

CALL FOR ACADEMIC PROPOSALS: Evaluation of NHS 24 Inform UX

Introduction

This is an academic call for proposals to undertake an evaluation of prototypes/wireframes developed as part of the service redesign of the NHS inform website. This workstream is managed by the Digital Health & Care Innovation Centre (DHI), but forms a part of a wider project managed by NHS 24. The purpose of the evaluation is to: 1. Conduct structured usability testing and academic review of prototypes/wireframes produced as part of codesign sessions; 2. Test accessibility, equity, and evidence-based design principles; and 3. Deliver user-centred insights to inform refinement.

Important note: The prototypes/wireframes produced as part of this workstream will represent specific user journeys for specific subjects (provided by NHS 24 colleagues) and not represent a full redesign of the whole NHS Inform platform.

Overview

We expect interested academic institutions to provide a brief response document (maximum 10 pages) clearly setting out their approach to this piece of work and detail of associated costs. Please note, applicants may provide additional information in appendices, but only the application will be scored, with the exception of one-page CVs of the team, which can be attached and will be included in the scoring.

Background

NHS 24 is a national Health Board which provides a range of services to people across Scotland (available via telephone, webchat, websites, and an app) delivering round-the-clock access to urgent care, mental health advice and support when GP and Dental practices are not available or when there is a need for urgent care. NHS inform is Scotland's online health information service that offers quality assured health and care information including symptom checkers, Scotland's Service Directory and mental health advice and resources. In partnership with Scottish Government, NHS 24 have been reviewing NHS inform as a national asset for Scotland. This work will deliver the Service Redesign workstream within Phase 2 of the NHS Inform Strategic Review Project, which aims to redesign NHS inform and develop a business case for future investment. The Digital Health & Care Innovation Centre (DHI) will provide support for NHS 24 in the redevelopment of NHS Inform. At NHS 24's request, DHI will provide strategic, design, technical, and business case development support to help deliver a co-designed roadmap, blueprints, and specifications for a modernised, accessible, and user-centred NHS inform service.

Policy context

This work aligns with [DHI's 10-year strategy \(2024–2033\)](#), [NHS 24's Digital Roadmap](#) and supports national digital health transformation priorities. The work will be framed within [NHS Scotland's Digital Service Standards](#), [the Digital Front Door programme](#), and other relevant transformation initiatives.

Eligibility to apply

The following eligibility criteria apply to this grant award:

- The applicant organisation must be a Scottish Higher Education Institution (HEI),
- Funds cannot be redistributed by the awarded party, except without express permission by DHI,

- Bids must be costed in line with the Higher Education Institution’s bidding policies. DHI expects the HEI research office to be involved in communication,
- DHI expects bids to be costed at 80% Full Economic Costing.

Approach

The approach is not prescriptive but is expected to include:

- UX evaluation protocol and testing sessions (including; usability, functionality, aesthetics, errors);
- Accessibility compliance report (and revalidation post audit changes);
- User insights summary report; and
- Inclusive design recommendations.

Skills required

The HEI will offer, either directly, or through engagement with third parties, a combination of experience and expertise in the areas listed below:

User research;

- Wireframing/prototyping;
- Information architecture;
- Visual design;
- Communication; and
- Critical thinking/problem solving.

Milestones, Deliverables and Timescales

We anticipate the commission milestones will follow the timescales set out in Table 1:

Tender Process:	Date
Issue call for bids	28 th November 2025
Deadline for submissions	15 th January 2026
Contract awarded	22 nd January 2026
Kick off meeting	w/c 26 th January 2026
Project milestones with deliverables	Date
Agreed methodology/proposal acceptance	30 th January 2026
Draft Evaluation Report	6 th March 2026
Final Evaluation Report	27 th March 2026

Table 1: Project Timetable

Governance

A Project Steering Group with representation from DHI and NHS 24 experts will oversee delivery of this project. It will sign-off project deliverables and provide advice/support the addressing of key issues.

Management arrangements

The grant award process will be managed by DHI as the lead commissioning body.

DHI Lead Contact:

Janette Hughes, Director of Planning and Performance: janette.hughes@dhi-scotland.com.

Copyright

DHI and Scottish Government will retain copyright of any outputs, partial or final, created as a result of the deliverables indicated in Table 1, including reports, evidence collection instruments created for this purpose, presentations, etc.

Conflicts of interest

There will be a requirement to state no conflict of interest exists or declare any actual or potential conflicts of interest.

Budget

The total budget available for this project is up to £35k, including any relevant VAT. Phasing of payment is detailed in Table 2 below.

