



# **NHS 24 Procurement Strategy**

## **July 2023 – June 2025**

### **Annual Review**

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## 1. Introduction

This document sets out the annual review for 2023 of the Procurement Service's Procurement Strategy (2023 to 2025) to support NHS 24 to deliver their corporate objectives in line with public procurement legislation, the Scottish Model of Procurement and Scottish Government policy.

This review includes additional details and narrative in relation to the publication in April 2023 of the Scottish Government's pan public sector Procurement Strategy;

[Public Procurement Strategy 2023 - 2028](#) and the continued development in relation to the Scottish Government's - [Sustainable procurement duty](#)

The Public Procurement strategy outlines the following four key enablers, with a focus to;

“Put public procurement at the heart of a sustainable economy to maximise value for the people of Scotland.”

- Developing Procurement staff capabilities and talent,
- Supporting suppliers,
- Creating effective processes and tools, and
- Strengthening collaboration across the public procurement landscape.

The Scottish Government's policy drivers for public procurement are predominantly centred around sustainability, economic development and tackling inequality.

The key priorities of the Procurement Service's Procurement Strategy are outlined in Section 4 of this document. It is not necessary to detail the legislative and policy background that governs public sector procurement in this document, but we will ensure that the Procurement Service complies with all legislative framework and policy drivers, and developments will be addressed through the annual work plans.

Current issues include compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and ensuring measures to prevent fraud and bribery are robust.

This Strategy has been developed in consultation with stakeholders within NHS 24 and will be signed off by the appropriate governance structure within the organisation. It is based on the template and guidance for procurement strategies produced by the Scottish Government (SG). Compliance with legislation pertaining to public procurement is the minimum standard. The Procurement Service will aim to function beyond that level and align with best practice.

At the time of production, we are operating under the following regulations:

- UK Legislation and Regulations
- The Public Contracts (Scotland) Regulations 2015 (Procurement Regulations)
- The Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 (the Reform Act).

NHS 24's Corporate Governance Framework defines and documents the roles and responsibilities of the Board through detailed guidance on standing orders, standing

financial instructions, scheme of delegation, contract/procurement regulations and a code of conduct.

NHS 24 gross expenditure is now over £100m and non-pay expenditure in any given year will be circa 25%-30% of that expenditure. It is essential that the correct procurement processes and capacity are in place to support this level of spend. Since June 2020 the NHS 24 Procurement service is provided by Scottish Ambulance Service.

The Scottish Ambulance Service also provides a procurement service to Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS).

Procurement staff skills are supported and developed to ensure the service remains up to date with all legislative and Procurement regulations and these are complied with, and supplier and contract management arrangements are implemented and managed appropriately

To promote the procurement strategy and good procurement practice within NHS 24:

The Procurement Improvement Team (PIT) is responsible for overseeing procurement across NHS 24. The PIT meets monthly to ensure NHS 24's procurement leads have cross-Directorate discussions and raise awareness of future procurement activities in the presence of the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) Procurement leads.

This group comprises of designated directorate procurement leads who attend with a view to gaining the relevant internal procurement expertise that they can share with their Directorate.

The NHS 24 Climate Emergency Sustainability Programme consider best means of minimising carbon risk, improving energy efficiency and reduction of waste. This programme will link to the PIT and SAS procurement to promote sustainable procurement practices. The procurement process is further supported in NHS 24 by the ICT Contracts Manager and officer. ICT is the area with the largest non-pay spend and these two posts support contract management processes and procedures to ensure they are consistent with public sector policies and commercial and legal obligations.

## **2. Our vision, mission and role of the Shared Procurement Service**

### Vision

Aspire to be a high performing function that not only delivers a legally compliant and sustainable procurement service but one that also provides opportunities for financial efficiencies within NHS 24.

### Mission

To provide a comprehensive sustainable procurement service that meets the needs and expectations of all service partners within NHS 24 in support of the Board's corporate and financial objectives.

### Role

Our work focuses on:

Delivering savings, efficiencies and sustainable procurement through contracting activity. This includes collaborative working where appropriate.

