# INVITATION TO TENDER

## RETAINED HR CONSULTANCY SERVICES

**CLOSING DATE – MONDAY, 14th DECEMBER 2026 BY 4:00PM**

# 1. Instruction to Tenderers

1.1. Ark Housing Association invites experienced service providers to tender for HR Consultancy Services

1.2. The successful service provider must be able to provide a professional consultancy service on the full range of HR and employment issues.

1.3. Completed tenders should be returned by 4:00pm on Monday, 14th December 2026 marked for the attention of John McVey, Director of Finance & Corporate Services. Any tenders received after this date and time will not be accepted.

1.4. Tenderers are expected to be experienced in undertaking this type of contract and will be able to point to other similar contracts they have undertaken. They must meet the mandatory requirements as specified in the tender document. Failure to do so will result in their bids not being progressed.

1.5. The Association is not obliged to accept the lowest priced tender. Value for money and experience are also evaluation criteria in selecting the successful bid.

1.6. The contract for HR Consultancy Services will commence on Monday, 4th January 2027.

1.7. Any queries regarding the specification for this contract should be emailed to John McVey at john.mcvey@arkhousing.co.uk.

1.8. Following the closing date for the submission of tenders, the Association reserves the right to ask follow-up clarification questions during the evaluation process, as well as invite selected bidders to present their proposal to the evaluation panel during the week of Monday, 14th December 2026.

1.9 Ark Housing Association (NI) Limited will not be liable to reimburse any costs incurred by the Service Provider during this tender process.

# 2. Introduction

## 2.1 About Ark Housing

2.2 Established in 1987, Ark Housing Association provides housing and related services to meet the needs of families, older persons, and single person households. Our general needs homes include a range of house types, apartments, and bungalows, whilst our supported accommodation comprises of residential care, supported living, sheltered housing, dementia care, and mental ill health. We also provide temporary accommodation for homeless families.

2.3 As one of 19 housing associations in Northern Ireland tasked with addressing social and affordable housing provision, Ark Housing is committed to maximising its capacity for growth and aims to increase its contribution to social and affordable housing provision by building many more new homes over the next number of years.

2.4 The Association is registered with the Financial Conduct Authority, Department for Communities and the Charity Commission, Northern Ireland.

2.5 Ark Housing currently employs up to 45 full-time and part-time staff.

## 2.6 Terms of Reference

2.7 The Association is seeking to establish a service contract with the successful tenderer on the following basis:

2.8 An initial two year service agreement will be established whereby upon expiry of that two year period, Ark Housing Association (NI) Ltd reserves the right to terminate that agreement or offer an extension to that agreement by a period of a further two years;

2.9 A fixed rate hourly price for work carried out under the scope of this agreement will be set at the outset of this agreement with the rate applicable composite and inclusive of Senior Consultant, Mid-Level Consultant and Administration. Hourly rates agreed at the outset will apply for the duration of the service agreement.

2.10 There will be no minimum or maximum number of applicable hours required or set within this service agreement due to the irregular nature of the service to be provided. However, for information purposes, previous use of contracted HR consultancy services has averaged at 3 hours a month within a year.

Ark Housing Association (NI) Ltd reserves the right to establish and agree with the successful provider a maximum number of applicable hours for each interaction as defined within the scope of this agreement.

## 3. Deliverables

3.1 Ark Housing are seeking service providers to provide a professional consultancy service to the Association in respect of the full range of HR and Employment matters, including but not limited to the following activities:

3.2 The provision of advice and assistance in the management, execution and oversight of internal employment disputes including grievance and disciplinary matters;

3.3 The provision of advice and assistance in the management, execution and oversight of complex HR and Employment matters including, but not limited to, redundancy, long term or persistent sickness absence, job evaluations and other such matters;

3.4 The provision of advice and assistance in the management, execution and oversight of Recruitment & Selection Processes;

3.5 The provision of advice and assistance in the development and review of internal company policies and practices in relation to HR and Employment matters;

3.6 The provision of essential training and development to the Association's employees and Board members in respect to HR and Employment responsibilities;

# 4. Tender Process

4.1 Service Providers must complete and submit the following documents:

- A Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) **and**
- A detailed Tender Response by completion of questions in Section 5.0 of the tender document.

4.4 **Timetable for Submission**

4.5 Three (3) copies of the completed PQQ and Detailed Tender Response (clearly marked in separate sealed envelopes) should be sent to Ark Housing's Head Office, for the attention of:

John McVey,
Director of Finance & Corporate Services
Ark Housing Association,
Unit 1, Hawthorn Office Park
43 Stockmans Way,
Belfast
BT9 7ET

4.6 Tenders should be received no later than **4:00pm on Monday, 14th December 2026**. Any tenders received after this date and time will not be accepted.

4.7 Ark Housing Association (NI) Limited will not be liable to reimburse any costs incurred by the Service Provider during this tender process. Ark Housing Association (NI) Limited is concerned to maximise the value obtained, however, the Association does not bind itself to accept the lowest or any tender.

# 5. Tender Response

5.1 Your detailed tender response should include the completion of the following questions. Your response to each of the sections should be succinct and not exceed 750 words.

5.2 **Experience & Qualifications**

The relevant experience and qualifications of your firm and, in particular, your staff, who will be responsible for delivering the service requirements as outlined above.

# 5. Tender Response (cont.)

## 5.3 Approach & Methodology

An outline of the approach and methodology that will be adopted by the service provider to deliver the service.

