

Procurement frequently asked questions

Public sector procurement is often seen as complex, so we've published answers to some of the most frequently asked questions (FAQs) we receive about each of the topics listed below:

- [The procurement process](#)
- [Tenders](#)
- [Contracts](#)
- [Electronic procurement](#)
- [European Union \(EU\) Directives](#)

FAQ's – The procurement Process

Public sector procurement is often seen as complex. The information below answers some of the common questions and queries about the procurement process:

- [What type of things does the trust purchase?](#)
- [What is the procurement process?](#)
- [Who can I contact for more information on procurement?](#)

What type of things does the Trust purchase?

The range of goods and services required across all trust services is vast.

Examples include: vehicles, stationery, office equipment, cleaning materials, books, furniture, construction, venue hire, refuse collection, IT hardware, consultants, maintenance, etc.

What is the procurement process?

Under EU Procurement Directives, and the UK's Public Contract Regulation 2015 conduct their procurement using one of three tender processes:

- **Open:** any organisation can express an interest and request tender documents.
- **Restricted:** a two-stage process where any organisation can express their interest. They then go through a pre-qualification assessment. Once these assessments (usually referred to as PQQs) are complete, only the most suitable applicants are invited to tender.
- **Request for Quote (RFQ):** an online request for quotation facility

Who can I contact for more information on procurement?

The trust has a dedicated purchasing team that is responsible for issuing and receiving all tenders and managing contracts. This is provided through the Leeds and York Partnership NHS Foundation Trust's Supplies Department.

Electronic tenders should be submitted online via the trust [e-sourcing](#) portal and not via paper. All documents related to tenders should be clearly marked with the tender title and reference number.

Alternatively, you can email any documentation, contract or general procurement queries to [Procurement](#)

FAQ's - Tenders

The information below answers some of the common questions and queries.

- [How do I find out about supplier opportunities?](#)
- [What happens if I can't get my tender in on time?](#)
- [How are tenders evaluated?](#)
- [Why is the tender process so formal?](#)
- [How much information do I need to provide on contract award criteria?](#)
- [Is it now possible to specify a particular brand of product?](#)
- [Are there any circumstances in which bidders must be excluded?](#)

How do I find out about supplier opportunities?

All current tenders for goods, services and works are advertised on the Trusts [e-sourcing portal](#), which advertises on [Contracts Finder](#) and in the [Official Journal of the European Union \(OJEU\)](#) for over [threshold](#) values.

What happens if I can't get my tender in on time?

Tenders must be returned by the date and time advertised. Any received after the deadline will not be considered. All tenders are locked by the system until the deadline has passed and then are released to be opened at the same time to ensure a fair process. Suppliers still have the ability to amend their submissions until the deadline,

How are tenders evaluated?

Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust has an obligation to offer the best value for money services to its patients and requires an exceptional standard of performance from its contractors and suppliers. Therefore, when selecting a supplier, the trust must ensure that the supplier will provide value for money, and that services will be delivered effectively.

In the list of evaluation criteria, cost and quality are usually the most important criteria.

Details of the specific evaluation criteria and the relative weighting of the criteria are included in the tender documents that suppliers receive with the invitation to tender (ITT).

At any time during the tender process suppliers may be invited to give a presentation/product demonstration or attend a meeting/interview to aid the evaluation

process. The trust may also conduct site visits to see first-hand how potential suppliers organise their work.

Why is the tender process so formal?

This is to make sure honesty and integrity is maintained throughout the process and that the process is handled in a consistently fair and competitive manner. We are always happy to answer questions specifically about a tender and specification if you have any. We will ensure consistency in the information provided to contractors/suppliers and in the way in which we communicate with them.

During the tender process only enquiries or clarification questions will be answered if they are submitted through the e-sourcing portal. This is to ensure a fair and transparent process is followed.

How much information do I need to provide on contract award criteria?

The contract notice will state whether the award is to be based on the lowest price or most economically advantageous bid. In the latter case, the contract notice, contract documents or, in the case of the competitive dialogue, the descriptive document accompanying the contract notice, will state the relative weightings given to each of the award criteria.

The weightings can be expressed as a single figure or as an appropriate range. Where the purchaser believes it is not possible to give weightings for demonstrable reasons, award criteria will be stated in descending order of importance.

Is it now possible to specify a particular brand of product?

The rules on specification of brands have not changed. Brands can only be specified, exceptionally, when it is not feasible to specify the requirement in technical or performance terms. Reference to the brand will be accompanied by the words 'or equivalent'.

Are there any circumstances in which bidders must be excluded?

Bidders convicted by final judgement of money laundering, fraud, corruption, bribery or participation in a criminal organisation must be excluded.

FAQ - Contracts

The information below is intended to answer some of the more common questions and queries.

- [How do I respond to a Contract Notice?](#)
- [What information will I need to provide when applying for contracts?](#)
- [How likely am I to win a Trust contract?](#)
- [How can I improve my chances of winning a Trust contract?](#)
- [How are contracts monitored?](#)

How do I respond to a Contract Notice?

If you see a trust contract advertised that you or your company is interested in tendering for, you should lodge an official Expression of Interest. Details of how to do this will be given in the contract notice advert together with any deadline for completion.

What information will I need to provide when applying for contracts?

The contract notice or advert will detail what procurement procedure is being utilised i.e. open, restricted.