- Providing advice on public procurement to stakeholders throughout NHS 24
- Developing the skills and expertise of our team to deliver a high-quality service to our stakeholders.

Note: Sustainable procurement is intended to derive social, environmental and economic benefits from public expenditure in addition to the purchase of the goods or services concerned.

## 3. Contracting activity

Our approach to procuring goods, services and works reflects the Scottish Model of Procurement as shown below in figure 1. We aim to achieve value for money by working closely with our stakeholders to understand their requirements, and with suppliers to understand the relevant market sectors. Procurement processes are based on a fair, open and transparent competition which is proportionate to the scale and purpose of the contract and meets our legal obligations.

Contracts are awarded using a mix of criteria appropriate to the subject matter of the contract.



For each procurement project that exceeds £50,000 ('regulated procurement') we will develop a sourcing strategy. These strategies are based on tools provided in the Scottish Government's Procurement Journey, such as the sustainability test. These tools help to identify opportunities to include social, environmental, economic issues that can be included in the procurement.

Our activity includes contracts for NHS 24. Details of the contracts we have awarded are available on the Public Contracts Scotland portal.

#### 4. Key priorities

The purpose of this Strategy is to set out the strategic direction for the Procurement Service for the next 2 years.

The key priorities of the Procurement Service's Procurement Strategy are:

##### (a) Continue the quest for best value

This will be achieved through the continued proactive (formal and informal) engagement with key NHS 24 stakeholders and suppliers to identify new ways to achieve best value through supportive challenge of specifications and service levels, the use of innovative solutions where appropriate, and ongoing engagement with key suppliers and stakeholders through the contract management process post-award.

We will embrace quality improvement with a view to ensuring that our processes are as efficient as they can be for the benefit of our stakeholders, our suppliers and ourselves.

- Formal monthly procurement review meetings are in place with key NHS 24 stakeholders to review current and future contract requirements.
- SAS Procurement also provide awareness / refresher sessions on the services Standing Financial Instructions (SFIs) and the Procurement Regulations & tendering requirements.
- Supplier Management and development is structured with a key focus on the service's key critical suppliers
- Close working relationships have also been developed with the ICT Contract Manager and NHS 24 Finance colleagues to assist with the progression of the major ICT procurements that are being developed over the next couple of years.

#### Procurement strategy 2023 to 2025

- Reduced health inequality
- Reduced environmental harms
- Fair work being evident within and across our supply chains
- Promotion of the "Real Living Wage"
- Cyber Security
- National Whistleblowing Standards

#### Value delivery

We will commit to defining delivering and communicating value widely, which will include;

- Commercial cost reduction through consideration of;
  - Specification requirement – The 5 W's (Who, what, where, when & why)
  - Tendering methodology and approach to maximise value opportunities



- Tender Weighting: Where applicable, Total Cost – weight consideration
- Award structure: Sole Award, Ranked, Small Value lots
- Security of supply;
  - All tendering suppliers are required to provide their Business Continuity Plan's.
  - Where possible, potential alternative sources of supply (product) and or services are identified for critical service provision items or areas.
  - Improved local social outcomes
  - Tender responses are required relating to Community Benefits either delivered or committed as part of a supplier's tendering response.
  - Where possible, these responses are weighted and scored as part of the tender process.

We will continue to develop our approaches to supplier engagement and supply management that takes account of our wider definition of value.

How do we obtain value for money?

