

Selling to the Council

A Guide for Suppliers 2026



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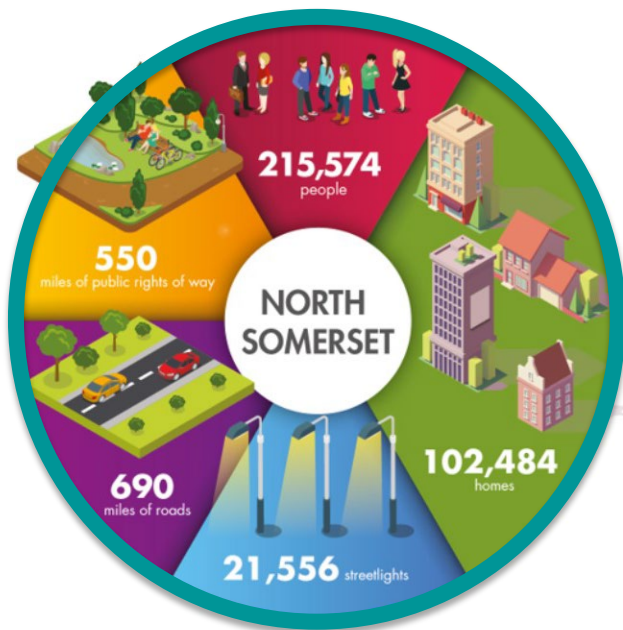
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Background Information

North Somerset Council (NSC) is the local authority of North Somerset. It is a unitary authority, possessing the powers of both a non-metropolitan county and district council combined. There are three parliamentary constituencies within North Somerset. The main settlements are Weston-super-Mare and three smaller towns of Clevedon, Nailsea and Portishead.

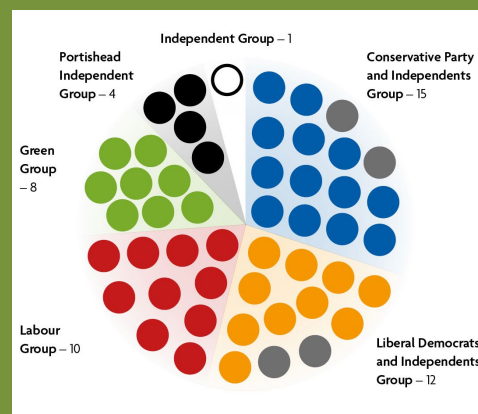


North Somerset Council provides a full range of local government services including highways, adult social care, children's services, planning, parks and open spaces, waste collection and disposal, property maintenance and the council is also a local education authority. The council declared a climate emergency and is committed to emissions reduction of own estate and wider region. In addition, the council has strong vulnerabilities to effects of climate change, including high risks of flooding and overheating, therefore has strong commitments to climate adaptation measures.



North Somerset has a population of around 215,574. It borders the local government areas of Bristol, Bath and North East Somerset, and Somerset Councils. The council operates out of the Town Hall in Weston-super-Mare.

The council has been under no overall control since 2019. Below is the number of seats that each political group currently holds in the Council:



Our Vision - an open, fairer and greener North Somerset



The **Armed Forces Covenant** is a public sector pledge from government, businesses, charities and organisations to demonstrate their support for the armed forces community.



The Covenant was brought in under the Armed Forces Act 2011 to recognise that the whole nation has a moral obligation to redress the disadvantages the armed forces community face in comparison to other citizens, and recognise sacrifices made. The Covenant's 2 principles are that:

- Those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether Regular or Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services.
- Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and the bereaved.

North Somerset Council encourages all suppliers to sign the Covenant, declaring their support for the Armed Forces community by displaying the values and behaviours set out therein. For further guidance on how you can sign the Covenant and how you can further show your support, please go to:

<https://www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk/show-your-support>



The Council is a **Disability Confident Leader**. This means that we take proactive steps to recruit disabled people and make sure our employees are well supported by providing reasonable adjustments, training for all and listening to those with lived experience.

