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Specification

Provision of a fully bilingual (Welsh and English) HR Information System (HRIS)

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1 Background

Social Care Wales is a public sector, Welsh Government–funded body employing professional staff who provide improvement, support and strategic development services across Wales. Our teams work alongside partners to help services deliver on the ambitions of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act, the Welsh Government's A Healthier Wales plan for health and social care, and the Children and Young People's Plan. We do not deliver frontline care or employ social workers; instead, our workforce is made up of specialist, professional and corporate staff who enable improvements in the quality, effectiveness and accessibility of care and support for children, adults and families across Wales.

We currently use the Ciphr HR system as our core platform for employee data and HR processes.

This procurement seeks to identify a modern, scalable HR solution that aligns with our organisational model and supports efficient, compliant and future-focused HR service delivery. As part of good procurement practice and to ensure we achieve the best value for money, Social Care Wales is re-exploring the market to assess alternative solutions and to confirm that our future HRIS meets our operational, technical and bilingual requirements effectively.

2 Introduction

Social Care Wales requires a fully bilingual Human Resources Information System (HRIS), with both front-end (employee and manager-facing) and back-end (HR and administration facing) functionality available in Welsh and English.

Full bilingual capability is essential to ensure compliance with our Welsh Language Standards (legal framework under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011). The system must be secure, accessible, and intuitive to use, while streamlining HR processes and delivering efficient user-friendly functionality for HR teams, employees, and line managers in both languages.

As of 15 January 2026, Social Care Wales has 248 employees.

3 Aims and Objectives

The aim of this project is to procure and implement a modern, fully bilingual (Welsh/English), secure and scalable Human Resources Information System (HRIS) that will replace Social Care Wales's current platform (Ciphr) and support efficient,

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compliant and future-focused HR service delivery. The system will support up to 248 active users, with room for growth, and integrate seamlessly with existing platforms.

The objectives of the HRIS are to:

- Implement a secure, intuitive, user-friendly software that supports HR teams, line managers, and employees.
- Streamline key HR processes such as personal data management, absence tracking, performance reviews and reporting.
- Ensure a fully bilingual (Welsh and English) user experience for the HR team, staff and line managers that meets Welsh Language Standards and web accessibility requirements.
- Provide self-service functionality and improve efficiency through automation and integration with existing systems.
- Enable full lifecycle record management in line with retention policies, including automated deletion schedules.
- Ensure robust data security, including multi-factor authentication.

4 Scope of the Requirements

4.1 Out of Scope

Payroll functionality is out of scope for this procurement and will not be included within the requirements for the new the HRIS.

4.2 User Groups

The HRIS will be accessed by three primary user groups, each with distinct requirements and responsibilities:

Employees - Employees will use the system's self-service functionality to access and update their personal information, view employment details, submit leave requests, update timesheets, complete objectives and PDPs, and engage with HR processes relevant to their role. The system must provide a user-friendly, intuitive interface that supports efficient completion of routine tasks and encourages high levels of digital adoption.

Managers - Managers will require enhanced self-service access to carry out supervisory responsibilities, including approving leave and working time (timesheets), inputting other types of leave (sickness, maternity, special leave), completing return to work following sickness absence, reviewing team information, completing performance-related tasks, ability to deputise authority, and accessing relevant workforce reports or dashboards. The system should support clear

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workflows, delegation features, and appropriate access permissions to enable managers to efficiently oversee their teams.

HR Team - The HR team will operate within the system's administrative back end to manage the full range of HR processes, including maintaining employee records, overseeing complex case management, conducting reporting and analysis, configuring workflows, and performing compliance-related activities. They require advanced functionality, flexible configuration options, and robust data management tools to ensure the system supports accurate, efficient and legally compliant HR operations.

4.3 Geographic Scope

Our workforce operates on a hybrid basis across multiple locations in Wales. Employees are primarily based at two organisational offices located in South Wales and North Wales, with additional flexibility to work from home as part of our hybrid working model. The HR system must therefore fully support a geographically dispersed workforce and enable seamless access for users regardless of location or working arrangement.

