

NHS Somerset Integrated Care Board Procurement Policy

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Please complete the table below:

To be added by corporate team once policy approved and before placing on website

Policy reference no:	
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Approved by:	Audit Committee
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The purpose of the Procurement Policy is to ensure all procurement undertaken on behalf of NHS Somerset Integrated Care Board:

- Provides the best possible value.
- Is undertaken in a transparent and non-discriminatory manner with equality of treatment a core requirement.
- Is compliant with all regulatory frameworks including local and national legislation.
- Uses best practice as standard.
- Complies with long and short-term objectives of the Integrated Care Board.

Policy Review Checklist	Yes / No / N/A	Supporting information
Has an Equality Impact Assessment Screening been completed?	No	Individual procurements will consider all equality impacts and may include the need for further consideration of equality impacts, dependant on services commissioned
Has the review taken account of latest Guidance/Legislation?	Yes	Public procurement obligations are defined in Section B – Procurement Direction and Influences.
Has legal advice been sought?	Yes	External advice sought pre-adoption
Has HR been consulted?	No	Not required for this Policy
Have training issues been addressed?	Yes	To be provided by procurement team and guides for managers / Standard Operating Procedure developed.
Are there other HR related issues that need to be considered?	No	Not required for this Policy
Has the policy been reviewed by Staff Partnership Forum?	No	Not required for this Policy
Are there financial issues and have they been addressed?	No	Although this Policy is concerned with ICB expenditure, it does not raise any specific financial issues
What engagement has there been with patients/members of the public in preparing this policy?	N/A	Not required for this Policy
Are there linked policies and procedures?	Yes	ICB Constitution (Standing Financial Instructions), ICB Detailed Financial Policies, ICB Contracting Standing Operating Procedure, ICB Procurement Standing Operating Procedure and ICB Patient and Public Involvement Strategy and Policy
Has the lead Executive Director approved the policy?	Yes	
Which Committees have assured the policy?		Audit Committee on 05 March 2025

Policy Review Checklist	Yes / No / N/A	Supporting information
Has a Policy implementation plan been provided?	N/A	
How will the policy be shared with? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff? • Patients? • Public? 	Yes	Staff – through integration with the ICB's overall training plan, and bespoke training as provided through the SCW procurement team. Patients and public – through ICB website publication
Will an audit trail demonstrating receipt of policy by staff be required; how will this be done?	No	Not required for this Policy
Have Data Protection implications been considered?	Yes	Yes, via the comments made about IG at CPRG.

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1 Preface

This policy sets out the framework as to how NHS Somerset Integrated Care Board (“the ICB”) procurement decisions should be undertaken. All managers and staff (at all levels) are responsible for ensuring that they are viewing and working to the current version of this procedural document. If this document is printed in hard copy or saved to another location, it must be checked that the version number in use matches with that of the live version on the ICB website.

All ICB procedural documents are published on the ICB website and communication is circulated to all staff when new procedural documents or changes to existing procedural documents are released. Managers are encouraged to use team briefings to aid staff awareness of new and updated procedural documents. All staff are responsible for implementing procedural documents as part of their normal responsibilities and are responsible for ensuring they maintain an up-to-date awareness of their contents.

1.1 Summary Points

This document outlines how the ICB will make decisions regarding the procurement of the goods and health care services it commissions. Procurement seeks to positively influence and support the ICB’s strategy, transformation and transition plans utilising the principles in this policy.

The objective of this document is to ensure that in relation to the procurement of healthcare services the ICB acts with a view to:

- Securing the needs of the people who use the services.
- Improving the quality of the services.
- Improving efficiency of the services.
- Ensuring that services provided are accessible.
- Ensuring its procurement activities are undertaken transparently, fairly, proportionately, and where appropriate through integrated service delivery.

And in relation to the procurement of all goods and health care services that the ICB complies with the law, regulations and published guidance and its own standing orders.

1.2 NHS Somerset ICB Values

This Policy is aligned with NHS Somerset ICB Values:

- Respect and dignity. We value each person as an individual, respect their aspirations and commitments in life, and seek to understand their priorities, needs, abilities and limits.
- Commitment to quality of care.
- Compassion.
- Improving lives.
- Working together for patients.
- Everyone counts.

The appropriate use of procurement ensures a robust process framework exists within which the ICB's values can be achieved, including in relation to the ICB's obligations regarding acting with integrity through appropriate expenditure of public money, through embracing diversity in relation to the commissioning of services, and striving for excellence in how services are commissioned within Somerset.

2 Relevant to / Target Audience

The policy, associated framework and guidance applies to all staff within the ICB and specifically to the decision-making bodies who make commissioning decisions regarding new, alternative or renewal of contracts for services or goods. This policy is to be read alongside the ICBs Standing Financial Instructions and Scheme of reservation and delegation.

<https://nhssomerset.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/SFI-2024-Update.pdf>

SECTION A - Introduction

3 Introduction and Purpose

Procurement is the act of obtaining or buying goods or services and covers all spend undertaken within the Integrated Care Board (ICB). Spend within the ICB is wide ranging and may be the purchase of information technology hardware, legal services, healthcare services or human resource, but every element of spend is regulated by the internal Standing Financial Instructions, internal policies and external regulations and guidance.

The principal aim of procurement undertaken by NHS organisations is to deliver essential goods and services and improve patient outcomes, while increasing value from every pound spent. The ICB will ensure it uses the most appropriate mechanism (procurement process) and legislation available to secure goods, resources, services and works.

The purpose of this policy is to outline the procedures to be followed when obtaining goods or services on behalf of the ICB, either by outlining the processes, or by providing links to further information and support.

This Procurement Policy will ensure that all procurement undertaken:

- a) Complies with relevant national legislation, policy, and guidance, the ICB Constitution, Standing Orders, Schemes of Reservation and Delegation and Standing Financial Instructions.
- b) Acts with a view to deliver against the needs of the local population.
- c) Treats providers in a transparent, proportionate, and non-discriminatory manner with equality of treatment a core requirement.
- d) Provides the best possible value for money.
- e) Maintains high standards of public trust and probity in its use of public funds.
- f) Uses best practice as standard and is aligned to the ICB Procurement Standard Operating Procedures (SoP).
- g) Complies with long and short-term objectives of the ICB.
- h) Does not engage in anti-competitive behaviour.
- i) Providers and suppliers understand their obligations under UK general data protection regulations (UKGDPR)

This policy sets out existing legal framework for procurement by public bodies in the UK and will be updated in line with any changes to UK legislation.

In all cases, procurement decisions will be taken within the parameters and limitations of the existing legal framework. Alongside this, the ICB recognises the general progression toward greater integration of services in the context of integrated models of care and will ensure that any such developments as they relate to procurement will be considered and integrated into ICB procurement practices as necessary.

4 Scope of the Procurement Policy

This policy applies to all spend (goods, services, clinical and non-clinical) undertaken on behalf of the ICB. All services commissioned including those delegated to the ICB and/or yet to be delegated fall in scope of this policy.

This policy must be followed by all personnel working for, or on behalf of the ICB including staff on temporary or honorary contracts, pool staff, students, Independent Contractors, Sub-Contractors, and representatives from other external bodies acting on behalf of the ICB including other ICBs and NHS South, Central and West Commissioning Support Unit (“SCW”).

5 Definitions

This document is a policy. Any abbreviations used in the document will be written in full in the first instance.

6 Roles and responsibilities

The Chief Finance Officer and Director of Performance and Contracting is the responsible officer for this policy and the contracting and procurement function. The Audit Committee is responsible for the adherence and monitoring compliance with this policy under delegated authority from the ICB Board.

The procurement function is supplied by NHS South, Central & West Commissioning Support Unit (SCW) and relevant advice and training will be provided by competent individuals supporting any procurement.

All ICB staff are responsible for consulting with the procurement function in matters contained within this policy. This includes due consideration of matters affecting equality and diversity and ensuring that the services that are being procured are accessible. Section D (Additional Considerations) identifies tools to support decision making such as Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA), Equality Impact Assessment (EIA), Quality Impact Assessment (QIA) and section 8.7 the consideration of delivering a Greener NHS, working towards a ‘net zero national health service.

When jointly commissioning / securing services on behalf of the ICB/ICS system, all ICB staff must engage with all partners involved prior to launching the procurement process.

Please seek advice as early as possible from the ICB Business, Strategy and Planning Directorate contracting team or the SCW Procurement Team if you are uncertain which procurement regulations apply and need to be followed. A member of the Business, Strategy and Planning Directorate contracting team and or the SCW CSU procurement team should be involved as early as possible in the commissioning process to ensure they have a full understanding of the requirements.

7 Ethical Framework principles for decision-making

The ICB at all times seeks to work within an Ethical Framework in relation to its decision making. This includes:

Principle 1 – Rational: Decision-making is rational and based upon a process of reasoning.

Principle 2 – Inclusive: Decisions should be arrived at through a fair and non-discriminatory process.

Principle 3 – Take account of the value secured: Decisions will take account of the outcomes we will achieve (for example population health, quality of health, survival rate, extent of recovery, people's experience, safety) for the resources that we use (for example the amount we pay for a service, salaries, investment in equipment and buildings). This is what we call "value".

Principle 4 – Transparent and open to scrutiny: Decisions and the way they are made should be transparent and easily understood. The information provided to decision makers should be fully documented together with the process followed and the degree of consensus reached.

Principle 5 – Promote health for both individuals and the community: Decisions about things that promote health and avoid people becoming ill will be considered alongside things that will cure illness and other interventions. There may be times when it is appropriate to target specific demographic groups or health issues in order to reduce inequalities in health outcomes.

