

Ref. No: 1949  
Date: 30/07/25  
Subject: Master Vendor and Neutral Vendor Services

## REQUEST & RESPONSE

### Master Vendor Service

The below response is for S&O Sites as STHK sites are served by an Internal Bank.

**1. Does your Trust have a Master Vendor service in place?**

Yes

**2. If yes, which agency provides this service?**

NHSP

**3. What technology platform is used to manage this service?**

RL Datix NHSP interface

**4. What is the end date of the current agreement/contract?**

20/10/25

**5. What cost (if any) is incurred by the Trust for this service?**

**Response – including application of section 43 of the FOIA:**

The Freedom of Information Act gives the public a general right of access to information held by a public authority, including activity and financial details, subject to exemptions within the Act.

Section 43 – Commercial Interests - sets out an exemption from the right to know if:

*The release of the information is likely to prejudice the commercial Interests of any person. (A person may be an individual, a company, the public authority itself or any other legal entity.)*

Information can only be withheld under this exemption if the public authority is satisfied that to release the information would damage someone's commercial Interests. A commercial Interest relates to a person's ability to participate competitively in a commercial activity

Where a public authority is satisfied that the release of information would prejudice someone's commercial Interests, it can only refuse to provide the information if it is satisfied that the public Interest in withholding the information outweighs the public Interest in disclosing it.

The bias is in favour of disclosure and there will be occasions where information is released even though it is likely to prejudice someone's commercial Interest. If the public Interest is in favour of disclosure, the FOIA requires the information to be released.

The public interest test undertaken is specifically in relation to section 43(2) with the prejudice to commercial interests being those of the Trust (as the public authority).

<b>Public Interest Arguments</b>	
<b>In favour of disclosure</b>	<b>In favour of non-disclosure</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a general public Interest in the income, expenditure and activity of public authorities.</li> <li>• To increase the accountability of the public authority.</li> <li>• To increase the transparency of the public authority.</li> <li>• Promote competition in the industry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A business case could be produced from the information based upon the service supply, demand and cost information.</li> <li>• The information could induce further competitors to the market.</li> <li>• Could prejudice MWL's negotiations with other organisations as it would be known what the demand and costs are of the service.</li> <li>• The information requested is for a contract that is due for renewal within the next 2 months available therefore attracts significant time sensitivity.</li> <li>• It is not possible for the authority to gain the reciprocal information from private providers, giving the private providers an unfair advantage</li> </ul>

**Outcome** In accordance with section 1 (1) the Freedom of Information Act, It can be confirmed that the information is held by the authority. In the balance of the public interest test under section 43 of the FOIA the Trust determines that the public Interest is in the non-disclosure of the information requested.

The combination of this information could then allow a business case to be produced to directly compete with NHS service providers including Mersey West Lancashire NHS Trust. Furthermore, the Trust is of the opinion that the information is likely to be used for this purpose.

This would have an adverse impact of the commercial activity of the authority therefore section 43 (2) of the Freedom of Information Act is engaged.

**6. Which staffing groups are covered under the Master Vendor service?**

All agenda for change staff

**7. What is the average fill rate achieved under this service over the past 12 months?**

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