- Early project engagement – involvement at the design stage allows for an optimised supply solution ensuring unnecessary costs are minimised
- Early market engagement – procurement can engage with market participants to understand new developments and bring this knowledge back in house
- Right sizing contracts – appropriately segmenting requirements to better facilitate SME/Third Sector and Supported Business participation
- Focusing on wider value - maximising the impact of each pound spent by including Community Benefit Clauses as a minimum for procurements over £4m and as Weighted and Scored considering aspects where possible for each procurement.
- Evaluating on whole life costing – not just focusing on acquisition cost
- Utilising output-based requirements – buying the outcome not defining how it should be done
- Challenging the need and demand management – is the purchase necessary?
- Shift in focus to supply management - by prioritising key supply areas and suppliers we can unlock additional value through partnerships and innovation

(b) Sustainable procurement

The Scottish Government introduced the [Sustainable Procurement Duty](#) (following [The Procurement Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2014 \(the Act\)](#)) requiring public bodies to consider how they can improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of their constituency, and act in a way to secure improvements identified. In response to this,

When procuring goods and services, NHS 24 and SAS Procurement recognise that supply chain sustainability must be considered to help determine the extent of the associated greenhouse gas emissions and social and environmental impacts.

NHS 24 and SAS Procurement are committed to utilising the suite of sustainable procurement tools and guidance

- ([Sustainable Procurement \(sustainableprocurementtools.scot\)](https://sustainableprocurementtools.scot))

Scottish Government has made available to all public bodies to assess current levels of performance, helping to inform the actions required to embed good procurement practice to realise intended sustainable outcomes.

We will continue to develop our practice with respect to sustainable procurement, this will include looking for ways to broaden access to contracts for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs), the third sector and supported businesses.

This encompasses the following;

- Looking for innovation and harnessing more sustainable technologies
- Encouraging our suppliers to provide more sustainable goods and services with lower carbon emissions
- Expanding the use of community benefits
- Embedding fair work practices

Promoting equality and tackling inequality and:

- Inclusion of Life cycle impact mapping as part of the sustainability test.

In partnership with NHS 24 key stakeholders, SAS Procurement will work to develop the following key areas;

- Areas for improvement:
  - develop supplier information for procurement setting out clear circular economy expectations of those supplying NHS 24.
  - classify suppliers in line with a development hierarchy, based on their approach and published data in relation to climate change and circular supply systems
  - identify further items which are single use and / or not recyclable and collaborate with our suppliers to seek opportunities to switch to more circular alternative
  - work in partnership with stakeholders to identify further areas where circular economy principles can be adopted
  - Every procurement tender requires the participating supplier to provide details of their sustainability offer and provision. Where possible, these considering aspects are scored as part of the tender evaluation process.

SAS Procurement will continue to underpin a sustainable and resilient NHS 24 and work with stakeholders in the development of the above areas, but also by providing excellent support services and expertise.

#### (c) Innovation & Supplier development

Procurement can be a key part in the development and encouragement of Innovation across the Supply Chain and we will look to support this aspect through promotion and development of Innovation in products and or services across our Procurement agreements and opportunities.

This will also be supported by promotion of the Innovation Leadership Groups and similar bodies like the NHS National Procurement – Health Innovation Assessment Portal, as per the following website link;

Link to NHS Scotland: National Procurement's Health Innovation Assessment Portal

[Innovation-portal-for-supplier-submissions](#)

Supplier development:

Particularly small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) the Third Sector and Supported businesses is crucial in "maximising value for the people of Scotland",

As part of an Anchor institution, SAS Procurement are working with other NHSS Health Boards and SDP Scotland to develop a Supplier Development Programme to encourage SMEs participation in the Tendering process.

<https://www.sdpscotland.co.uk/>

SAS Procurement are also considering holding online drop-in open sessions, covering:

- The tender process &
- What do we want and need from tender submission

(d) Tackling inequalities

We will continue to adhere to the legal requirements of the Equality Act 2010 which specifies that procurement should pay due regard to the award criteria (economic viability and performance) and equality considerations. Mechanisms are currently in place (and will be built upon) to ensure that suppliers and the Service comply with the Act and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

(e.) Modern Slavery Act

NHS 24 focus on the ethical employment of staff within the extended supply chain and requires all currently contracted and prospective suppliers support in continuing to develop the transparency and profile of this essential initiative highlighted in the Modern Slavery Act 2015

We therefore need all current and prospective suppliers support in highlighting the focus of the supply chain and on the importance of complying with the terms of the Modern Slavery Act, in particular publishing and promoting their statement of their company's position.