North Somerset Council encourages all suppliers to sign up to the Disability Confident scheme to make a commitment to giving equal opportunities to everyone in their employment.. For further guidance on how you can sign up, please go to:

<https://disabilityconfident.campaign.gov.uk/>

Prevention of Sexual Harassment in the workplace

At North Somerset Council, we are committed to fostering safe respectful, and inclusive environment for all employees and everyone we work or interact with in the wider community.

Aligned to the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023, we recognise our legal and ethical duty to take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. We have a zero-tolerance policy towards sexual harassment in any form, including harassment perpetrated by third parties such as clients, customers, suppliers, members of the public or other external parties.

The council is organised by Directorates, or departments, each with its own specific responsibilities:

Adults Social Services and Housing

This Directorate covers Social Care including hospital discharge, safeguarding and quality assurance, mental Health and learning disability services, transitions from Children's services, housing Services and homelessness, including working with refugees.

Children's Services

This Directorate covers all services relating to children including education and early years, social services, youth justice, safeguarding and children with disabilities.

Environment, Transport and Asset Services (EATS)

This Directorate provides a variety of services, which mainly deal directly with the public. Services include roadworks, environmental services, waste collection, property, recycling and transport.

Healthy & Sustainable Communities

This Directorate covers services including health improvement, health protection, Trading Standards, economy and placemaking, planning and emergency planning, and climate emergency.

Corporate Services

This Directorate includes areas like finance, libraries, legal services, procurement etc.

About this Guide

This Selling to the Council Guide is to assist suppliers and contractors who wish to supply North Somerset Council with goods and services, by:

- Outlining the rules that the council must follow
- Explaining where to find details of opportunities to supply the council
- Explaining how to tender for the council's business
- Explaining what is expected of you when undertaking work for us

How is procurement organised?

This authority has a Procurement Team responsible for developing the council's procurement strategy, policy, good practice and procedures to drive best value for money procurement. It is also responsible for corporate purchasing arrangements for the majority of supplies e.g. temporary staff, insurance, etc, which are used commonly across the council. The Procurement Team also works closely with Directorates who have specific requirements e.g. social care, highways maintenance.

Contracts let by the council can take a number of forms, including:

One-off Contracts: e.g. a Highways scheme or specific project; these contracts meet specific needs/individual requirements.

Framework Agreements: used to procure batches of similar works, supplies or services which the council expects to need over a period of time, but where it has no certainty as to what sort of quantity or details it may require. The council gives indicative quantities and spend but is not bound by them.

Renewable Contracts: These are contracts for services, supplies or goods required regularly. They are generally let over a longer period e.g. 5 years or more and will be regularly reviewed and re-procured as necessary.

Concessions: An arrangement whereby the council grants the contractor the right to operate a contract, within stipulated parameters and to benefit from the profit made from the operation e.g. operation of a leisure centre.

Social Value

The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 came into force on 31st January 2013. Public Authorities are required to “consider, prior to undertaking the procurement/commissioning process, how any services procured might improve economic, social and environmental well-being”. The Act applies to all public service contracts over the Find a Tender threshold.

The Social Value Policy provides further information on how Social Value should be considered and applied within the council's procurements and includes detail on what

constitutes Social Value for the council. The Council has adopted the TOMs approach to Social Value (Themes, Outcome and Measures), see the website link below for more information:

[Our social value policy | North Somerset Council \(n-somerset.gov.uk\)](https://n-somerset.gov.uk/our-social-value-policy/)

Local Supply Policy

The council is committed to working with local organisations, small businesses (SMEs) and the voluntary community sector enterprises (VCSE) as part of its approach to commissioning and procurement.