SECTION B – Procurement Direction and Influences

8 Public Procurement Legislation and Policy influences

Procurement within the NHS is governed by various pieces of legislation, policy and guidance which are to be considered when executing the ICBs' statutory duties, such as:

Legislation

- Section 75 of the Health and Care Act 2022 – “Co-operation by NHS bodies and local authorities”.
- Health Care Services (Provider Selection Regime) Regulations 2023
- The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 ('PCR 2015') which are amended by The Public Procurement (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020 ('PPAR 2020').
- Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012
- Health and Care Act 2022
- The Procurement Act 2023 – note will be replacing PCR 2015 in October 2024
- Equality Act 2010.

Policy / Guidance

- Cabinet Office Guidelines and Procurement Policy Notes
- Crown Commercial Service Guidance
- NHS Constitution
- Strategy and Guidance documents from regulatory bodies such as NHS England and the Department of Health and Social Care
- Commissioning decisions made by the ICB.
- Relevant case law as it develops through the judicial system.
- NHSE Managing Conflicts of Interest: Revised Statutory Guidance for CCGs

The ICB is required to follow two separate procurement regimes –

- (1) a specific regime for healthcare services (see s8.1 – Provider Selection Regime (PSR))
- and**
- (2) a regime for all other procurements (see s8.2 - Procurement Act 2023).

Where the ICB has already started a procurement exercise before 01 January 2024 then these will be required to conclude under the Public Contract Regulations 2015.

The Public Contracts Regulation 2015 is intended to be replaced on 25 February 2025 by the Procurement Act 2023. This update will be reflected in a subsequent version of this Policy.

Any new procurements that commence once the Procurement Act 2023 is in place (excluding regime for healthcare services) must be conducted by reference to the Act only, whilst those

that were commenced under the previous legislation (the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (PCR)) must continue to be procured and managed under that legislation.

For clarity, a contract award process for healthcare services is considered to have started under the Public Contracts Regulation 2015 if any of the following began **before** 01 January 2024:

- a contract notice has been submitted to the UK e-notification service for publication in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015
- the ICB has contacted any provider to:
 - seek expressions of interest or offers in respect of a proposed contract, **or**
 - respond to an unsolicited expression of interest or offer received from that provider in relation to a proposed contract.

Please seek advice from the SCW Procurement Team if you are uncertain which procurement regulations apply and need to be followed.

8.1 NHS Provider Selection Regime (PSR)

The Provider Selection Regime (PSR) has been in force since 01 January 2024 and is set out in the Health Care Services (Provider Selection Regime) Regulations 2023. The PSR sets rules for procuring healthcare services in England by organisations termed Relevant Authorities. Relevant Authorities are:

- NHS England
- Integrated care boards (ICBs)
- NHS trusts and NHS foundation trusts
- Local authorities and combined authorities.

The PSR replaces the:

- Public Contracts Regulations 2015, when procuring **health care services**
- National Health Service (Procurement, Patient Choice, and Competition) Regulations 2013

The PSR will **not** apply to the procurement of goods or non-health care services (unless as part of a mixed procurement), irrespective of whether these are procured by Relevant Authorities. The PSR is introduced by regulations made under the Health and Care Act 2022. In keeping with the intent of the Act, the PSR has been designed to:

- a) introduce a flexible and proportionate process for deciding who should provide health care services.
- b) provide a framework that allows collaboration to flourish across Systems.
- c) ensure that all decisions are made in the best interest of patients and service users.

8.2 Procurement Act 2023

The Procurement Act 2023 is expected to go-live from 25th February 2025. Once implemented the Procurement Act 2023 will replace the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (detailed below), the Concessions Contract Regulations 2016 and the Utilities Contract Regulations 2016.

The key benefits of the Procurement Act include:

- Creating a simpler yet more flexible commercial system whilst ensuring that ICB procurement activity remains compliant with regulations.

- Provides opportunity to open up ICB public procurements to new entrants such as small businesses and social enterprises so that they can compete and win more public contracts.
- Enables tougher action to be undertaken on underperforming suppliers and exclude those suppliers who pose unacceptable risks.
- Embeds transparency throughout the commercial lifecycle so that the spending of taxpayers' money can be properly scrutinised.

The Procurement Act will also condense the 7 procurement procedures highlighted at section 13.2 into the following 3 procedures:

- 1) **Open Procedure (a one stage process).** This is a single stage procedure whereby any interested party can submit a tender and the ICB will decide whom to award the contract to on the basis of that tender.
- 2) **Competitive Flexible (Multi-stage design procurement process).** This provides flexibility for the ICB to design a competitive tendering procedure where it considers appropriate for the purpose of awarding the public contract.

There are some circumstances where the ICB can only use the competitive flexible procedure; these include:

- a) Where it wishes to limit the number of suppliers before inviting tenders.
- b) When procuring under a dynamic market
- c) When reserving a public contract to supported employment providers or public service mutuals.

Note, Framework contracts can be established under either the open procedure or the competitive procedure.

- 3) **Direct Award (including urgency requirements).** A public contract is awarded without a competitive tendering procedure and the public contract is placed directly with the supplier of the ICBs choosing. Under the Procurement Act, a transparency notice must be published before a contract is directly awarded. The function of the transparency notice is to inform stakeholders that a contracting authority intends to directly award a contract and ensure that there is transparency relating to this decision. It provides an opportunity for interested parties to consider the justification for direct award.

Guidance Documents

The Cabinet Office has developed comprehensive guidance documents that cover all aspects of the Procurement Act 2023 and are intended to provide technical guidance and help with interpretation and understanding. These can be accessed from the following link:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/procurement-act-2023-guidance-documents>

The guidance documents should be read in conjunction with the Procurement Act 2023 and its associated regulations and are aimed at procurement practitioners and commercial policy leads across the ICB and its partners.

Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (PCR 2015)

The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (the 2015 Regulations) detail the required processes for conducting public procurement non-Healthcare services procurements through to 25th February 2025, or for healthcare services procurements formally commenced prior to 1 January 2024. The 2015 Regulations require that certain procedures must be followed by relevant public bodies when awarding contracts above specified financial thresholds.

Providers raising a complaint against the 2015 Regulations will sometimes look to resolve a complaint/challenge via correspondence with the ICB and/or if the provider remains unsatisfied with the outcome, they may decide to issue court proceedings. There are general time limits that a provider can issue court proceedings as specified in [regulation 92](#) but generally proceedings must be started within 30 days beginning with the date when the provider first knew or ought to have known that grounds for starting the proceedings had arisen.

8.3 Integrated Working

The ICB is a member of the Somerset Integrated Care System (ICS). Although the ICB remains accountable in law for its own public procurement decision making, there are times where an integrated approach to procurement with other ICS members will be appropriate. This could be with the ICB as either a lead or associate Contracting Authority. Where the ICB is an associate to other ICS members' procurement activity, it will remain incumbent on the ICB to ensure that its procurement obligations are fulfilled.

8.4 The Health and Care Act 2022

The Health and Social Care Act 2022 establishes a [legislative framework](#) to support ICB collaboration and partnership working to integrate services for patients. The Act enables the ICB and its partners to consider and determine the best system arrangements adopting a population health approach aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of the local population; integration within the NHS (between different NHS organisations) and integration between the NHS and local government (and wider partners).

8.5 Equality Act 2010

The main [Public Sector Equality Duty \(PSED\)](#) is comprised of three areas/functions, set out in section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010 ("the Act"):

The ICB will, in the exercise of its procurement functions, have due regard to the need to:

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act.
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

‘Due regard’ itself is broadly defined in the following ways:

- decision-makers must be made aware of their duty to have due regard to the identified needs.
- the Duty must be fulfilled both before and during consideration of a particular policy and involves a “conscious approach and state of mind”.
- it is not a question of ticking boxes, the Duty must be approached in substance, with rigour and with an open mind, and a failure to refer expressly to the Duty whilst exercising a public function will not be determinative of whether due regard has been had.
- the Duty is non-delegable.
- the Duty is continuing.
- it is good practice for an authority to keep a record showing that it has considered the identified needs.

8.6 Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012

The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 places requirements on commissioners to consider the economic, environmental, and social benefits of their approaches to service provision and procurement. Social Value when incorporated effectively, will help to reduce health inequalities, drive better environmental performance, and deliver more value from procured products and services.

Commissioners should consider social value during the needs assessment and service design phase before any procurement starts so they can inform the shape of the procurement and the design of the services required. In particular, the Act requires commissioners to make the following considerations at the pre-procurement stage:

- (a) how what is proposed to be procured might improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the relevant area.
- (b) how, in conducting a procurement process, it might act with a view to securing that improvement.
- (c) whether to undertake a consultation on these matters.

In addition commissioners are required to include a minimum 10% weighting attributed to the evaluation criteria as detailed in [Procurement Policy Note 06/20](#) – ‘taking account of social value in the award of central government contracts’.

8.7 Greener NHS – Delivering a ‘Net Zero’ National Health Service

When considering service redesign and procurement the process should also consider the health service’s commitment to ‘delivering a ‘Net Zero’ National Health Service. Net Zero has been embedded in legislation, through the Health and Care Act 2022. This places a duty on the ICB to contribute towards statutory emissions and environmental targets.

The ICB has developed a [Green Plan](#) which headlines the ambition for the ICB when considering procurement and its supply chain. This recognises the positive impact that can be leveraged from a collaborative approach to procurement, to ensure social, responsible, and environmental commitments are at the heart of decision making that will drive towards a net zero procurement and supply chain by 2030.

9 Fraud and Bribery and corruption

The ICB is committed to reducing and preventing fraud, bribery and corruption in the NHS and ensuring that funds stolen by these means are put back into patient care. During the development of this policy document, consideration has been given to how fraud, bribery or corruption may occur in this area. We have ensured that our processes will assist in preventing, detecting, and deterring fraud, bribery and corruption and considered what our responses to allegation of incidents of any such acts would be.