The solution should provide secure, reliable, cloud-based access for employees, managers and HR staff working remotely or across different sites, without degradation of performance or functionality. The system must also offer consistent user experience across devices and locations, ensuring that all users, whether office-based or working from home, can access self-service features, workflows and information efficiently and securely.

5 Implementation Requirements

The Supplier shall deliver a structured, well-managed implementation of the new HRIS that enables a smooth transition from Social Care Wales's existing HR platform. The implementation must encompass configuration, testing, user readiness, data migration, reporting setup and Welsh and English requirements, and must be delivered in partnership with the Social Care Wales's HR and IT teams.

The Supplier must provide a clear and detailed implementation methodology that includes:

- **Implementation timeline**, with key milestones and dependencies.
- **Roles and responsibilities**, including Social Care Wales and Supplier activities.
- **Required Social Care Wales resource commitments**, including indicative weekly effort expectations for HR, IT, and key stakeholders.

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- **Approach to maintaining momentum**, managing delays, and ensuring decision-making pathways are understood.

5.1 Discovery, Process Review and System Configuration

The Supplier must:

- Support Social Care Wales to review and map existing HR processes.
- Advise where processes can be simplified or standardised prior to configuration.
- Ensure all process changes are documented and agreed in advance of go-live.
- Avoid automatically replicating (“lifting and shifting”) inefficient existing processes.

The configuration must reflect agreed processes and support future workforce needs.

5.2 Data Migration

The Supplier must:

- Ensure a secure, controlled and well-managed migration of data from the incumbent HR system into the new HRIS.
- Provide structured support, guidance and validation throughout the migration process but Social Care Wales will always retain ownership of its data.
- Ensure the migration approach minimises risk, ensures data accuracy and enables a smooth transition to the new system.

The Supplier must support the migration of all agreed datasets required for Day-1 operation of the HRIS (1 September 2026).

These will include, but are not limited to:

- Core employee data (personal details, contact details, next of kin)
- Equality and diversity data
- Job title, contract type, work pattern and pay history records
- Absence and leave records (annual leave, sickness, special leave and all other types of leave)
- Performance management information (objectives, review notes, documents)
- Historical leaver information (as agreed with Social Care Wales)
- Any additional datasets identified during implementation

The Supplier must also support phased or optional migration of non-critical historic data where appropriate.

5.3 Responsibilities

Social Care Wales Responsibilities	Supplier Responsibilities
Extracting data from the incumbent HR system in agreed formats (e.g., CSV, Excel).	Providing clear data import templates with defined field structures and validation rules.
Cleansing, reviewing and validating data prior to submission to the Supplier.	Providing guidance on data preparation, cleansing and formatting.
Providing data within agreed timescales to prevent delays.	Validating submitted data and notifying Social Care Wales of any issues.
Confirming data definitions, business rules and mapping decisions.	Loading data into test and live environments using secure methods.
Maintaining access to legacy data until project closure.	Supporting reconciliation and quality assurance checks.
	Providing advice on managing incomplete or poor-quality data.

5.4 Data Extraction and Formats

The Supplier must accept data in widely used formats, including:

- CSV
- Excel (.xlsx)
- PDF (for documents only, not structured data)

If certain fields or formats are required for successful import, these must be clearly communicated during the early stages of implementation.

The Supplier must provide clear instructions on:

- Mandatory fields
- Optional fields
- Formatting rules (e.g., date formats, codes, dropdown values)
- Character limits
- Dependencies between fields

The supplier must ensure a robust, rigorous and provable data integrity testing.

The supplier must ensure that the data is:

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- Mapped correctly to the appropriate fields
- Clear testing criteria to check and validate the data integrity
- Demonstrable data testing and validation
- Appropriate data transformation, cleansing and formatting for the new system

5.5 Data Security and Transfer

The Supplier must ensure all data migration activities comply with:

- UK GDPR
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Social Care Wales security and information governance policies
- The Data (Use and Access) Act 2025

All data must be transferred using secure, robust mechanisms, including:
The Supplier must provide secure transfer mechanisms, such as:

- Encrypted file transfer
- Secure shared workspace or SFTP
- Defined access controls and audit logs

Supplier personnel accessing any personal data must be appropriately vetted, trained, and authorised.