Selection of bidders will be based solely on the criteria set out for the procurement, and the contract will be awarded on the basis of the most advantageous tender (MAT), however, the council does try to lower the barriers to SMEs and VCSEs bidding for contracts. The council's Contract Standing Orders state that for procurements

- under £25,000 quotations are not required and a direct award to a single supplier is permissible. Preference should be given to local and VCSE organisations where they exist and offer value for money and can deliver the works, services and/or goods to be supplied.
- Under £160,000 – a minimum of 3 written quotations are required. In selecting suppliers to quote, preference should be given to local organisations where they exist and offer value for money and can deliver the works, services and/or works to be supplied. The contract must also be entered on the Council's Contracts Register, which can be accessed here:

[What we spend and how we spend it | North Somerset Council \(n-somerset.gov.uk\)](https://n-somerset.gov.uk/what-we-spend-and-how-we-spend-it/)

The Local Supply Policy provides further information on how the council supports local organisations:

[Our local supply policy | North Somerset Council \(n-somerset.gov.uk\)](https://n-somerset.gov.uk/our-local-supply-policy/)

What Rules & Regulations must be followed?

As a local authority there are regulations which the council must follow when procuring supplies, works and services. It is vital that if you wish to contract with North Somerset Council you are fully aware of the rules and regulations, which govern the way we operate. The following table summarises the rules that must be followed, depending on the value of the purchase:

Estimated Contract Value	Permitted Sourcing Options
Up to £25,000	Quotations not required, Direct Award permissible
£25,000 to £160,000 (Goods & Services)	Invite 3 quotes
£25,000 to £1,000,000 (Works)	Invite 3 quotes
Above £160,000	Open Tender, FTS if over threshold

Advertising

All contracts over the value of £160,000 must be tendered and as such advertised on the council's e-procurement system www.supplyingthesouthwest.org.uk and Find a Tender Service (FTS).

What does FTS mean?

FTS stands for the Find a Tender Service, which replaced the Official Journal of the European Union once the UK had left the European Union. It is a publication which public bodies have to publish opportunities in if they are over a certain value. The Procurement Act 2023 (Public Contracts Regulations 2024) is the overarching legislation which dictates the way public bodies must carry out their procurement activities for contracts over the relevant thresholds for local authorities (see table below). We have a legal requirement to comply with these Directives.

The thresholds from January 2026 are:

Services	Supplies	Works	Light touch regime
£207,720	£207,720	£5,193,000	£663,540

Note: these values are inclusive of VAT.

Note: the thresholds are reviewed every 2 years.

The new Procurement Act will benefit suppliers of all sizes. In particular it will support start-ups, scale-ups and small businesses. It will create a central digital platform. This platform will allow suppliers to:

- register and store their details
- view open opportunities all in one place
- apply for multiple bids

New simplified bidding processes will make it easier to bid, negotiate, and work in partnership with the public sector.

Under the Procurement Act 2023, North Somerset Council can conduct their procurement using one of the following procedures:

Open Procedure – this is a one stage process, and any organisation can respond to the advert and submit a tender.

Competitive Flexible Procedure - this is a new procurement route introduced under the Procurement Act 2023. It replaces multiple former multi-stage EU procedures with one flexible, adaptable competitive process. Contracting authorities can design a bespoke single- or multi-stage tendering process tailored to the specific needs of the contract. Further information on the Procurement Act 2023 can be found here:

[The Procurement Act 2023: A short guide for suppliers \(HTML\) - GOV.UK](#)

The principles of transparency and equal treatment apply to all procurement exercises.

Light Touch Contracts - for Health, Social, Education and certain other service contracts

Light Touch is a specific set of rules for certain service contracts that tend to be of lower interest to cross-border competition, meaning service providers in other European Countries. The services these rules apply to are detailed in the Procurement Act 2023.

How do I find out about opportunities?

Potential suppliers should register on www.supplyingthesouthwest.org.uk (referred to as the Portal) and on the Central Digital Platform (CDP) (part of FTS) [Find a Tender](#) to receive automatic alerts when relevant opportunities are published and to be able to submit a tender. Registration is free of charge and gives you sight of all the procurement opportunities you may wish to bid for.

The Council is required to publish an annual Pipeline Notice on the CDP/FTS, in April, which lists all known prospective tender opportunities over £2m in value, due to commence over the next 12-18 months. The Pipeline Notice references will then link

through to any subsequent preliminary market engagement, tender notice and contract award notifications for the same opportunity, to improve transparency.