Each tender process will require the supplier to provide some or all of the following information and this will be specified in the notice:

- *Financial information* - Details from each of the last three years may be required. Where requested, private and public limited companies must submit their fully audited accounts as registered with Companies House. Other suppliers should forward copies of financial statements, business plans or a certified statement of turnover. This information is assessed to ensure the company is financially stable enough for the contract in question. Other financial details, for instance; insurance cover, may also be required.
- *Equal opportunities* - The trust strongly supports equal opportunity laws, and requires all suppliers to comply with equal opportunities legislation. Suppliers will be asked to detail and possibly provide evidence of how equality issues are included in a company's employment practices.
- *Sustainability* - Certain types of tender will ask for information in relation to sustainable procurement and this will generally relate to social, economic or environmental considerations, and may incorporate requests for information on community benefits that will be provided as part of the contract.
- *Health and safety* - The trust is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for everyone it works with. Suppliers must provide information about their company's safety policies, operational safety procedures and risk assessments.
- *Experience and technical ability* - The trust needs to assess whether a company has the relevant experience, resources and technical ability to carry out the categories of work or to provide the type and quality of service required.
- Suppliers should provide details of similar work carried out over recent years. They must also provide contact details of referees so that confidential references can be directly obtained by the trust. Further details may be required for particular contracts.

How likely am I to win a trust contract?

As long as certain criteria is met, such as financial stability, satisfactory health and safety environments and that services are provided to a high quality at a competitive cost, there is no reason why companies cannot attract business from the trust. Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust applies fairness and equality of treatment in awarding contracts in line with achieving best value for patient and the taxpayer.

How can I improve my chances of winning a trust contract?

You need to clearly demonstrate that you can meet the required standards and service delivery requirements at the most economically advantageous cost.

How are contracts monitored?

The contractor will be expected to deliver or provide the service in accordance with the requirements set out in the contract papers and proposals on how to carry it out.

Suppliers and contractors working for the trust are regularly monitored to assess their compliance with predefined performance criteria. The contract conditions are strictly applied and explanations sought if a contractor fails to perform to the levels required.

FAQs - Electronic Procurement

The information below answers some common questions and queries.

- [What is e-tendering?](#)
- [What is e-procurement?](#)
- [What are the benefits of e-procurement to suppliers?](#)
- [Who can I contact for more information on procurement?](#)

What is e-tendering?

E-tendering refers to the electronic advertising of requirements for good or services, registering suppliers, issuing and receiving tender documents and evaluating responses over the internet, using tools such as the Contract Finder website.

What is e-procurement?

E-procurement combines internet technology with procurement best practice to streamline the purchasing processes, increase efficiency in the ordering process and reduce costs for both contracting authorities and suppliers.

What are the benefits of e-procurement to suppliers?

Participating suppliers can realise many benefits from online or e-procurement, including:

- increased visibility and access to markets without additional marketing efforts
- a single point of access to Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust's 'market'
- faster and more efficient tendering
- increased order accuracy through electronic ordering
- a consistent purchase order format.
- Reduction of transposition error.
- Speedier invoice processing by utilising e-invoicing.

Overall, e-procurement can help suppliers reduce costs in process, marketing, and admin operations.

Who can I contact for more information on procurement?

The trust has a dedicated Procurement Manager that is responsible for issue and receipt of all tenders and management of contracts.

Tenders should be submitted online and not in paper format. All documents related to tenders should be clearly marked with the tender title and reference number.

Alternatively, you can email any general procurement queries to [procurement](#)

FAQ - EU Directives

The information below is intended to answer some of the more common questions and queries.

- [What rules and regulations should I be aware of?](#)
- [What are the key changes to EU Directives and do they constitute a major change to public sector procurement practice?](#)
- [What are the additions to EU Directives?](#)
- [Where can I obtain copies of the EU Directives?](#)

What rules and regulations should I be aware of?

As an NHS authority, there are regulations which the Trust has to follow when purchasing goods, works and services. It is important that if you wish to contract with Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust you are fully aware of the rules and regulations which govern the way we operate.

For instance, we have a legal requirement to comply with the European Union (EU) procurement directives, which govern the way in which public sector procurement is conducted for contracts above specified thresholds. These rules alter the way in which contracts are awarded, based on the value of the purchase.

EU Thresholds are issued in euros and are converted into GBP every two years; the following link can be used to find the current [thresholds](#).

The trust will contact all tenderers whether successful or not to advise them of the outcome. Where a contract is valued in excess of the EU thresholds, the unsuccessful tenderers will be told of the outcome and the successful tenderer will be notified that, subject to there being no challenge to the award decision, the contract will only be awarded after a standstill period of 10 days.

What are the key changes to EU Directives and do they constitute a major change to public sector procurement practice?

Key changes and refinements to the EU Directives are:

- The ability for supplier to self-declare compliance with mandatory requirements including financial standing
- more consistent treatment of issues common to the three established procurement procedures (Open, Restricted, Competitive Dialogue)
- a requirement to publish the relative importance of contract award criteria
- greater ability to take account of relevant environmental issues in specifications and contract award criteria reflecting European Court of Justice case law, and
- greater encouragement to use performance specifications and more emphasis on the need to consider equivalence to a specified standard.

What are the additions to EU Directives?

Additions to the EU Directives are:

- the introduction of Competitive Procedure with Negotiation and Innovative Partnership procedures to enable purchasers to enter into dialogue with bidders for the purpose of developing and optimising specifications and contract terms and conditions for complex procurements
- explicit provision for framework agreements and central purchasing bodies (consortia) which are very similar to established UK public sector practice
- explicit provision for electronic trading in the form of electronic auctions, dynamic purchasing systems and electronic communications, and
- mandatory exclusion of candidates convicted by final judgement of money laundering, fraud, corruption or participation in a criminal organisation

Where can I obtain copies of the EU Directives?

Copies of the Directives can be obtained on the [European Union website](#)