5.6 Incident Response and Breach Notification Requirements

The Supplier must maintain a formal, documented Incident Response Process covering any actual or suspected data loss, corruption, unauthorised access, or compromise occurring during data migration or transfer.

5.7 Testing, Quality Assurance and Go-Live Support

The Supplier must provide a structured and robust approach to testing, quality assurance and go-live support to ensure the HRIS is stable, accurate and fully aligned with Social Care Wales' requirements before it becomes operational. The Supplier must work collaboratively with Social Care Wales to test all system components, resolve defects and support a seamless go-live experience.

6 Core System Functionality Requirements

6.1 Core HR Data and Records (HR Team)

The system must allow the HR team to:

- Record and update employee personal details, contact details, equality data, next of kin, bank details for up to 300 active users.

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- Maintain job and pay records, including changes to job roles, increments, and contractual changes.
- Store and manage employee documents (Word, PDF, email, etc.) with restricted access when required, for example to line manager.
- Upload and edit organisational charts.
- Securely log in using multi-factor authentication (2FA).

6.2 Absence and Leave Management

The system must:

- Record annual leave in both days and hours.
- Allow managers to approve/reject leave requests.
- Allow other leave types (e.g. sickness, special leave) to be entered and tracked.
- Support automated carry-forward of leave balances from 1 April.
- Provide visibility of leave balances to employees and managers

6.3 Learning and Development

The system must:

- Maintain a full record of mandatory and non-mandatory training attended and completed by employees.
- Integrate with the current LMS (iHASCO) to:
 - Record learning completion
 - Trigger notifications for refresh or re-training
 - Display training status to employees and managers

6.4 Performance Management

The system must:

- Record objectives, quarterly, mid-year and end-year reviews.
- Enable both employee and line manager input.
- Allow upload of reviews in alternative formats (Word, PDF).
- Provide automated reminders for key milestones and review cycles.

6.5 Reporting and Analytics

The system must provide flexible, accessible reporting HR reporting, including:

- Workforce composition (headcount, EDI data, Welsh language skills)
- Employment details (contract type, FTE status)
- Pay and equality metrics (e.g. gender/ethnicity pay gap)
- Retention and leaver data

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- Absence rates and reasons
- Timesheets and attendance
- Learning and development completions
- Personal data and compliance completion

The system must also:

- Allow creation of custom reports
- Allow ability to amend standard reports
- Export reports into common formats
- Support internal and external reporting needs, including compliance reporting

Reports must be easy to create, filter, export and customise.

6.6 Notifications and Workflow Automation

The system must provide bilingual (Welsh/English) notifications for:

- Personal detail changes requiring HR review
- End of fixed-term contracts approaching
- Manager reminders for probation reviews
- Sickness absence return-to-work reminders
- Leaver notifications to internal teams
- Leave request approvals/rejections
- Performance management deadlines

6.7 Employee Self-Service

Employees must be able to:

- Track monthly time and attendance via timesheets, including carry-over balances and prepopulated hours.
- View annual leave balances and submit leave requests.
- Input objectives and performance notes.
- Update personal information (with HR notification).
- Update equality and diversity and Welsh language skills data.

6.8 Manager Self-Service

Managers must also be able to:

- Approve/reject annual leave requests.
- Record sickness absence and complete return-to-work interviews.
- Approve overtime or hours worked.
- Review and approve objectives.
- Input notes ahead of performance reviews.

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- Delegate authority to another manager when absent.
- Receive automated notifications for outstanding tasks.

6.9 Custom Forms and Page Creation

The system must allow administrators to:

- Create custom pages and forms in Welsh and English.
- Build short or long surveys.
- Store survey responses and acknowledgements in employee records.

This must support policy acknowledgement and ad-hoc data collection.