All forthcoming contracts, over the relevant thresholds, are advertised through the Portal and [Find a Tender](#). All relevant tender documentation is available to download from the Portal. All processes to let contracts over £160,000 are undertaken via the Portal.

Appendix 3 is a guide to registering and basic use of the Portal.

Suppliers not registered on the Central Digital Platform (FTS) will not be able to submit a tender, even if you are already registered on the Supplying the South West portal, so please register as soon as possible.

How do I apply for contracts?

The Tender notice published on FTS will advise potential bidders of the process to be followed for that procurement. Potential bidders will need to register on the Portal and the Central Digital Platform (CDP) (see links above) and complete the tender documents, which will be used to assess their suitability to supply the council and their ability to satisfy the standards required to tender for the contract. It is essential that you supply all of the information requested and respond by the due date.

What information do I need to provide?

For above FTS threshold contracts, the council will use either the Open (one stage) or Competitive Flexible (two+ stages) procedures. Where our procurements exceed the thresholds, we must assess the following elements:

Excluded or Excludable Supplier - the Council is required to check if a Supplier is either an Excluded Supplier or an Excludable Supplier. To achieve this, the Council will seek evidence from Suppliers, that they have:

- Registered on the Central Digital Platform (CDP);
- Submitted any updated or corrected supplier information to the CDP;
- Shared any updated or corrected supplier information with the Council.

Core Supplier Information – this is organisational information, completed by the Supplier, and will include a downloaded zip file of the information contained on the CDP, to enable the Council to determine whether a Supplier is excluded or excludable.

Conditions of Participation (CoP) - the Council will assess whether a Supplier/ Submission is suitable to proceed by setting out conditions that a Supplier must demonstrate they can satisfy in order to be awarded the Contract, following two headline criteria:

- Legal and financial capacity to perform the Contract;
- Technical ability to perform the Contract.

Quality, pricing, environmental and social value submissions will only be assessed after the above stages have been passed. Failure to pass the Core Supplier Information and/or

the Conditions of Participation stages will result in tenders being excluded from subsequent assessment.

Tips for Tendering

- Get involved in market analysis & feedback on strategies
- Don't miss the opportunity – sign up early to the Portal and the CDP
- Familiarise yourself with the Portal (there are user guides to help you), make sure it is the right person who is signed up to attend any market engagement days
- Read all documents and answer the questions thoroughly, taking care to consider all elements of the question and with reference to the scoring matrix used.

It is essential that dates and times stipulated as deadlines for the submission of documents, at any stage of a process, are adhered to. The Portal will not allow you to submit any documentation after the deadline. This is to ensure a fair process.

Once the deadline for receipt of documents has passed, all submissions will be assessed in the order described above. This assessment will be done against the criteria which will have been provided by the council in the tender pack.

What are the council's expectations of contractors?

North Somerset Council needs to ensure that we offer value for money services to our taxpayers. We therefore expect excellent performance from contractors/suppliers, demonstrated through:

Appropriate total cost - Suppliers should consider the total, whole life costs of supply when putting together their tenders.

Quality - contractors/suppliers are expected to provide services, supplies and works to an appropriate standard of quality, to meet the needs set out in the specification.

Adherence to council policies and protocols - we are committed to delivering our services, with consideration for a number of issues including social value, equalities, health and safety, and look for suppliers/contractors who are committed to helping us achieve our aims in these respects.

Safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults - All suppliers of personal care and support services that the council purchases for its service users must have the necessary safeguarding policies, procedures and training in place and be registered where appropriate with the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

Integrity - honesty is expected in all dealings between the council and its contractors in addition to other relevant parties. In particular it is a criminal offence to give or offer any gift, inducement or reward to a local government official. It is North Somerset Council's policy not to accept inducements, gifts or hospitality. Bidders should note that they risk being excluded from the procurement process for failing to observe this requirement.