If fraud, bribery or corruption is reasonably suspected, and in accordance with the Local Counter Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy, a referral will be made to the ICB's Local Counter Fraud Specialist for investigation. The ICB reserves the right to prosecute where fraud, bribery or corruption is suspected to have taken place. In cases involving any type of loss (financial or other), the ICB will take action to recover those losses by working with law enforcement agencies and investigators in both criminal and/or civil courts.

Procurement is a particularly high-risk area in terms of fraud and bribery. It is important that all ICB staff are aware of the risks and can recognise and report fraudulent activity. All staff should also be aware that the ICB has a zero-tolerance approach to Fraud and Bribery as highlighted within the Fraud and Bribery policy and detail provided at Corporate Induction.

9.1 Fraud Act 2006

The [Fraud Act 2006](#) created a criminal offence of Fraud and defines three ways of committing it:

- Fraud by false representation (*e.g., an external fraudster purporting to be a genuine supplier to arrange payment to a bank account*).
- Fraud by failing to disclose information (*e.g., a company director failing to disclose criminal convictions*); and
- Fraud by abuse of position (*e.g., an employee creating fictitious suppliers with payments to their own bank accounts*)

In these cases, an offender's conduct must be dishonest, and their intention must be to make a gain or cause a loss (or the risk of a loss) to another.

9.2 Bribery Act 2010

The [Bribery Act 2010](#) defines bribery as the giving or taking of a reward in return for acting dishonestly and/or in breach of the law. There are four main classifications of bribery:

- Bribing another person.
- Being bribed.
- Bribing a foreign public official; and
- Failure to prevent bribery (Corporate offence).

Any offering, promising, giving, requesting, agreeing to, receiving, or accepting of any bribe is strictly forbidden by any employee when conducting business on behalf of the ICB or when representing the ICB in any capacity and is contrary to the Bribery Act 2010.

Any suspicions or concerns of acts of fraud or bribery can be reported confidentially to the Local Counter Fraud Specialist online via <https://www.reportnhsfraud.nhs.uk> or via the NHS Counter Fraud Authority (NHSCFA) Fraud and Corruption Reporting Line on 0800 0284060. All calls are dealt with by experienced trained staff and any caller who wishes to remain anonymous may do so.

SECTION C – Practical processes and guidance

10 Procurement Approach / Decision to Tender

10.1 ICB Constitution and applicable financial thresholds

Where the ICB wishes to award a contract for goods or services, it must consider which of the relevant pieces of legislation is applicable and the value of that contract opportunity to determine the appropriate procurement approach. Attention should also be given to the ICB's Constitution. All procurement activity will be undertaken in accordance with Standards of Business Conduct including conflicts of interest – section 6 of the NHS Constitution.

The table below summarises the potential routes to market in accordance with the potential value of the contract (calculated over the full term of the contract) and the requirements of the PCR 2015 Regulations and other relevant legislation for non-healthcare contracts and Healthcare Services (Provider Selection Regime) Regulations 2023 for healthcare contracts. In certain circumstances the procurement route specified below might not be appropriate. In such circumstances written approval must be sought from the Chief Finance Officer. Potential routes to market are described in section 11 as a reference guide.

Non-Healthcare:

Total Contract Value over the lifetime of the contract, incl. VAT	Minimum Type of Procurement Required	Applicable Governance/Legislation
Up to £20k	No formal requirement for external procurement process. Obtain at least one written quote demonstrating Value for Money.	ICB Constitution: which describes the authority for approval of single tender waivers. Procurement Policy: which describes the award of contract without competition (see s13.4). Managing conflicts of interest: revised statutory guidance for CCGs 2017.
Between £20k and £214k (threshold for public supply contracts and services)	Quotations should be obtained from at least 3 organisations. Where it is not possible to obtain 3 quotes, this must be documented incl. the reasons. Single Tender Waivers should only be used in exceptional circumstances and must be reported to Audit Committee.	
Above £214k (threshold for public supply contracts and services)	Full open (advertised) or closed (framework) tender required. Advice and guidance from SCW Procurement Team if full tender cannot be undertaken	

Healthcare Contracts:

Total Contract Value of Healthcare contract/s	Minimum Type of Procurement Required	Applicable Governance/legislation
No set threshold values.	<p>Route to market to be determined on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the SCW Procurement Team and Contract Oversight Group (see s18).</p> <p>Transparency Notices published in Find Tender Service as required according to route to market (see Appendix 2).</p>	<p>Healthcare Services (Provider Selection Regime) Regulations 2023</p> <p>Health and Care Act 2022</p> <p>NHSE Managing conflicts of interest: revised statutory guidance.</p>

10.2 Decision whether to competitively tender

The table above and the additional Provider Selection Regime process guidance at Appendix 1 for healthcare contracts should be applied in the first instance to determine the correct procurement process approach.

In relation to healthcare contracts, there is no ‘one size fits all’ approach, and regard will have to be given in each instance to how the ICB can best meet the needs of the population, ensuring that the quality of services and the efficiency with which they are provided is improved (for example in terms of whether a new contract that would attract procurement law obligations needs to be awarded, or whether the ICB’s requirements can be met in other.

This will need to be routinely considered as part of the commissioning process and the rationale behind any decision, whether or not, to competitively tender a contract should be fully documented, having obtained advice in all such instances from the Procurement Team and/or the Contract Oversight Group. Such decisions should be transparent and must be signed-off by the relevant ICB committee(s).

In instances of particular urgency where it is necessary to award a contract without competitive tendering, and there is not time to follow the standard governance and approval process, it will be necessary to seek approval from the appropriate officer within the ICB aligning / adhering to the ICBs SFIs and to ensure that advice is obtained from the procurement and/or legal teams in accordance with the relevant scheme of delegation, in the form of a signed waiver document.

The ICB approval of the procurement strategy and readiness to proceed shall be managed through the ICB governance processes and shall include preparedness, contract value and contract length plus any extensions.

10.3 Engaging the Procurement Team

A member of the SCW Procurement team should be involved as early as possible in the commissioning process to ensure they have a full understanding of the requirements of the service and to advise on the procurement process, considering best practice and timelines as required.

11 Route to Market

A variety of procurement and tendering options are available by which the ICB can secure the required service. The advice of the SCW Procurement Team should be sought to ensure that the appropriate route is selected when procuring healthcare (see s12) and non-healthcare services (see s13), in compliance with all relevant legal and regulatory requirements.

SECTION D – Provider Selection Regime (Healthcare procurements Only)

12 Provider Selection Regime (Healthcare procurements Only)

The Provider Selection Regime (PSR) applies to all new healthcare procurements commenced after the 01 January 2024. NHSE has provided [statutory guidance](#) that sits alongside the PSR regulations to support the ICB/commissioners understand and interpret the regime. A summary of key aspects of the PSR is detailed below.

The ICB can follow three provider selection processes to award contracts for health services. These are:

- 1) **Direct Award processes (A, B and C):** These involve awarding contracts to providers when there is limited or no reason to seek change from the existing provider; or to assess providers against one another, because:
 - a. the existing provider is the only provider that can deliver the health care services (direct award process A)
 - b. patients have a choice of providers, and the number of providers is not restricted by the ICB (direct award process B)
 - c. the existing provider is satisfying its existing contract, will likely satisfy the new contract to a sufficient standard, and the proposed contracting arrangements are not changing considerably (direct award process C).
- 2) **Most Suitable Provider process:** This involves awarding a contract to providers without running a competitive process, because the ICB can identify the most suitable provider.
- 3) **Competitive process:** This involves running a competitive process to award a contract including the formulation of framework agreements.

Direct Award processes A and B must be used where they apply. Where these processes are not mandated, commissioners may choose whether to use Direct Award process C, the Most Suitable Provider process, or the Competitive process, subject to the specific conditions of those processes (for example Direct Award process C cannot be used if services are changing considerably, as defined in the regulations).

12.1 Making decisions under the Provider Selection Regime

The regime will need to be applied as part of the commissioning process whenever contracts for healthcare services are coming to an end, changing considerably, or being awarded for the first time. A decision flow chart and overview of the decision-making approach to PSR process is provided at Appendix 1 to support commissioner understanding of the processes.

Commissioners will need to comply with defined processes in each of the provider selection routes to market to evidence their decision-making, including record keeping and the publication of transparency notices. As such advice from the SCW Procurement Team should always be sought when considering the most appropriate route to market.

12.2 Key and Basic Selection Criteria

If commissioners decide to follow the Direct Award C, Most Suitable Provider or Competitive process as a viable route to market then ‘key criteria’ and ‘basic selection criteria’ need to be considered, as detailed below:

Key Criteria
Quality and Innovation
Value
Integration, Collaboration, and service sustainability
Improving access, reducing health inequalities, and facilitating choice
Social Value

All of the key criteria must be considered. The relative importance of the criteria is not pre-determined and there is no prescribed hierarchy or weighting for each criterion with the exception of Social Value which must be a minimum of 10% weighting (see s8.6). The total percentage of the key criteria should equal 100%.

The relevant authority must also assess providers against the basic selection criteria and is expected not to award a contract to a provider that does not meet these. These may relate to:

Basic Selection Criteria
The provider’s ability to pursue a particular activity e.g., membership of professional organisation or hold a specific authorisation
Economic and financial standing e.g., minimum turnover, indemnity insurance
Technical and professional ability e.g., level of experience, not having conflicting interests

Furthermore, the relevant authority should not award a contract to a provider that meets the exclusion criteria.

12.3 Transparency Requirements

The PSR is designed to encourage transparency and consequently commissioners will need to be transparent in their decision making to ensure that there is proper scrutiny and accountability of decisions made about NHS services. Appendix 2 provides a summary of the transparency steps required for each of the provider selection processes.

12.4 Mixed Procurements

The PSR must not be used for the procurement of goods or non-healthcare services alone. However, when a contract comprises a mixture of in-scope health care services and out of scope services or goods the ICB may use the PSR to arrange those services when both of the below statements are true:

- The main subject matter of the procurement is health care services. This means that the health care service element must be more than 50% of the value of the contract.