For further information please see the following link to the legislation;

[Modern Slavery Act 2015 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

(f) Fair Work First Policy

We will continue to develop and embed in all formal Procurement's the Scottish Government's Fair Work First in Scottish Public Procurement.

The Scottish Government's Fair Work policy outlines five Fair Work criteria that must be applied to Public Sector Procurements from the 1st of April 2021.

- Appropriate channels for effective voice, such as trade union recognition
- Investment in workforce development
- No inappropriate use of zero hours contracts
- Action to tackle the gender pay gap and create a more diverse and inclusive workplace
- Providing fair pay for workers (for example, payment of the 'real' Living Wage)

Link to the Scot Gov Policy note:

[Implementation of Fair Work First in Scottish Public Procurement: SPPN 3/2021 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/sppn-3-2021/pages/implementation-of-fair-work-first-in-scottish-public-procurement.aspx)

(g) Cyber Security

Cyber Security is an essential part of operational service and business continuity and the Scottish Government have outlined how we all need to work together and have a role to play in protecting ourselves, families, communities, and businesses.

A Cyber Security strategy has been published by the Scottish Government (link below) to help deal with the rising cyber risks.

Procurement is working with NHS 24 Information Communication Technology (ICT) and Senior Stakeholders to identify high risk areas and or services that require increased review, development and assurance that the service and its Supply Chain is Cyber Resilient.

A supplier assessment tool has been developed by the Scottish Government and key supply chain providers will be requested to confirm their position and capabilities in relation to Cyber Resilience.

Further information can be found at the following Scottish Government link;

[Cyber Resilient Scotland: strategic framework - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/cyber-resilient-scotland-strategic-framework/pages/cyber-resilient-scotland-strategic-framework.aspx)

(h) Whistleblowing

NHS24 Board is opposed to all forms of fraud, corruption and malpractice whether arising from within or outside the Board or from contractors. If staff, contractors or subcontractors have any concerns about suspected malpractice, NHS24 encourages them to raise the issue.

Managers of NHS24 will take all concerns seriously and wish to encourage all to report any suspected fraud or corruption.

To make you aware The Authority's "confidential contact", for all in-scope services provided to NHS24 is as follows:

[whistleblowing@nhs24.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:whistleblowing@nhs24.scot.nhs.uk)

(g) NHS Scotland collaborative working

SAS Procurement continues to engage with all NHS Scotland Health Boards and other Scotland Public Sector organisations, including Police Scotland and Scottish Fire and Rescue for any collaborative opportunities to use our resources as efficiently as possible. We will also seek any collaborative opportunities wherever these may be of value to NHS 24 including wider UK agreements.

(h) Procurement & Commercial Improvement Programme (PCIP)

The Procurement & Commercial Improvement Programme (PCIP) has now been running since 2015 but was put on hold during the pandemic period and is now due to re-commence across NHSS from September 2023.

The PCIP assessment provides a means of measuring and reporting on the procurement and commercial capability of organisations pan public sector through the provision of evidence, based around a series of set questions and other evaluation methods.

<https://www.procurementjourney.scot/pcip/pcip-overview>

The assessment of SAS Procurement service provision for NHS 24 will be undertaken in conjunction with other NHS Scotland Healthboards with the output being utilised to identify areas of best practice and areas for further development.

(i) Team development

In order to achieve the key priorities, set out above, we must continue to develop the skills of SAS Procurement team members so that they have the capability to achieve these priorities and ensure that we continue to deliver a legally compliant service.

We also must look to find innovative ways to recruit and train new members of staff recognising the current shortfall in these skills across NHS Scotland. We will work closely with other public sector bodies and further education institutions to maximise these opportunities.

- SAS procurement team includes a modern apprentice position that is key in the continuing development of future procurement staff.
- Continuation of the flexible remote and hybrid working structure will encourage both new starts and staff retention.
- CIPS Qualification: Support for procurement staff to achieve MCIPS qualification.
- Mentoring and procurement skills development is provided by senior member of Procurement team.
- There is an ongoing national NHSS development programme to identify and where possible resource training requirements for all NHSS Procurement.
- SAS Procurement also work closely with Police Scotland and Scottish Fire and Rescue and when possible, procurement key skills training is utilised.