Innovation - suppliers are encouraged to be innovative and suggest new ideas to add value, continuously striving to improve their performance.

Communication - suppliers are expected to maintain good communications with the council throughout the contract.

How else might I be assessed?

The tender documents may include Method Statements and/or Case Studies, which are used to determine how bidders would manage the service or deal with particular issues. In responding to method statements and case studies bidders are expected to show what methods and procedures they propose to use in undertaking the work, showing initiative and innovation in delivering the service.

For some tenders you may be invited to give a presentation or attend an interview as part of your submission. The council may also conduct site visits to see first-hand how bidders organise their work. In some instances, it might look like similar questions are being asked at both Conditions of Participation (CoP) and tender stage (e.g. technical merit, experience, etc.). Be aware that questions at CoP stage relate to the organisation as it stands at the time of completing the tender; those asked at tender stage relate to how the organisation will be able to deliver the contract should they be successful.

The council's social value policy advises a 10% weighting given to social value on projects over £160k. Please see page 5 for more details.

The mandatory eight-working-day standstill period must be observed for FTS contracts before a contract is awarded.

How is the contract awarded?

The assessment of tenders is always carried out in a comprehensive, equitable, auditable and transparent manner. To ensure fairness the assessment criteria and method will be clearly defined before tender documents are issued.

The council must be sure that in selecting a preferred bidder it is getting value for money, and the services will be delivered effectively. Assessment is therefore based on two key criteria – how the bidder proposes to deliver the contract (quality) and the cost of the contract (price). The council is looking for the best balance of quality and price, not just the lowest price. In most cases additional criteria will also be used in evaluating bidders.

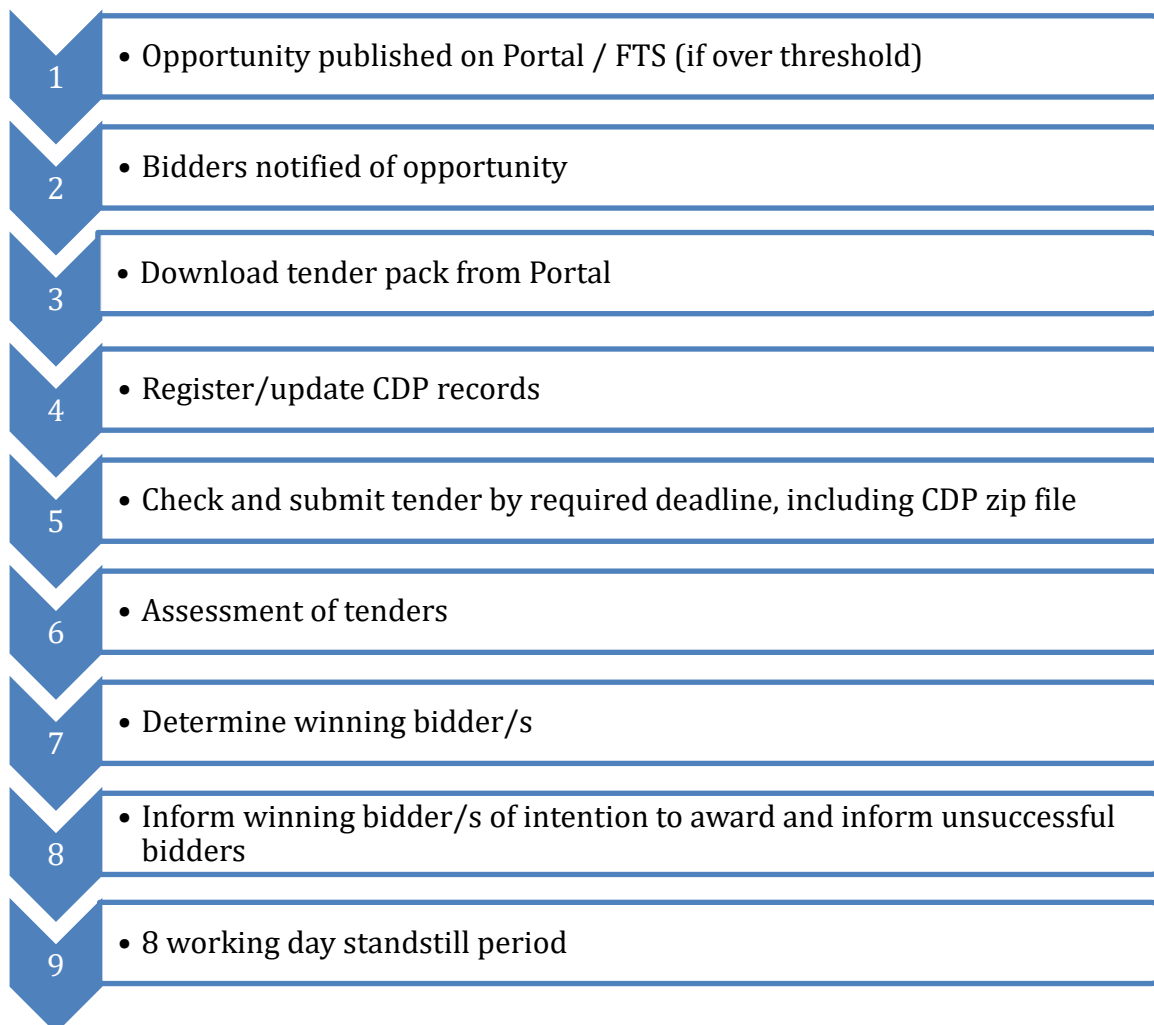
Contracts are awarded to the bidder who is considered to offer value for money, having regard to price, quality and best value – sometimes referred to as “most advantageous tender” (MAT), and to be best able to meet the council's specification. Assessment of the most advantageous tender can incorporate a number of factors including:

- Financial viability of the tender
- Whether the required quality standards can be met
- Technical merit

- After sales service
- Delivery date
- Technical back-up
- Experience
- Competence
- Policy issues such as equalities and Health & Safety

The criteria to be used will be listed in the tender documents, in order of importance. The weightings of the criteria will also be given.

Typical Open procurement process:



Post Contract Award

Once a tender has closed and all bids have been assessed, the winning bidder will be selected based on the award criteria given in the tender documentation. All suppliers who have been unsuccessful will be notified in writing, along with their score and feedback on their submission. They will also receive the scores of the winning bidder and a copy of their feedback (subject to commercially sensitive redactions), so that bidders can see why they were unsuccessful.

Being unsuccessful in one tender application does not mean you will be unsuccessful in future. You should use the feedback to help you improve for upcoming opportunities.

How are contracts monitored?

You will be expected to provide the service in accordance with the requirements set out in the contract documentation and your proposals to carry out the contract. In order to ensure that we are continually providing value for money services to our community, suppliers and contractors working for the council are regularly monitored to assess their compliance with pre-defined performance criteria. The contract conditions are strictly applied, and explanations sought if a contractor fails to perform to the levels required.

Where can I get further information?

If you are seeking information regarding a specific contract, please use the contact details provided in the advert/contract notice and tendering details.

General information on the tendering process and procurement at North Somerset Council can be obtained from the Strategic Procurement Service, by e-mailing

Procurement.Contracts@n-somerset.gov.uk.

Should you have any comments or feedback on this guide we would be happy to hear from you, as we are always looking to develop the advice, guidance and support we offer to potential contractors. Please contact us by e-mailing Procurement.Contracts@n-somerset.gov.uk

Appendix 1 - Equality & Diversity

Why is it important?

- We all have different viewpoints
- Working with the public we need to ensure no-one sets out to discriminate
- The Equality Act has specific duties expected of anyone offering a service
 - applies to the council and
 - all service providers

What is the council looking for?