And

- The ICB is of the view that the other goods or services could not reasonably be supplied under a separate contract. This means that the ICB is of the view that procuring the health care services and the other goods and services separately would, or would be likely to, have a material adverse impact on the ICB's ability to act in accordance with the procurement principles.

12.5 Modifications of contracts and framework agreements during their term

There will be situations where contracts or framework agreements need to be modified to reflect/account for changes to services/circumstances during their term. Depending on circumstance, permitted modifications can be made without following a new provider selection process, but in some cases will require the publication of transparency notices. Appendix 3 provides a process flow chart to support commissioners.

Modifications are permitted if one of the following parameters is met:

- Clearly and unambiguously provided for in the original contract.
- Solely a change in the identity of the provider
- Made in response to external factors beyond the control of the ICB and the provider, such as changes in patient or service user volume in indexing; but do not render the contract materially different in character.
- Attributable to the ICB, does not render the contract materially different in character, and the change in the lifetime value of the contract, compared to its value when it was entered into, is UNDER £500k or represents less than 25% of the original contract.
- Attributable to the ICB, does not render the contract materially different in character, and the change in the lifetime value of the contract, compared to its value when it was entered into, is OVER £500k and represents less than 25% of the original contract value.
- Made to a contract that was originally awarded under the Direct Award Process A or Direct Award Process B and the modification does not render the contract materially different in character.

Modifications are NOT permitted when:

- the change is attributable to a decision made by the ICB, and
- if the changes render the contract materially different, or
- where the changes are over £500,000 and represent over 25% of the original contract value.

The provision for modification should not be used to circumvent PSR regulations when a contract ends and a new one is awarded. ICB staff should seek contracting / procurement advice from either the Business, Strategy and Planning Directorates contracting team or SCW when intending to modify a contract.

12.6 Standstill Period and Receiving Representations

A standstill period must be observed once a notice of intention to make an award to a provider under Direct Award process C, the Most Suitable Provider process, or the Competitive Process has been published (see process chart at Appendix 4). This includes concluding a framework agreement or awarding a contract based on a framework agreement following a mini competition.

The standstill period follows a decision to select a provider and must end before the contract can be awarded. It gives time for any provider who might otherwise have been a provider of the services to which the contract relates to make representations if unhappy with the decision; and for the ICB to consider those representations and respond as appropriate. The ICB where possible will ensure that decisions are reviewed by individuals not involved in the original decision. Where this is not possible, the ICB will ensure that at least one individual not involved in the original decision is included in the review process.

The standstill period must last for a minimum period of eight (8) working days (ending at midnight on the eighth day) and any provider representation must be made during this period. If any representations are received during this period, then the standstill period will remain open until the ICB provides any requested information, considers the representations, and makes a further decision.

The end of the standstill period must be at least five (5) working days after the ICB has communicated its decision to the provider. The minimum five (5) 'working days' notice allows for providers that remain unsatisfied about the response given by the ICB to their representations to seek the involvement of a PSR review panel. The PSR review panel will provide independent expert advice to the ICB with respect to the review of PSR decisions during the standstill period.

Where the PSR review panel accepts a representation for review, it will endeavour to consider it and share advice, or a summary of its advice, with the provider and the ICB within 25 working days. However, this timeframe is indicative and contingent on the engagement and timely responses of the provider and the ICB throughout the review process.

The PSR review panel may consider whether the ICB complied with the Regulations and may provide advice to the ICB. Following consideration of advice, the ICB will make an informed decision about how to proceed. SCW Procurement will support commissioners during the

standstill period, receiving a representation and associated processes and when communicating the ICB's decision outcome aligned to PSR regulations. The decision outcome may include:

- entering into a contract or concluding the framework agreement as intended.
- going back to an earlier step in the selection process,
- abandoning the provider selection process, and
- starting a new process.

12.7 Record Keeping

The ICB must keep records of their considerations throughout the award process. These records may be requested for review prior or post contract award. Records must include:

- The relative importance of each of the key criteria and the rationale for their relative importance and how the basic selection criteria were assessed.
- Name and address of the provider
- The decision-making process followed to select a provider.
- The rationale for the decision
- For mixed procurements, how the procurement meets the requirements for mixed procurement.
- Details of the individual/individuals making the decision
- Any declared or potential conflicts of interest for individuals involved in decision making and how these were managed.

All contracts and awards made will be held on the ICBs Contract register – see ICBs contracting SoP for further details.

SECTION E – Public Contract Regulations 2015 and Procurement Act (Non-Healthcare Procurements)

13 Public Contract Regulations 2015 (Non-Healthcare Procurements)

Public sector procurement is subject to national procurement rules and regulations, and it is therefore critical that procurement activity is conducted consistently, accurately, and effectively. Where commissioners wish to purchase Supplies, Services or Works which are over the relevant public procurement thresholds (see s13.1) they must also consider the definitions of Supplies, Works and Services that are as follows: -

- **"Supplies"** contracts are essentially those for the supply (including purchasing, leasing, and installation where appropriate) or hire of products.
- **"Works"** is the execution and/or design of works, working being defined as "the outcome of building or civil engineering, works taken as a whole that is sufficient of itself to fulfil an economic and technical function".
- **"Services"** includes, for example, services such as maintenance of equipment, transportation, consultancy, technical services, etc.

13.1 Procurement Thresholds

When commissioners are calculating the estimated value of a contract to determine whether the procurement regulations apply, the contract value estimation should be inclusive of Value Added Tax (VAT). Contracts must not be artificially broken down to avoid the application of the regulations. The threshold values are detailed below:

Category	Type of Contract	Threshold from 1 January 2024 (inclusive of VAT)
The Light Touch Regime (Public Contract Regulations 2015) Applies to health care, social care, education, cultural and certain services listed at Schedule 3 to the PCR 2015 where procurements commenced before PSR regulations are enacted i.e., 01/01/24.	Services (Schedule 3 (The Light Touch regime).	£663,540
Fully regulated (Public Contracts Regulations 2015)	Services and Supplies (sub-central contracting authorities)	£214,904

Applicable to non-healthcare procurements commenced before 24/02/25 and subject to full implementation of the Procurement Act 2023.

Works

£5,372,609

The Light Touch Regime

The regime is only applicable to those services listed at [Schedule 3](#) to the PCR 2015 (the “light touch regime”) of which the contract value exceeds the threshold of £663,540 inclusive of VAT. Any services which are not within the Light Touch Regime are subject to the full rigour of the PCR 2015 (as amended by The Public Procurement (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020) and case law around the procurement rules.

Calculating Contract Values

While contract values are to be calculated inclusive of VAT for the purposes of assessing whether thresholds are exceeded, guidance in [PPN 10/21](#) states that contract values inputted into Contract Notices and Contract Award Notices should continue to be stated exclusive of VAT.

13.2 Procurement Procedures

The following procedures apply when awarding non-healthcare contracts when their value exceeds set thresholds, and the procurement has commenced prior to 1st January 2024. Alternatively, an ICB may choose to use a procurement process similar to any of the below processes under the ‘Competitive process’ of PSR. A procurement process table is provided at Appendix 5 to support commissioners.

Below are the most common routes to market, all of which the ICB may utilise as and when appropriate. A summary of the most used processes with detail of when they would be appropriate is also provided in Appendix 6.

Open procedure:

In the Open Procedure all applicants who respond to the Contract Notice will be invited to submit a tender for the contract opportunity. If there are a small number of providers who are likely to express an interest, and all are expected to be technically competent and financially robust, this process should be considered. It means that bidders do not have to pre-qualify for inclusion in the procurement, but that they submit information in terms of financial standing and technical expertise at the same time as submitting their bid.

Restricted procedure:

The Restricted Procedure is used where the ICB wants to restrict the number of bidders who will be issued with the Invitation to Tender. A qualification requirement, usually in the form of a selection questionnaire (SQ) allows the ICB to assess the suitability of bidders prior to the bidders submitting a bid. This can make the process more manageable and cost-effective by reducing the number of bidders able to submit tenders and help to ensure that only bidders with the requisite capability and capacity are invited to tender.

Competitive dialogue procedure (CD):

This process should only be used in limited circumstances when the ICB's needs cannot be met without adaptation of readily available solutions. This might be where the tender process would include the development of design or innovative solutions and/or where there is a need for negotiation due to the complexity, evolving specification, legal or financial profile of the services required. If such circumstances exist the ICB will consider using a process that allows for a dialogue with bidders (post advertisement), rather than asking for bids in response to a defined specification.

Competitive Procedure with negotiation (CPN):

This allows the ICB to award a contract based on an initial tender but also enables the ICB to negotiate with bidders who submitted an initial tender, and any subsequent tenders, until it decides to conclude those negotiations. The ICB cannot negotiate following final offers.

Innovation Partnership Procedure:

This is a procedure designed to allow contracting authorities to establish a long-term partnership for the development and subsequent purchase of a new, innovative product, service or works. The ICB should note that its ability to use this procedure is limited and may only apply if the ICB is seeking innovative ideas where solutions are not already available on the market.

Framework Agreement:

The ICB may wish to consider whether it can use an established framework agreement which has been tendered in accordance with the procurement rules. Purchasing from a framework agreement can save procurement costs and time.

Various existing frameworks are available for the ICB to use such as the Crown Commercial Service (CCS) to purchase goods or services without a full local tender. Each framework will have its own ordering process to follow but the timescales and transaction costs are usually far lower than running a full procurement.

The terms and conditions applicable to any subsequent call-off contract are defined by the particular framework agreement and may not be compatible with the NHS standard contract and therefore advice must be sought from the framework owner prior to conducting a mini-competition.

If the ICB are considering using a framework agreement it should ensure that:

- it is entitled to use the framework agreement and it follows the correct processes to appoint a provider.
- its requirements fall within the scope of the pre-established framework agreement.
- The term of the framework agreement has not expired.