## 5. Policies

In this section, we set out our general policies on several key areas, together with a statement on how we will monitor these over the period of the strategy.

### 5.1 Our policy on the use of community benefits in our contracts

As an NHSS Health Board, NHS 24 has become an Anchor Institution, which is key to Community Wealth Building. Anchor organisations are large employers with a strong local presence in an area. They can exert sizable influence through their commissioning and purchasing of goods and services, through their workforce and employment capacity, and by creative use of their facilities and land assets.

Positive use of these aspects can affect social, economic and environmental change in an area.

There are five core principles to Community Wealth Building (CWB):

- Progressive procurement – developing local supply chains of businesses likely to support local employment and keep wealth within communities
- Fair employment and just labour markets – using anchor institutions to improve prospects of local people
- Shared ownership of the local economy – supporting and growing business models that are more financially generative for the local economy
- Socially just use of land and property – developing the function and ownership of local assets held by anchor organisations, so local communities' benefit from financial and social gain
- Making financial power work for local places – increase flows of investment within local economies by harnessing and recirculating the wealth that exists

Although NHS 24 is a large-scale employer nationally, at local levels, particularly in urban areas, our overall influence is limited. Our properties are not designed for public facing services or necessarily big enough to fully endorse all of the principles of CWB or that of regionally centered Anchor Institutions. However, there is certainly opportunity to develop our use of local supply chains and contractors to support local employment to keep wealth within the locality.

Examples of where SAS Procurement could support CWB initiatives include:

- Implementation through contract tenders, by giving a greater weighting to agreed criteria
- Including social and environmental sustainability as an influencing criterion on contract tenders
- Creating opportunities for supported businesses and third sector organisations to deliver public services
- Employment and training opportunities for the long term unemployed and disadvantaged individuals
- Creating opportunities for SMEs to deliver public services
- Environmental activities
- Support for community initiatives

The Shared Procurement Service will seek community benefits for all procurements valued at £4m and above in line with the requirements of the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014. In addition, we will consider the potential for community benefits

for all regulated procurements (currently over £50,000 for goods and services, and £2m for works) and seek to obtain these where possible.

We will monitor the community benefits achieved and report this in our Annual Report on procurement activity.

## **5.2 Our policy on consulting and engaging with those affected by our procurements**

The Procurement Service works with internal stakeholders and potential suppliers to help us to design our procurements. Internal stakeholders may include users of the goods or services, budget holders, senior management, subject matter experts or staff representatives. Stakeholder mapping is a component of the sourcing strategy that is developed for all regulated procurements.

We will record any complaints about failure to consult and report this in our Annual Report.

## **5.3 Policy on the payment of a living wage to persons involved in producing, providing or constructing the subject matter of regulated procurements**

NHS 24 supports the right of employees to earn a fair wage. We will work with suppliers through contract and supplier management, and through addressing fair work practices in procurement processes to encourage suppliers to pay the (Real) Living Wage within their staff structures.

Suppliers will be asked about fair work practices, including the (Real) Living Wage, in future procurements where relevant. Key suppliers will be monitored through the contract management process.

In relation to Procurements that are funded via public sector grants the rules are due to change and when these changes come into effect shall make it a mandatory requirement for suppliers to pay their staff the real Living Wage;

Fair Work conditionality for real Living Wage and effective workers voice will be effective from 1 July 2023, providing reasonable time for grant-makers and grant recipients to make the necessary system changes.

Real Living Wage and effective workers' voice conditionality will be applied to the following groups of workers:

- to all directly employed staff of the grant recipient, and
- to any workers who are not directly employed but are directly engaged in delivering the grant-funded activity, whether they are sub-contractors or agency staff.

