number and range of suppliers, including SMEs.

All suppliers have to be HSCN Stage 1 compliant to join the DPS. The DPS application process has been simplified and removes the traditional lengthy framework tender process, removing the cost and resource required for that process.

Once on board, suppliers will be able to bid to deliver the service to thousands of public sector organisations across the UK.

Dermot Ryan, HSCN Programme Director says

Creating a competitive market for network services in health and social care, to drive both product innovation and value for money, has been an ambition of the HSCN programme since the outset. Working in partnership with Crown Commercial Service, the establishment of the HSCN dynamic purchasing system is a

significant part of realising this ambition. The DPS will promote the formation of a thriving market in HSCN services and provide health and social care customers with an easy to use, low risk way of procuring compliant services.

Opportunity for small businesses

The move away from a framework model to the DPS was with suppliers and particularly SMEs in mind, reducing certain barriers to entry and enabling compliant suppliers to join over time.

Supplier feedback was positive on this move, with Ian Fishwick, Chief Executive of Adept Telecom, Commercial Director for Innopsis, and member of the Cabinet Office SME Panel commenting:

The new Dynamic Purchasing System for the Health and Social Care Network is a great example of how this form of procurement can be used for complex requirements. Previously many believed that DPS were only suitable for buying commodity products and this is now demonstrably not true.

One of the problems SMEs have with conventional frameworks is that if you miss the start then you are effectively cut out of the market for several years. With the HSCN Dynamic Purchasing System we have shown that businesses who comply over time can join in when they are ready.

To find out more about HSCN, visit [the NHS Digital HSCN webpage](#)

To find out how to sign up to provide services through HSCN, [visit the DPS webpages](#)