Alternatively, the ICB could consider setting up its own framework agreement for its requirements. This could be a framework of multiple providers or a single provider and would need to be advertised in accordance with the PCR 2015.

Any Qualified Provider (AQP) (UK NHS Initiative only) (for Light Touch Regime services only commenced prior to 01 January 2024):

AQP describes a set of system rules (accreditation framework) whereby for a prescribed range of services, any provider that meets the cost and quality criteria laid down by the Commissioner can compete for business within the market, without direct constraint by the commissioner. AQP is a procurement route that encourages competition between providers of routine or other services, where activity is driven solely by Service User choice.

Under AQP, any provider assessed as meeting rigorous quality requirements who can deliver services to NHS prices and under the NHS Standard Contract is able to deliver the service. Providers have no volume guarantees and patients will decide which providers to be referred.

Assessment of the AQP option should include consideration of the characteristics of the service, the local healthcare system, whether the service lends itself to patient choice, an analysis of the current market, how much competition and choice there is now and how much is required and any barriers to market entry. Once an AQP procurement is advertised, providers are assessed using a consistent qualification process and will qualify if they can:

- meet the quality requirements.
- meet the Terms and Conditions of the NHS Standard Contract.
- accept the NHS price for the service; and
- Provide assurance that they are capable of delivering the service requirements that have been set.

13.3 Contract Variation Process

It may be possible to use this option to secure incremental change to the service provided. When procuring a service, the ICB should consider potential modifications it may wish to make during the term of the contract and state this in the initial procurement and contract documents. The PCR 2015 provide clarity about the extent to which a contract can be amended after award, including where transparency notices need to be published (see [Regulation 72](#) of the 2015 Regulations).

Permissible grounds for amendment include:

- the existence of suitable “clear, precise and unequivocal” review clauses in the contract.
- a need for additional supplies or services where a change of supplier is impossible and would cause significant inconvenience, or a need for additional deliveries due to unforeseen circumstances (both subject to 50% maximum non-cumulative increase in initial contract value).
- where a new supplier replaces the existing supplier because of insolvency or genuine restructuring.
- where the amendment, irrespective of its value, is not substantial (below the relevant procurement threshold and represents a cumulative variation of 10% of the initial contract value for service and supply contracts and 15% of the initial contract value for works contracts).

The following circumstances are likely to be regarded non-permitted variations and as such will require a new contract:

- the contract is materially different from the one initially concluded.
- the scope of the contract is extended considerably.
- other providers would have been interested in bidding for the contract if the change

had originally been part of the specification when the service was originally procured.

- the contract would have been awarded to a different provider if the change had originally been included in the original service specification.
- the change involves genuinely new services not originally within the scope of the specification covered by the contract.
- there is a significant change in the value of the contract.
- the modification changes the economic balance of the contract in the favour of the contractor; or
- a new contractor replaces the one to which the ICB had initially awarded the contract, save for where that replacement occurs due to a universal or partial succession of the initial contractor including through a takeover, merger, acquisition, or insolvency and does not modify the overall nature of the contract.

The ICB may be subject to challenge if it uses a contract variation inappropriately. Therefore, commissioners should always take appropriate procurement advice before following this route.

13.4 Award of Contract without Competition (Direct Award)

Where the ICB determines through analysis of the market and proportionate and transparent engagement with potential providers that the service is only capable of being provided by one provider e.g., for technical, economic reasons, or there is an urgent clinical need, commissioners may consider proceeding with an award of contract without competition. This is where a contract is awarded to a single provider or a limited group of providers.

The law in this regard is complex and carries a risk of challenge from providers who believe they should have been given the opportunity to compete for the service. It is important that, if the ICB decides to take this route, it clearly records the rationale for the decision. Failure to plan adequately or not leaving enough time to tender is unlikely to be accepted as an urgent clinical need. Advice from the Procurement Team should be obtained in every event. Where a service is put in place for reasons of urgency or safety, the ICB should consider this as an interim step and plan to undertake a competitive and/or a compliant procurement process as soon as possible.

Commissioners should ensure there is evidence and an options appraisal in place that led to the decision to direct award. The ICB is required through statute to provide assurance that service providers are the most capable of delivering the service outcomes through efficient and effective process and operational management. The ICB should retain an audit trail of its decision-making process and associated governance approval e.g., completion of a signed Single Tender Award/Waiver form and justification paper prior to award of contract aligned to the relevant procurement threshold. Direct awards must also be compliant with Regulation 32 of PCR 2015.

14 Procurement Act 2023 (Procurement Regulations 2024), Non-Healthcare Procurements

The Act introduced from the 25th February 2025 considers and reflects value for money, competition and objective criteria in decision-making. Therefore, it is important for the ICB to

have regard to delivering value for money, maximising public benefit, acting with transparency, acting with integrity as well as consideration to the particular barriers facing SMEs and what can be done to overcome them.

The procurement procedures available for use under the Act are detailed at section 8. Other Key areas of the Act include:

Estimating Value of Contracts and Thresholds

The Procurement Act requires the ICB to estimate the value of contracts, in accordance with a methodology set out in Schedule 3, and restricts manipulation of the estimated value of a contract in order to avoid requirements in the legislation. By following the methodology, the ICB can estimate the value of a contract and thereby determine whether the contract is above or below the relevant thresholds as detailed in Schedule 1 (key thresholds summarised below).

Type of contract	Thresholds (including VAT): 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2025
Utility works contract	£5,372,609
Utility contract that is not a works contract, a defence and security contract or a light touch contract	£429,809
Concession works and services contract	£5,372,609
Works contract	£5,372,609
Contract for the supply of goods or services (which may be mixed contracts that contain some works elements) to a central government authority not within any other row	£139,688
Contract for the supply of goods or services (which may be mixed contracts that contain some works elements) to a sub-central government authority not within any other row	£214,904

Light Touch Contracts

Light touch utilities contract	£884,720
Light touch concession contract	£5,372,609 (1 January 2024 to 31 December 2025)
All other light touch contracts	£663,540

Mixed Procurements

The ICB may need to be able to award contracts that are not always 100% goods, 100% services or 100% works. Contracts can therefore comprise a mixture of two or more different categories. [Section 5](#) of the Act sets out the rules on determining when a mixed contract will become a public contract. This is because a mixed contract may comprise two or more elements that, if procured separately, would have different applicable thresholds. Section 5 also provides clarity on applying the rules on thresholds to situations where a contract contains mixed elements, where at least one is above, and one is below the relevant thresholds.

Frameworks

Frameworks that are public contracts are most likely to be awarded following a competitive tendering procedure and will either be deemed as a standard framework or an open framework. The Procurement Act 2023 (Act) defines a framework as a: ‘contract between a contracting authority and one or more suppliers that provides for the future award of contracts by a contracting authority to the supplier or suppliers.’ ([section 45\(2\)](#)). This means that a framework sets out the provisions under which future contracts for the supply of goods, services and/or works are to be awarded.

The Act defines an open framework as a: ‘scheme of frameworks that provides for the award of successive frameworks on substantially the same terms’ ([section 49\(1\)](#)).

Conflict of Interest

The Procurement Act 2023 (Act) requires the ICB, when carrying out a ‘covered procurement’, to have regard to a number of objectives, which include acting, and being seen to act, with integrity ([section 12\(1\)\(d\) of the Act](#)). The integrity of a procurement may be compromised if it is influenced by external or private interests. Alongside the procurement objectives, the Act includes specific provisions dealing with conflicts of interest when carrying out a covered procurement ([Part 5 of the Act](#)).

A conflict of interest arises in a procurement context where there is a conflict between the interests of a person acting in relation to a procurement and those of the procurement itself. These conflicts of interest need to be managed effectively to ensure that the public can trust the ICB to carry out public procurement responsibly and impartially. It also helps to encourage suppliers to participate in procurements, providing confidence that they will be treated fairly and that there will be genuine competition.

When conflicts of interest are not identified and effectively mitigated, there can be far-reaching consequences. It can lead to accusations of fraud, bribery and corruption, legal challenges and the undermining of public confidence in the integrity of public institutions. The Act requires the ICB to identify and keep under review actual and potential conflicts of interest. The ICB must also mitigate conflicts of interest and address circumstances which are considered likely to cause a reasonable person to wrongly believe there to be a conflict or potential conflict of interest (‘perceived conflict of interest’).

Modifying a Competitive Procurement

During the course of a competitive tendering procedure, it may be necessary to make amendments or clarifications to information in the tender notice or associated tender documents to deal with circumstances that were not anticipated. Modifications during a procedure may be necessary for a number of reasons. For example, it could be that a supplier has raised a clarification question which requires an amendment to the associated tender documents, or something was omitted from the tender notice. Any modifications must be made in accordance with [section 31](#).

Transparency Notices

The Act places an increased focus on the ICB to be transparent when undertaking procurement

activities to ensure that procurement information is publicly available not only to support competition, but to provide the public with insight into how their money is spent. A table of all the transparency notices covered under the Act and when publication is required is detailed in Appendix 7.

15 Form of Contract

The ICB will ensure that the appropriate standard form national contract is used for all contracts for NHS funded health and social care services that the ICB let. Where non-healthcare contracts are awarded then the standard appropriate version of the NHS Terms and Conditions for the Supply of Goods and/or Services should be used, with the exception of procedures through an existing framework contract.

16 Award of Contract

The ICB will approve the award of contracts in accordance with the ICB's scheme of delegation as set out in the ICB Constitution and the ICB Detailed Financial Policies. The contract award recommendation will include the contract term plus any extension period to be approved by the appropriate Committee of the ICB Board.