6.10 Integrations

The system must support integration with the following systems and platforms to ensure seamless workflows and efficient HR operations:

Learning Management System (LMS)

Integration with the current LMS (iHASCO) to enable:

- Automatic recording of training completion
- Visibility of training status for employees and line managers
- Notifications when training is due for renewal

Microsoft Services

The HRIS must integrate effectively with key Microsoft 365 tools used by Social Care Wales, including:

Microsoft Entra ID (Azure AD)

- Support for Single Sign-On (SSO)
- Synchronisation of core identity attributes
- Role-based access aligned to directory groups (where applicable)

Outlook / Microsoft 365 Calendars

- Automatic creation of calendar entries for approved leave
- Updates/cancellations reflected in Outlook calendars
- Visibility of team leave for managers

Microsoft Forms

- Ability to exchange data or integrate with workflows (where appropriate)

SharePoint

- Compatibility for document storage, policy access or linking (as required)

Microsoft Teams (desirable)

- Ability to surface notifications or approvals through Teams channels or bots

Other Systems

- Integration with other internal or external systems as required.
- Further details will be confirmed during implementation planning.

API and Connectivity Requirements

The Supplier must provide:

- Open APIs or standard connectors to allow integration with Microsoft 365 applications and future third-party systems
- Technical documentation and support for configuration
- Clarification of any integration limitations

6.11 Configurability and Internal Control

The system must enable high levels of in-house configurability, reducing reliance on the Supplier for routine changes or system updates. The system must provide flexible configuration tools that can be used by trained HR staff to manage and refine the solution throughout the contract period.

The system should empower Social Care Wales to:

- Configure workflows, approval routes and notifications
- Create and amend forms, fields, and data tables
- Manage role-based access and permissions
- Build and adapt reports and dashboards
- Update system content, templates and guidance
- Adjust business rules, automation triggers and validation logic

The goal is to ensure that Social Care Wales can maintain, adapt and optimise the HRIS without ongoing Supplier intervention for day-to-day operational or configuration needs. Supplier involvement should be limited to complex changes, technical upgrades, or enhancements outside the scope of standard configuration.

6.12 Future / Desirable Functionality

The system should ideally have or integrate with:

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- An Applicant Tracking System (ATS) for recruitment, covering job posting, candidate management, workflow automation and analytics. We will be looking to add this functionality circa December 2026 – January 2027.
- A Learning Management System for hosting and recording e-learning modules.

7 Technical, Security and Compliance Requirements

The system and Supplier must:

- Ensure compliance with GDPR.
- Store all data in the UK.
- Hold Cyber Essentials Plus certification.
- Hold ISO27001 accreditation.
- Be registered with the ICO as a data controller.
- Provide ongoing support and system maintenance under an SLA.

8 Bilingual Requirements (Welsh and English)

Social Care Wales is subject to the Welsh Language Standards and therefore requires a HRIS that provides full bilingual capability across all user-facing and administrative components. The Supplier must ensure that the system operates seamlessly in both Welsh and English, delivering an equivalent user experience in each language.

The system must support bilingual usage across the full lifecycle of HR processes, enabling employees, managers and HR staff to access all required functionality in their language of choice.

The Supplier must ensure that the HRIS is fully available in both Welsh and English, including but not limited to:

- Employee and manager self-service portals
- HR and administrator interfaces
- Dashboards, menus and navigation
- Forms, fields, and dropdown lists
- Letters, templates and correspondence
- Notifications, alerts, tasks and workflow prompts
- Reporting outputs visible to end users
- Help text, tooltips, and system guidance

Bilingual capability must be delivered as standard system functionality, not as a bespoke customisation.

8.1 User Language Selection

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- Users must be able to select their preferred language (Welsh or English) within the system.
- The system must retain language preference for future logins.
- Switching language must not require a separate account or duplicate configuration.

8.2 Parity of Experience

The Supplier must ensure functional parity between Welsh and English interfaces, meaning:

- The same fields, functions, menus and workflows must be available in both languages.
- Updates, improvements and new releases must be deployed bilingually at the same time.
- Welsh translations must be accurate, complete and context-appropriate.