Milestone	Completion	Payment
Formal Proposal Acceptance	30 th January 2026	50%
Draft Evaluation Report	6 th March 2026	25%
Acceptance of Formal Evaluation Report	27 th March 2026	25%

Table 2: Project Milestones

Response

You are invited to respond to this document with the following information, with max 10 pages of text:

- Your proposals for delivering on the requirements, scope, methods and deliverables described above. You should detail:
 - your understanding of the main issues to be addressed;
 - how you intend to deliver on the requirements;
 - the methodology you propose to use; and
 - how you will consider accessibility and inclusion and what standards will be applied.
- The expertise and experience of the team undertaking the work, referencing the skills detailed in the 'Skills required' section of this document. This should include *one-page* CV[s] and statement of availability of the individual/s who will undertake the work. CVs can be attached into the application and will be taken into account in the assessment of applications.

- Brief summaries of similar work undertaken, including contact information (name and telephone number or email address) for at least one reference.
- Proposals should also detail all risks and constraints identified for this project, including an assessment of impacts and proposed mitigation actions.
- A realistic timetable of activities, including contingency management, to meet the timescales outlined in the '*Milestones, Deliverables and Timescales*' section of this document.
- A breakdown of costs, including any expenses.
- An outline of anticipated ethical issues, including data protection and research governance.

Response proposals are to be submitted to research@dhi-scotland.com. To assist with the completion of your response, you may contact jennifer.thomas@dhi-scotland.com for further information.

Additional information can be given in appendixes, but only the application will be assessed, unless otherwise mentioned.

Evaluation

Proposals will be evaluated against each other in an objective manner by a team consisting of representatives from DHI and NHS 24. The Evaluation Panel will score each Bidder's response using the criteria shown in the following table.

The Bidder(s) selected will be chosen based on the best value for money. This means suitable quality, delivery, level of risk and response to customer needs at best price.

Criteria	Description	Weighting
Understanding the purpose of the work, context and background and proposes a methodology that meets all the requirements of the tender specification	The proposal clearly demonstrates understanding of the context of this project, including the strategic and policy drivers. Proposal demonstrates that all the requirements of the specification have been addressed and understood and that the proposed methodology is appropriate and capable of successfully delivering all the required outcomes.	25%
Relevant skills and expertise of team to be appointed to deliver the project	Proposal demonstrates availability of the required combination of expertise and experience among team members to be appointed to the project.	20%
Experience and reputation in undertaking similar work	Proposal demonstrates evidence of previous work undertaken in the past 3 years <u>relevant to this project</u> including the names(s) of clients who can be approached for comments.	20%

Support of DHI Net-Zero Carbon Emission Targets	All work supported and funded by DHI should be fully committed to supporting the Scottish Government's ambitions to Net-Zero Carbon Emission Targets by 2045. The proposal should indicate how the team will minimise environmental impacts.	5%
Risk Management and Quality Assurance	The proposal provides evidence that the main risks involved with the project have been identified and adequately addressed. Details of the bidder's risk management and quality assurance methodology are also outlined.	5%
Criteria	Description	Weighting
Timetable	The proposal provides a detailed timetable of events to ensure that deadlines can be met and explicitly identifies any contingency.	10%
Price	The proposal is competitively priced and represents good value in the context of the goods/services to be delivered over the life of the contract. Costs are clearly demonstrated and justified. Best value bids will demonstrate an appropriate combination of cost and quality.	15%

In the event of a number of proposals being received, short listed HEI's may be invited to provide a presentation to the Evaluation Panel or interview to demonstrate their understanding of the project.

The following scoring convention will be used to assess each of the responses to the above quality questions.

Score	Descriptor
4	Excellent response - is excellent overall and will include a balance of completely relevant elements of the Contract as specified (but not limited to the specifications) The response is comprehensive, unambiguous and demonstrates a thorough understanding of the requirement and provides details of how the requirement will be met in full
3	Good response - is relevant and will include a balance of elements of the Contract as specified (but not limited to the specifications) The response is sufficiently detailed to demonstrate a good understanding and provides details on how the requirements will be fulfilled
2	Acceptable response - will include some elements of the Contract as specified (but not limited to the specifications) The response addresses a broad understanding of the requirement but lacks details on how the requirement will be fulfilled

1	Poor response - is partially relevant and will include few elements of the Contract as specified (but not limited to the specifications) The response addresses some elements of the requirement but contains insufficient/limited detail or explanation to demonstrate how the requirement will be fulfilled
0	Unacceptable - Nil or inadequate response Fails to demonstrate an ability to meet the requirement

The Evaluation Panel reserves the right to recommend that if the score for any one criterion is "0", that the Contractor not be recommended. That is, they reserve the right to veto a Contractor if it does not meet at all any one of the criteria.