[Fair Work action plan: becoming a leading Fair Work nation by 2025 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/documents/2022/07/Fair-Work-action-plan-becoming-a-leading-Fair-Work-nation-by-2025.pdf)

[Anti-racist employment strategy - A Fairer Scotland for All - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/documents/2022/07/A-Fairer-Scotland-for-All.pdf)

## **5.4 Policy on promoting compliance by contractors and sub-contractors with the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and any provision made under that Act**

NHS 24 has a policy for the Management of Contractors which is aimed at promoting compliance with the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, and a broad range of other health and safety legislation. This policy is provided to contractors and they are required to comply with it. In addition, the Service uses standard NHS terms and conditions of contract which require contractors to comply with health and safety legislation, and provide remedies for any failure to comply with this. Key suppliers will be monitored through the contract management process.

#### **5.5 Policy on the procurement of fairly and ethically traded goods and services**

NHS 24 will consider the requirement for specifying fairly traded and ethically traded goods and services in relevant procurements on a case-by-case basis, as set out in its sustainable procurement policy. The shared service partners buy minimal amounts of goods and services that could have a fair trade or ethical trade implications, and most of these commodity areas would be covered by National Procurement framework contracts e.g., staff uniforms (cotton content), foodstuffs.

#### **5.6 Policy on how it intends its approach to regulated procurements involving food to:**

- Improve the health, wellbeing and education of communities in the authority's area
- Promote the highest standards of animal welfare.

Although this is not an area of significant spend, with very limited requirement for food related products, NHS 24 promotes the use of National Framework Contracts to procure all food and therefore the requirement to undertake regulated procurements in respect of food and related provisions is rare. Any regulated procurement required in respect of food will reflect the requirements noted above.

#### **5.7 Payment processes**

- **The authority must set out how it intends to ensure that, as far as reasonably practicable, the following payments are made no later than 30 days after the invoice for**
  - contractors
  - sub-contractors
  - sub- contractors to sub-contractors

NHS 24 has policies on the Prompt Payment of Suppliers. These policies state that approved invoices will be paid within 30 days, although the Finance Department aim to achieve payment within 10 days.

In addition, the Procurement Service uses standard NHS terms and conditions of contract which require contractors to pay their sub-contractors within 30 days. If this does not occur, sub-contractors may apply to our Board for support to resolve the matter.

NHS 24 is required to comply with the NHS policy on 'No PO (Purchase Order) no pay' (i.e., invoices must quote purchase order numbers). Any Invoice without a valid



purchase order number is returned to the supplier. The requirement for invoices to show order numbers is made clear in the NHS terms and conditions of contract.

## **6. Annual Procurement Report**

The Procurement Strategy is implemented by means of annual work plans. Progress against the work plan is monitored by the Head of Procurement on an ongoing basis and reported to key stakeholders within the Board on a quarterly basis.

The Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 required the Board to publish an annual report on regulated procurements each year. The Annual Procurement Report for 22/23 was signed off by the Audit & Risk Committee in June 2023 and sent to the Scottish Government for inclusion in their NHS Scotland reporting. It was also published on the NHS 24 web site following final approval.

Each Annual report will contain.

- A summary of the regulated procurements that have been completed during the period covered by the report.
- A review of whether those procurements complied with this strategy for regulated procurements.
- Any regulated procurements that did not comply with this strategy for regulated procurements, a statement of how the Service intends to ensure that future regulated procurements do comply.
- A summary of any community benefit requirements imposed as part of a regulated procurement that were fulfilled during the period covered by the report.
- A summary of any steps taken to facilitate the involvement of supported businesses in regulated procurements during the period covered by the report.
- A summary of the regulated procurements that the Service expects to commence in the next two financial years.
- Details on how the procurement service pays due regard to equality and achieve the equality objectives in line with the Equality and Human Rights Commission guidance.

## **7. Strategy ownership and contact details**

The owner of this Strategy on behalf of NHS 24 is the SAS Head of Procurement. This Annual review of the Strategy covers the period from July 2023 to June 2025 and will be subject to further annual review.

The Strategy will be published on the NHS 24 website. Any amendments to this Strategy will be similarly published.

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