

# Quality communication in the context of public procurement

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# What is quality communication in public procurement about?

It is about being clear on the **outcomes** that we are trying to achieve by:

- enabling strategic procurement
- articulating, understanding and shaping procurement exercises
- creating the market conditions to support innovation and building credibility with the suppliers

Quality communication uses two-way, proactive approaches

**It works within the legal framework by fully utilising tools and mechanisms that are available and appropriate at different procurement stages**

# Why is communication important?

## With all stakeholders

- Quality communication plays a crucial part in generating and inspiring innovation, best value for money and embedding added benefits

## With suppliers

- It allows public procurement objectives to be shared with the suppliers and in return assures that contracting authorities have correct understanding of markets capabilities and capacities and can develop a realistic and effective tender specifications

# Communication with suppliers at different procurement stages

Pre-procurement engagement	Procurement communication	Contract management
<p>Communication is key, encouraged by EU procurement regulation and not subject to detailed procedure</p> <p>Underpinned by principles of consultation, co-design and co-production &amp; attracting smaller and new providers</p> <p><b>Pros&amp;cons</b> Resource intensive &amp; requires planning, but saves time and resource in the procurement stage, can identify and mitigate any risks to either process or service</p>	<p>Communication is open to all (e-portal), recorded and auditable; provides history of any pre-procurement engagement;</p> <p>Clearly embeds &amp; articulates all requirements (e.g. responsible procurement principles)</p> <p>Underpinned by principles of equal treatment, transparency, non-discrimination and proportionality</p> <p><b>Pros&amp;cons</b> If not governed by transparency and equal treatment it can be open to challenge; if applied consistently and correctly can make the procurement efficient and effective</p>	<p>Communication channels established in procurement are used to build relationships with suppliers</p> <p><b>Pros&amp;cons</b> Resource intensive but invest to save in communicating and mitigating potential issues, ensures that the supplier continues fulfilling the objectives and deliver their commitments</p>

# Using communication to embed responsible procurement principles - Croydon Council's View

- As a major contracting authority we have made a strategic decision to using our purchasing power to get our suppliers to give back to the community and support our strategic objectives
- The council was one of the first in started to take social value seriously even before the Public Social Value came into force
- This takes strong leadership and champions understanding the local community
- Being able to commutate with suppliers at different procurement stages and using different tool has been key in embedding this approach

# First steps

**Where to start as an organisation wanting to use quality communication with suppliers to introduce new objectives such as principles of responsible procurement:**

Focus on professional awareness first

Invest in pre-procurement engagement

Use e-portal to communicate and keep record

Test your new approaches before rolling them out

# First steps

## **Avoiding challenge:**

- Clearly separate and communicate the difference between consultation (pre-procurement engagement) and any future competitive procurement
- Do not give any one potential supplier an advantage in bidding over another – for example, by providing one supplier with substantially more information than another – this could be overcome by publishing all information on your website to ensure equal access
- Do not shape your requirement in favour of any one particular potential supplier as a result of pre-procurement dialogue
- Engage in a way that does not disadvantage any one particular potential supplier or group of potential suppliers – for example, SMEs and mutual
- Record all your communications with suppliers and be able to provide an audit trail