For all relevant procurement procedures conducted under the PCR Regulations 2015, the Procurement Act 2023 and the Provider Selection Regime the ICB will operate a standstill period, reflecting best practice and will align to the respective procurement regulations between announcing the contract award decision and entering into the contract. For clarity, the minimum standstill period for the respective procurement regulations is detailed below:

- PCR Regulations 2015 – A minimum of 10 calendar days after intention to award a contract is sent electronically to bidders e.g., via an e-Tendering Portal.
- Procurement Act 2023 – A minimum of 8 working days beginning with the day on which a contract award notice is published in respect of the contract.
- Provider Selection Regime – A minimum of 8 working days starting on the day after intention to award a contract is published.

If in doubt on how long to allow for a standstill period, please seek advice from the SCW Procurement Team.

17 Complaints and Dispute Procedure

The ICB's approach to contestability means that it may pursue a wide range of routes to secure new and existing services. The ICB has developed the processes that will be followed within the ICB that enable any potential dispute relating to a procurement process or outcome from any procurement to be resolved in an open and transparent manner. The ICB will utilise a dispute resolution process to address and resolve any complaint in relation to competition and procurement received from either:

- Bidders/contractors
- A member of the public

This will at first require writing to the ICB Accountable Officer, as described in the dispute resolution process.

In regard to the ICB receiving any Provider Selection Regime representations it has been agreed that those representations received by Somerset ICB will be reviewed by NHS Devon ICB. Note that it has been agreed that Somerset ICB will reciprocate this review. If the provider remains unsatisfied following the review the provider can then make representation to the NHSE Independent Patient Choice and Procurement panel.

SECTION F - Additional Considerations

18 Data Protection Impact Assessment

Where any new service is required, it will be necessary for a data protection impact assessment (DPIA) to be completed. The project lead should liaise with the SCW information governance lead and/or ICB Data Protection Officer to complete a DPIA prior to selection of provider which should be updated once the provider is identified. DPIAs are completed to review security accreditations, processes and procedures to identify and mitigate risks.

18.1 Equality Impact Assessment

With any new service, compliance with the [Public Sector Equality Duties 2011](#) will be demonstrated through a robust Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process, ensuring that due regard is given to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity, and to foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic (as cited in under the Equality Act 2010) and those who do not share it.

18.2 Quality Impact Assessment

A Quality Impact Assessment should form part of any service commissioning process, especially when there is likely to be a change to the way in which a service is delivered or a change in provider. As with both tools above, a similar process should be completed for a quality impact assessment. The project lead should liaise with the ICB Quality Team.

18.3 Code of Conduct and Conflicts of Interest

In addition to the register of interests held by the ICB, the ICB needs to be able to recognise and manage any actual or potential conflicts of interest (COIs) which arise in relation to any procurement undertaken. Conflicts could arise where the ICB commissions healthcare/non-healthcare services, in which a member of the ICB has a financial, or other interest. Measures should be taken to identify and manage COIs at every stage of procurement to ensure and protect the integrity of the process. SCW Procurement will refer to the advice and guidance published by NHS England.

Clear records that show an audit trail of how COIs have been identified and managed as part of a procurement process will be kept, including:

- Declaration of conflict of interest for bidders / contractors
- Declaration of interests for ICB members and employees
- Register of procurement decisions and contracts awarded.

18.4 Voluntary and community sector/Small and Medium Enterprises Support

The ICB will aim to support and encourage voluntary and community sector and small and medium enterprise suppliers in bidding for contracts. The Procurement Team will work with service commissioners to ensure that procurement processes promote equality and do not discriminate on the grounds of age, race, gender, culture, religion, sexual orientation, or disability.

18.5 NHSE Integrated Support and Assurance Process (ISAP)

The ICB must consider this process for all novel and complex contracts. The ultimate decision on whether the Integrated Support and Assurance Process ([ISAP](#)) should apply to a complex contract is at NHS England's discretion. Therefore, Commissioners should engage with their regional NHSE team as early as possible to establish whether a procurement or other arrangement would benefit from going through the ISAP. If ISAP is applicable a rigorous assurance process will be followed, with support of the SCW procurement team working alongside NHSE.

18.6 NHSE Consultancy spending approval criteria for providers

The ICB must consider the process and guidance when looking to commission consultancy services. Consultancy contracts over £50,000 (including irrecoverable VAT and other costs e.g., expenses) will require prior approval from NHSE. The approval process only applies to contracts that are accounted for as revenue expenditure and does not currently apply to contracts accounted for as capital expenditure.

For further information and/or guidance on the process to be followed please contact the NHSE regional team or email england.consultancy@nhs.net direct.

18.7 Accessible Procurement

The ICB has a keen awareness of its accessibility and disability obligations as both an employer and a commissioner of services. When procuring digital systems the ICB will use NHS England's [Digital Technology Assessment Criteria \(DTAC\)](#). The DTAC is a national standard assessment that should be used when introducing any new digital technology into the NHS and includes usability and accessibility assessments such as Web Content Accessibility Guidelines compliance.

For requirements where use of the DTAC is not a mandatory requirement, the ICB has developed a Software Accessibility Checklist through its Disability Staff Network, and this will be used on a case-by-case basis.

18.8 IR35 and Employment Assessment

The ICB has a responsibility to ensure appropriate procedures are in place to meet with HMRC requirements regarding, amongst other things, appropriate payment of tax. This is particularly relevant to procurement when the ICB engages with self-employed individuals, individuals via their own limited company (known as a Personal Services Company) or a partner in a partnership.

Characteristics that may result in being inside IR35 legislation include the following:

- Having to work under direct supervision or control of the end client.
- Having to work at a set location or to set hours.
- Having to formally request leave or seek permission for absence.
- Having an hourly, daily, or weekly rate of pay
- Being paid for overtime, or to correct unsatisfactory work.
- Is unable to provide a substitute i.e., the work must be carried out by the

contractor.

- Is able to be moved from task to task or to another location without arranging a new contract.

Characteristics that may result in being outside IR35 legislation include the following:

- Not having to work under direct supervision or control of the end client.
- Having control over how / where / when to complete the work.
- Has no access to holiday pay or sickness benefits.
- A fixed fee is agreed by the employer for the work, regardless of how long it takes to complete.
- Financial risk e.g., having to correct errors in their own time and at their own expense.
- Being able to propose a substitute agent or person to complete the work.

18.9 Integrated Care - Working with People and Communities

The ICB acknowledges that integrated care provides an opportunity to collaborate with partners to improve services and how money is spent. Commercial procurement due diligence activities may provide an opportunity for the ICB to meet its public involvement legal duties and the new 'triple aim' of better health and wellbeing, improved quality of services and the sustainable use of resources. Therefore, the ICB will consider, where appropriate, when looking to procure goods and services the following:

- Health needs assessment
- Stakeholder engagement activities
- Provider market engagement activities
- Undertaking consultation/public consultation where required
- Addressing health inequalities by understanding communities' needs and developing service specifications leading to proposed solutions with them.
- Opportunities for collaboration with partners – including local authorities, social care providers, Healthwatch/Patient Participation Groups and voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations.

19 The Contract Oversight Group

To support this policy, the ICB has established a Contract Oversight Group. The Contract Oversight Group's main purpose is to ensure procurement policy and processes are delivered appropriately to secure quality value for money services through procedures which are transparent, fair, and non-discriminatory. The group will have oversight of the contract and procurement pipeline to ensure procurement activity is planned and managed in a proactive way as well as ensuring a register of procurement decisions and contracts awarded are published on the ICBs website. The full terms of reference for the Group will be made available on the ICB procurement webpage.

19 Training and Awareness

No mandatory training is required to comply with this policy. However, all ICB staff and others working with the ICB will need to be aware of this policy and its implications. It is not intended

that staff generally will develop procurement expertise, but they will need to know when and how to seek further support.

All commissioning staff throughout the ICB should know enough about procurement to know to seek help when they encounter related issues; they must also be able to give clear and consistent messages to providers and potential providers about the ICB's procurement intentions in relation to service developments. Awareness of procurement issues will be raised through organisational development and training sessions as necessary by the SCW procurement team.

Decision makers such as procurement evaluation panel members will have access to appropriate levels of training regarding procurement matters commensurate with their responsibilities. This will include general awareness of regulatory obligations and how to seek further support, advice, and guidance.

Each evaluation panel will receive evaluation and moderation training prior to starting the process. If training has not been undertaken the individual will not be involved in the evaluation and moderation process.

SECTION G – Policy Governance

20 Consultation

This policy was completed following consultation with the relevant internal stakeholders and groups including required ICB committees.

21 Recommendation and Approval Process

This policy is to be approved by the Finance and Audit Committee under delegated authority of the ICB Board.

22 Communication/Dissemination

Following approval ICB staff will be made aware of the policy through the ICB website, the ICB voice communication and the weekly staff communication briefing.

23 Implementation

This policy is a revision of an existing policy and as such requires no specific implementation over and above the communication and dissemination highlighted in section 19 (Training and Awareness) and section 22 (Communication / Dissemination).

24 Monitoring Compliance and Effectiveness of the Document

The Audit Governance and Risk Committee will oversee compliance with aspects of this policy through its review of the award of contract without competition requests and annual review of the Procurement Decision register. Audits of the procurement function will periodically be commissioned as appropriate as to ensure compliance with this policy.

Any areas of concern or non-compliance identified in any review must result in the production of an action plan. This will be reviewed by the appropriate committee/group. Actions will be recorded in the committee/group minutes.