8.3 Welsh Language Delivery During Implementation

The Supplier must describe how bilingual capability will be delivered during the project, including:

- Assurance that Welsh language functionality will be in place for go-live
- Dependencies or technical constraints (if any)
- How Welsh content (e.g., forms, workflow labels, communication templates) will be translated
- How bilingual elements will be tested and validated before go-live

8.4 Bilingual Support and Training

The Supplier must provide:

- Bilingual training materials for managers, employees and HR users (see 2.9.4)
- Bilingual user guides, onboarding resources and help content (see 2.9.4)
- Welsh-language support for queries relating to system functionality
- A process for reporting and correcting issues relating to Welsh translations or bilingual display
- Note: MS Teams training sessions will only be required to be delivered in English (see 2.9.4)

9 Accessibility Requirements

Social Care Wales is committed to ensuring that all digital systems are inclusive and accessible to all users, including those with disabilities, neurodivergent users, and users who rely on assistive technologies. The HRIS must therefore meet recognised accessibility standards and provide a barrier-free experience across all system components.

The Supplier must ensure accessibility is embedded throughout system design, implementation and ongoing use.

9.1 Compliance with Accessibility Standards

The HRIS must fully comply with:

- WCAG 2.2 AA accessibility standards (or the most current version applicable at the time of contract award).
- UK Government accessibility requirements for public-sector digital services.
- The Equality Act 2010, ensuring reasonable adjustments can be supported through system design and configuration.

9.2 Compatibility with Assistive Technologies

The system must work seamlessly with commonly used assistive technologies, including:

- Screen readers
- Screen magnifiers
- Speech recognition tools
- Keyboard-only navigation
- High-contrast or low-vision modes
- Browser accessibility tools and extensions

All essential system functions, including login, self-service, workflows and reporting, must be fully usable through assistive technologies.

9.3 Accessible User Interface and Navigation

The system must adhere to inclusive design principles, including:

- Clear, consistent navigation
- Proper use of headings, labels and focus indicators
- Adjustable text size and zoom without loss of content or functionality
- Sufficient colour contrast
- Avoidance of colour-only indicators

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- Logical tab order and keyboard-friendly design

9.4 Accessible Content, Forms and Workflows

- All forms and workflows must follow accessible form design standards.
- Error messages must be clear, descriptive, and perceivable by assistive technologies.
- Notifications and workflow prompts must be accessible in both Welsh and English.
- Employee and manager self-service must meet the same accessibility requirements as HR/administrator interfaces.

9.5 Accessible Documents and Outputs

System-generated documents (e.g., PDFs, letters, reports) must:

- Be accessible or capable of being made accessible
- Use tagged structures, readable text, and accessible tables
- Avoid image-only or scanned content without accompanying selectable text

9.6 Accessibility in Implementation and Testing

The Supplier must provide:

- An accessibility testing plan covering both Welsh and English versions
- Clear processes for accessibility defect identification and remediation
- Assurance that updates, patches and new features continue to meet WCAG 2.2 AA

Accessibility testing must be embedded throughout the project lifecycle.

9.7 Accessible Training and Support

The Supplier must:

- Provide accessible training materials (e.g., captioned videos, readable documents)
- Ensure user guides and help content follow accessibility best practice
- Offer support channels capable of handling accessibility-related issues

10 Non-Functional Requirements

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will be agreed with the successful Supplier covering:

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- System uptime
- System integrity and reliability
- Response and resolution times to issues that arise

The Supplier must ensure the system provides a high-quality user experience (UX) that meets the following principles:

- User-centricity – intuitive, easy to use, and designed around real user needs
- Consistency – predictable navigation, layout and interaction patterns
- Hierarchy – clear structuring of information and workflows
- Context – relevant, contextual information available at each step
- User control – ability for users to navigate or correct actions easily
- Accessibility – compliant with recognised standards WCAG 2.2 AA
- Usability – efficient, task-focused user journeys

11 Training

The Supplier is required to deliver training only to the Social Care Wales HR team, who will act as system administrators and internal super users. Training must be delivered using a Train-the-Trainer approach to ensure the HR team can confidently deliver all end-user training internally to both managers and employees.

Training delivered by the Supplier must enable the HR team to support system rollout, ongoing adoption, and continued utilisation of the HRIS.

Training delivery is required in English only however all training materials and resources must be provided bilingually (Welsh and English) - see section 2.6.4.

Training is required remotely via MS Teams.