## 5.4 Relevant Knowledge

Present evidence that there is a detailed understanding of HR and Employment Practises, as outlined in the service deliverables.

# 5. Tender Response (cont.)

5.5 Input Required from Ark Housing

A clear outline of the input required from the Ark Housing Association's Board and staff.

# 5. Tender Response (cont.)

## 5.6 Other Services

Provide details of other relevant or related services that your company may be able to offer to the Association within the scope of this agreement.

# 5. Tender Response (cont.)

## 5.7 Pricing

An outline of your fees, including expenses for the activities should be detailed below.

Tenderers should note that the Association expects these rates to remain constant for the duration of the contract and that general expenses are deemed to be inclusive.

| **Area** | **Price £** |
|---|---|
| Composite / Average Hourly Rate<br><br>(Composite / Average hourly rate to be assessed by tenderer and should be inclusive of senior, mid-level and administrative input in delivering this service). | |

All prices provided should be listed as **inclusive of VAT**.

## 5.8 References

The names and contact details of two clients, where similar services have been delivered, whom Ark Housing can contact for a reference.

| |
|---|
| |

# 5. Tender Response (cont.)

### 5.9 Insurance

Provide full details of your company's Professional Indemnity Insurance, including level of cover, any exclusions and renewal date. A copy of this policy should be provided.

### 5.10 General

Tenderers are asked to keep their responses and submissions succinct. Working files or papers produced during the course of the contract will remain the property of the Association and must be handed over to the Association in the event of contract termination.

# 6. Selection Process

6.1 The minimum number of contractors envisaged to submit in response to the tender opportunity is three. No maximum limit has been set.

6.2 If it is considered necessary by the selection panel, all successful tenderers will be invited for interview. Interviews which may include a service provider company presentation will be an opportunity for the assessment panel to clarify elements of the tender response but will not be an opportunity to present new information.

6.3 A panel will be convened to assess the PQQ and Detailed Tender Response in accordance with the agreed selection criteria.

**6.4 Stage 1: Pre Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ)**

If the PQQ meets the Association's evaluation requirements, the remainder of the tender submission will be considered by the Panel. Tendering companies that fail to pass all sections will **NOT** be considered for Stage 2.

**6.5 Stage 2: Detailed Tender Response**

For the Service Providers selected to take part in the detailed tender response stage of the procurement, evaluation of the detailed tenders will be undertaken on the basis of where the price/quality ratio will be 60/40.

# 7. Evaluation Criteria

## 7.1 Detailed Tender Response

All tenderers will be evaluated using the following criteria and associated weightings

| Criteria | Weighting |
|---|---|
| **Quality** | **40%** |
| Experience | 15% |
| Approach and methodology | 10% |
| Knowledge | 15% |
| **Quantitative Requirements (Price)** | **60%** |
| Composite Hourly Rate | 60% |

The following criteria will be used to assess the tenders:

- Quality 40%
- Price 60%

## 8. Marking Scheme

To ensure consistency and equity the evaluation panel will assign scores for quality of response:

| **Quality Scoring System** | **Indicator**<br>The weighting for quality is 40% - the following formula will be applied when assessing final score under quality: Total Quality Score x 40% |
|---|---|
| 5 | - indicates an excellent response to the criteria with no weaknesses<br>- detailed supporting evidence is provided with thorough analysis, tailored specifically to the brief.<br>- no areas of weakness |
| 4 | - indicates a good response to the criteria with few weaknesses<br>- supporting evidence and analysis have been provided to demonstrate the competence required |
| 3 | - indicates a compliant response to the criteria, but lacks specific information or analysis on some aspects to award a higher mark<br>- strengths outweigh weaknesses |
| 2 | - indicates that the response to the criteria is limited in detail with some reservations<br>- understanding of the requirement and ability to deliver not fully demonstrated. Medium risk that the proposed approach will not be successful<br>- weaknesses and/or risks outweigh strengths |
| 1 | - indicates evaluation panel have major reservations about response to the criteria and there is insufficient detail to award a higher mark.<br>- weaknesses far outweigh the strengths |
| 0 | - indicates the response fails to provide sufficient detail to allow the panel to assess the response against the criteria<br>- an unacceptable response with serious deficiencies. High risk that the proposed approach will not be successful.<br>- very limited evidence provided against the criteria |

| **Price Scoring System** | **Indicator**<br>The composite hourly rate will be given a weighting of 60% |
|---|---|
| 5 | Lowest cost tendered for each element of the cost submission will be awarded the maximum score available. To calculate scores for each of the remaining tenders, the lowest tendered price in each cost submission will be divided by the tenderers price multiplied by 5 and the applicable weighting. |
| 1-4 | |

## 9. Further Information

9.1 Where a Service Provider seeks clarification or further information or would like to raise any questions regarding particular aspects of the tendering process, all communication must be in writing (email is acceptable) and directed to:

John McVey,
Director of Finance & Corporate Services,
Ark Housing Association,
Unit 1, Hawthorn Office Park
43 Stockmans Way
Belfast
BT9 7ET

Email: john.mcey@arkhousing.co.uk

9.2 Any enquiries must be received no later than 4th December 2026. A written response stating the question and answer, but not identifying the enquirer, will be sent to all Service Providers.

### 9.3. Cross Undertaking

Contractors should note that Ark Housing Association shall seek to recover all expenses and losses arising out of any objection, complaint or legal challenge to the implementation of this agreement.