25 Document Review Frequency and Version Control

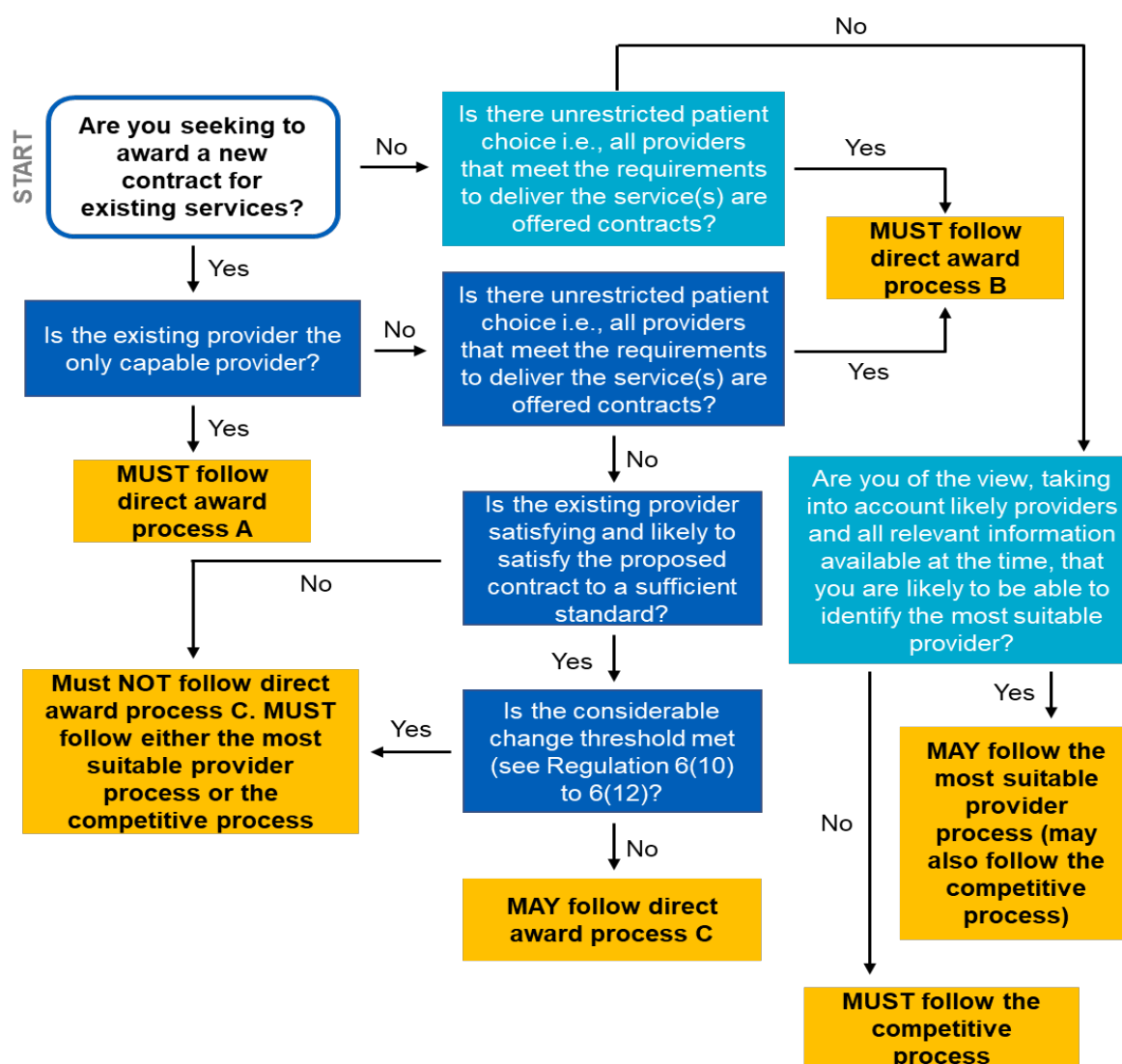
This policy will be reviewed every two years or earlier if appropriate, to reflect any changes to legislation or guidance that may occur. Necessary changes throughout the year will be issued as amendments to the policy. Such amendments will be clearly identifiable to the section to which they refer, and the date issued. These will be clearly communicated via the ICB newsletter.

Appendix 1: Provider Selection Regime – Decision Flow Chart

“Getting to the Right Decision”

NEED TO PROCURE A HEALTHCARE SERVICE?

SCW will support all procurements on a case-by-case basis – ICB procurement leads are to contact SCW in all cases to understand whether substantive procurement support is required.



Overview of decision-making approach to PSR process

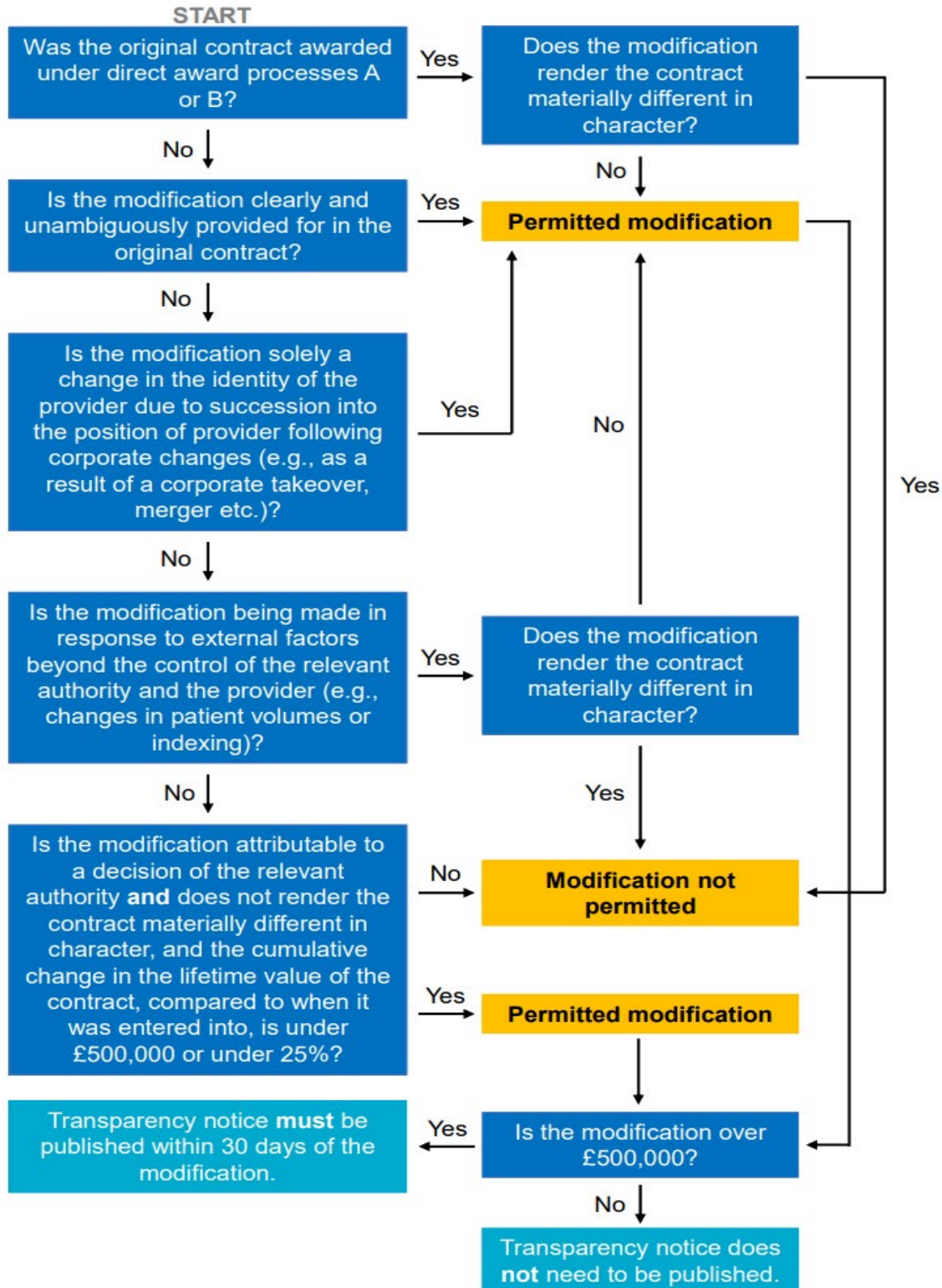
Direct Award A	Continuation of existing arrangements –there is no realistic alternative to the existing provider (for example for Type 1 and 2 urgent and emergency services). Not used to establish framework agreement. Must be used if applicable. Transparency award notice published within 30 days of contract award.
Direct Award B	The ICB wishes to provide, or currently provides an ‘unrestricted patient choice’ service (for example, consultant led elective care services). The number of providers cannot be restricted. Providers utilise Expression of Interest process. Contracts issued to all eligible providers. Must be used if applicable. Transparency award notice published within 30 days of contract award.
Direct Award C	Existing provider for the healthcare services, and their contract is ending – ICB decides by assessing key decision-making criteria that the provider is doing a sufficiently good job (satisfying original contract and is likely to satisfy new contract to a sufficient standard) <u>and</u> the service is not changing considerably (change is over £500,000 and is over 25% of the original lifetime value of the contract). Not required to follow Direct award processes A or B above. Cannot be used to establish a framework. Key and Basic Selection criteria to be considered. 8 working day standstill period must be observed. Multiple transparency notices published.
Most Suitable Provider	Identifying the most suitable provider when the decision-maker wants to use a new provider or for new/considerably changed arrangements and considers that it can identify the most suitable provider without a competitive process. Thorough knowledge of the provider landscape is crucial and goes beyond just knowing provider base. Not required to follow Direct Award process A or B and does not wish or cannot follow Direct Award Process C. Cannot be used to establish a framework. Key and Basic Selection criteria to be considered. 8 working day standstill period must be observed. Multiple transparency notices published, including allowing interested providers to ask to be considered as the ‘most suitable provider’.
Competitive	Competitive procurement process. Not required to follow Direct Award process A or B. Does not wish to or cannot follow Direct Award process C and does not wish to use or is unable to identify the most suitable provider using the Most Suitable Provider route. Competitive route is required to establish a framework. Key and Basic Selection criteria to be considered. No financial thresholds. 8 working day Standstill period must be observed. Multiple transparency notices published.