11.1 Training for HR Team (system administrators and super users)

The HR team (circa 5-10 participants) will require comprehensive, in-depth training across the full HRIS prior to go-live (1 September 2026), including:

- System configuration and administration
- Data management, workflows and process setup
- Reporting and analytics
- Troubleshooting and system maintenance
- Understanding of any optional modules or features in scope

Training must equip the HR team with the knowledge and capability to:

- Deliver internal training for managers and employees
- Support day-to-day system use
- Maintain system quality and performance over time

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11.2 Train-the-Trainer: Manager Training (Delivered Internally by HR Team)

Following training, the HR team will have the knowledge and resources to deliver training internally and independently to managers covering areas such as:

- Approvals (leave, timesheets, performance documentation, etc.)
- Accessing dashboards, workforce data, and insights
- Managing performance and objective-setting processes
- Initiating HR-related actions and tasks

Supplier training must therefore give the HR team the skills, materials, and knowledge to deliver this effectively.

11.3 Train-the-Trainer: Employee Training (Delivered Internally by HR Team)

Following training, the HR team will have the knowledge and resources to deliver training internally and independently to employees covering areas such as:

- Submitting leave requests and viewing balances
- Completing time and attendance via timesheets
- Setting objectives and adding performance notes
- Updating personal, equality, and diversity information

Supplier training must therefore also ensure the HR team have the knowledge and resources to confidently teach these tasks to end users.

11.4 Training Delivery Methods

The Supplier will deliver training only to the HR team (system administrators and super users) using a Train-the-Trainer approach, enabling Social Care Wales to deliver internal training to managers and employees. The detailed training plan will be agreed between Social Care Wales and the Supplier, but we expect it to include elements such as:

- Face-to-face sessions on Microsoft Teams (recorded) - English only
- Bilingual video tutorials
- Bilingual step by step user guides, onboarding resources and help content
- Bilingual FAQs and resources

11.5 Ongoing Training and Support

Ongoing training will be required to ensure Social Care Wales can maintain in-house capability and support continuous adoption of the HRIS. This will include:

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- Training for new members of the HR team as they join.
- Refresher or update training for the HR team following any system upgrades, enhancements, or configuration changes.
- Updated training materials following system changes, including:
 - Bilingual video tutorials (Welsh and English)
 - Bilingual step-by-step user guides (Welsh and English)
 - Bilingual FAQs and support resources (Welsh and English)

12 Outputs

The Supplier will deliver a fully implemented, secure, accessible and bilingual HR Information System (HRIS) that meets the operational, statutory and strategic needs of Social Care Wales.

The key outputs include:

- A live fully implemented bilingual system available in Welsh and English for both employees/managers and HR administrators.
- A successful data migration ensuring clean, accurate transfer of all required employee, job, absence, training and performance data from the incumbent system.
- Configuration of HR processes and workflows ensuring all core HR processes (absence, leave, performance, probation, notifications, etc.) are fully built, tested and aligned to Social Care Wales' requirements.
- Employee and manager self-service portals enabling leave requests, updates to personal information, time and attendance recording, performance processes and workflow approvals.
- Standard and custom HR reporting capability for statutory, operational and strategic needs.
- Connection to required third-party systems, including the current LMS (iHASCO) and compatibility with Microsoft tools.
- Ability for administrators to create bilingual forms/pages and store responses against staff records.
- Training for the HR team, including train-the-trainer delivery, and bilingual user guides and resources
- Compliance with UK-based data hosting, ISO27001, Cyber Essentials Plus, accessibility (WCAG 2.2 AA), secure login/2FA, and ICO registration.
- Support services for implementation, go-live, early-life, and ongoing service desk under agreed SLAs.

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13 Timeline

To ensure the project remains on track and the new HRIS is fully operational by the planned go-live date, a number of key milestones must be met. The timeline below sets out the critical activities and decision points required to deliver a smooth and timely implementation. Suppliers should review these dates carefully and ensure that their proposed implementation approach, resource plan, and dependencies align with the schedule to support an on-time go-live.

Deliverable	Milestone
Contract Mobilisation	5 May 2026
Discovery, Process Review and System Configuration	May 2026
Implementation, Data Migration & Training	June – July 2026
Testing & User Readiness (plus internal train the trainer)	August 2026
New HRIS Go-Live	1 September 2026