Appendix 2: Summary of the Transparency steps under the Provider Selection Regime

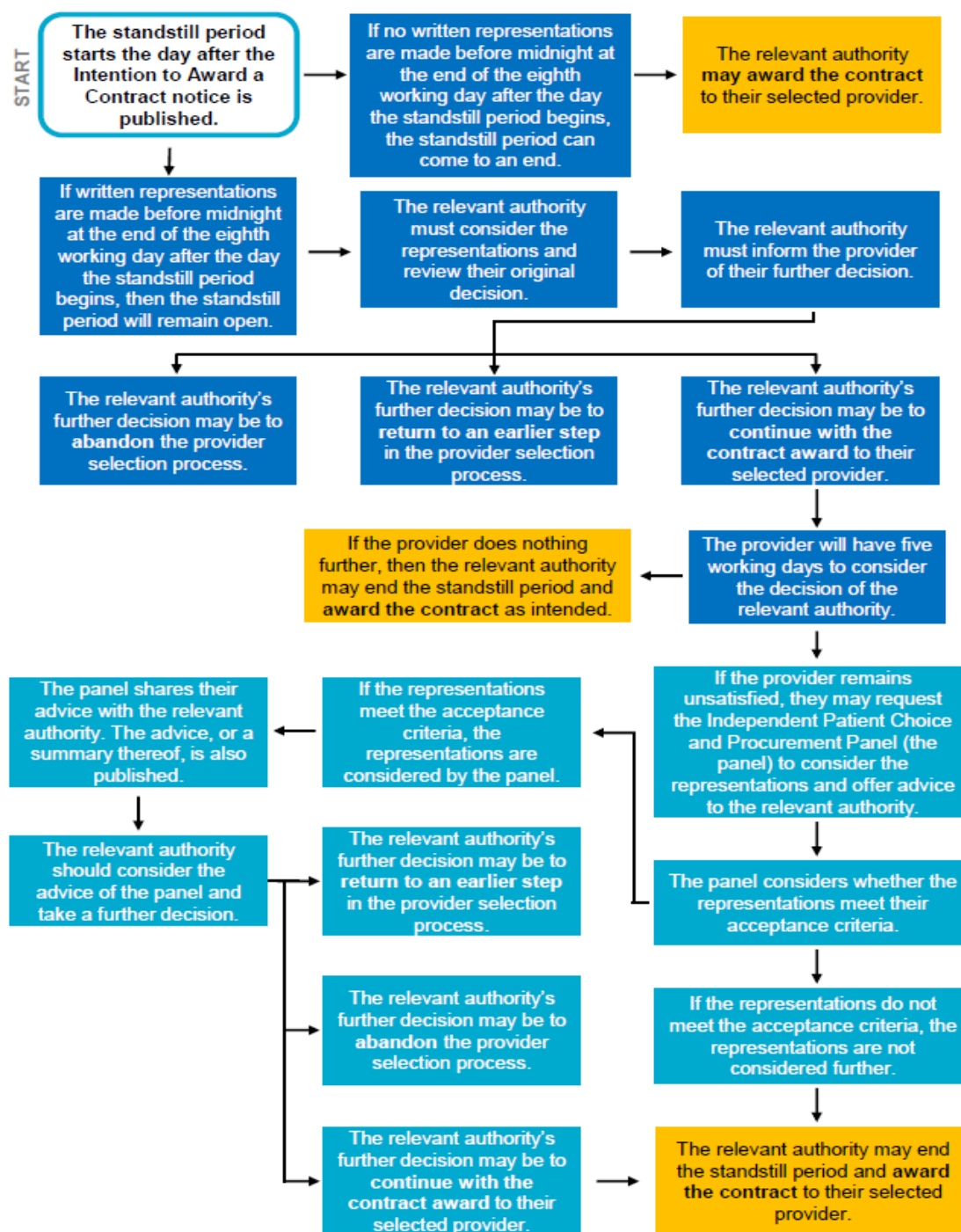
PSR Process	A	B	C	MSP	Competitive
Details on intended approach (PIN)				Notice published at least 14 calendar days before assessing providers	Optional
Contract Notice for procurement					On FTS website
Internal record of decision-making process & rationale					
Responding to unsuccessful bidders					
Intention to Award			On FTS website	On FTS website	On FTS website
Standstill & Resolution period (If representation received within 5 working days standstill period remains open until resolution)			8 working day Standstill Indicative 25 working days for Panel review 5 working days for bidder to consider final outcome	8 working day Standstill Indicative 25 working days for Panel review 5 working days for bidder to consider final outcome	8 working day Standstill Indicative 25 working days for Panel review 5 working days for bidder to consider final outcome
Confirmation of Award (CAN)	Within 30 days	Within 30 days	Within 30 days	Within 30 days	Within 30 days
Contract Modification	Within 30 days of modification	Within 30 days of modification	Within 30 days of modification	Within 30 days of modification	Within 30 days of modification

	Notice required
	Internal Record
	Outcome Letter

Appendix 3: PSR Contract Modifications Flow Chart



Appendix 4: Provider Selection Regime – ‘Standstill Process’ Flow Chart



Appendix 5: Procurement Process Table (non-healthcare)

SCW will support all procurements on a case-by-case basis. ICB procurement/commissioning leads are to contact SCW in all cases to understand whether substantive procurement support is required.

Total Contract Value over the lifetime of the contract, incl. VAT	Minimum Type of Procurement Required	Applicable Governance/Legislation
Up to £20k	No formal requirement for external procurement process. Obtain at least one written quote demonstrating Value for Money.	ICB Constitution: which describes the authority for approval of single tender waivers. Procurement Policy: which describes the award of contract without competition (see s13.4). Managing conflicts of interest: revised statutory guidance for CCGs 2017.
Between £20k and £214k (threshold for public supply contracts and services)	Quotations should be obtained from at least 3 organisations. Where it is not possible to obtain 3 quotes, this must be documented incl. the reasons. Single Tender Waivers should only be used in exceptional circumstances and must be reported to Audit Committee.	
Above £214k (threshold for public supply contracts and services)	Full open (advertised) or closed (framework) tender required. Advice and guidance from SCW Procurement Team if full tender cannot be undertaken	

Appendix 6: Common Procurement Processes (PCR2015) - Guidance

Below are three common procurement processes used and detail of when they would be appropriate. The type of process used to procure a service or goods should be decided in conjunction with the Procurement Team. These processes do not apply to healthcare service processes commenced on or after 1st January 2024.

Average length	Process type benefits	Process type risks
Open: - Suitable for simple procurements where the requirement can be clearly defined, i.e., purchase of goods.		
4 months plus mobilisation	-Only use if service specification is detailed and fully understood, i.e., service required is already known as no room for negotiation. -Ideal for limited markets when few responses are expected. -No Pre-Qualification Questionnaire restriction phase so can save time.	-Potential for numerous submissions if market is not properly understood. -Doesn't allow restriction and therefore any organisation can bid, and we are obliged to evaluate their bid. This will take a lot of time. -Can stifle innovation with restrictive specifications.
Restricted: - Suitable when you want to pre-qualify organisations and you are able to state the service requirement in detail as there is no room for negotiation following receipt of the bid.		
6 months plus mobilisation	-Designed for procurements where the service specification is fully understood and defined. -Allows restriction of bidders moving through to the Invitation to Tender (service delivery assessment) phase, therefore saving evaluation time at the Invitation to Tender phase.	-Pre-qualification stage takes additional time to complete. -Can be seen as burdensome by some bidders. -Can stifle innovation with restrictive specifications.
Competitive Dialogue / Competitive Procedure with Negotiation: - Appropriate where the specification is incomplete and will require negotiation, or where the solution is likely to be complex and will need dialogue to conclude the tender.		
9 months plus mobilisation	-Allows a better understanding of the specification and scope through dialogue, which in turn can lead to better outcomes and reduced risk. -Process allows more certainty around the bidder selection as you will have worked with them through dialogue. -Can lead to real innovation of services which are outcome driven. -Allows negotiation around requirements. -Allows restriction of bidders to the negotiation phase.	-Lengthy complicated process -Risk of price escalation when bidder truly understands the cost implications. -Loss of competition once preferred bidder is selected and therefore potential for difficult further negotiations before agreement on contract and price.

Appendix 7: Procurement Act 2024 Transparency Notice Requirements

(3) The provisions are—

- (a) section 15(1) (planned procurement notices)(2),
- (b) section 17(1)(a) (preliminary market engagement notices),
- (c) section 21(1) (tender notices),
- (d) section 24(4) (refining award criteria), in respect of republishing tender notices only,
- (e) section 31(5) (modifying a section 19 procurement), in respect of republishing tender notices only,
- (f) section 39(2) (dynamic market notices: intention to establish a dynamic market)(3),
- (g) section 39(3) (dynamic market notices: establishment of a dynamic market),
- (h) section 39(4) (dynamic market notices: modifications to a dynamic market),
- (i) section 39(5) (dynamic market notices: cessation of a dynamic market),
- (j) section 44(1) (transparency notices),
- (k) section 50(1) (contract award notices),
- (l) section 52(3) (key performance indicators),
- (m) section 53(1) (contract details notices),
- (n) section 53(3) (copies of contracts),
- (o) section 55(2) (procurement termination notices),
- (p) section 69(1) (payments compliance notices),
- (q) section 71(2)(b) (contract performance: information relating to the assessment of performance against key performance indicators),
- (r) section 71(5) (contract performance: breach of public contract or failure to perform),
- (s) section 75(1) (contract change notices),
- (t) section 75(5) (contract change notices: modifications taken together),
- (u) section 77(1) (contract modifications),
- (v) section 80(1) (contract termination notices),
- (w) section 87(1) (below-threshold tender notices),
- (x) section 87(3) (contract details notices following notifiable below-threshold contracts),
- (y) section 93(2) (pipeline notices), and
- (z) section 94(3) (information being withheld).