- Knowledge of requirements of Equality Act 2010
 - Who is covered
 - What your responsibilities are
 - Written evidence – a policy
 - Explanation of how you put this into practice
- What the Equality Act says, you show you understand:
 - The 9 Protected characteristics – people with these characteristics have legal protection in specific ways under the Act from discrimination
 - Discrimination can take any one of six different forms
 - Be aware of limited exceptions
 - See Advice for businesses – on Equality and Human Rights Commission website:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/core-guidance-businesses>

The council may also ask you

- if any findings of unlawful discrimination been made against your organisation by an Employment Tribunal, an Employment Appeal Tribunal or any other court
- if your organisation has had a complaint upheld following an investigation by the Equality and Human Rights Commission or its predecessors (or a comparable body in any jurisdiction other than the UK), on grounds or alleged unlawful discrimination.

If you have you

- Need to state what finding was.
- Demonstrate how you have dealt with it.
- Need to show you have addressed the issues satisfactorily.

Appendix 2 - Health & Safety

- All businesses need to have a health and safety policy
- There are 3 parts to a policy: Statement, Organisation and Arrangements
- If you employ 5 or fewer people you don't have to write your policy down, but it is probably easier if you do.

For small businesses the Health and Safety Executive publish a template you can use:

[Prepare a health and safety policy: How to write your policy - HSE](#)

For certain procurements we may need a Risk Assessment that covers all of your work activity.

Again the HSE provide guidance on this

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/casestudies/>

Appendix 3 - SUPPLIERS INTRODUCTION TO THE PORTAL

The council's e-tendering system is a web-based Portal entitled Supplying the South West ("the Portal") www.supplyingthesouthwest.org.uk. It has been developed so we can publish our contracts and tendering opportunities alongside many other councils in the South West.

This Portal enables each local authority within the South West to advertise all contract opportunities and all awarded contracts on one central Portal giving suppliers the ability to view information from all the councils, and if applicable express their interest in forthcoming opportunities in one central place.

Why do we use this system?

The council's own Contract Standing Orders require a full competitive tender process for all Services and Goods opportunities over £160k (whole life cost). The Portal also enables the council to comply with FTS guidance for contract opportunities over the relevant threshold. For best practise, opportunities over £160k will be published on the Portal.

For the council the Portal provides:

- a channel for advertising tenders documents
- a facility for conducting the complete tendering process electronically (e-tendering)

Benefits to you as a supplier

It is free to register your details on the system and once done will allow you to take part in any tenders, questionnaires or quotations with the organisation(s), receive email alerts when opportunities arise in categories of interest, and to express interest in opportunities electronically. This will result in less time being needed to check the portal for opportunities that are relevant and should ensure that no future opportunities are missed.

The system handles all aspects of the tender process including Standard Selection Questionnaires, Invitation to Tenders and Request for quotations. This includes expressing interest in a contract opportunity, the electronic sending and receiving of documentation, questions and answers throughout the tender process, post tender clarification and various notifications through the process.

You only need to register once to do business with all the councils. At the point of registration, you can choose to receive updates from all organisations or may select which organisations you wish to receive opportunity alerts from. You are also given the ability to select the product or service categories that you wish to receive updates from, ensuring that you only receive information that is relevant to your areas of skills and services.

Once registered you will then be informed automatically of relevant contract opportunities as they are published, based on the organisations and categories that you selected. This

is done via an automatic email that is sent to your registered email address, removing the need to check the portal daily.

The Opportunities Store is an area where you can come and see any upcoming tenders that you can potentially get involved with. You can search opportunities without being registered, but if you are registered you will receive automatic notification as described above.

How do I register?

One registration gives access to all councils using the portal and will enable you to access a huge number of contracts and tender opportunities.

Please go to this <https://procontract.due-north.com/Register> to register.

Requirements & tips for using the portal

- Is it critical that you keep the contact details up to date on your account otherwise you may not receive notification of relevant opportunities e.g. if the named contact has left your business. Therefore, we would suggest using a generic email address that can be accessed by multiple employees, and/or naming several secondary contacts under your account. Please delete old accounts or users.
- All contact and questions must be directed through the portal.
- Bids must be received by the deadline. No late bids will be accepted.
- All bids must be submitted electronically through the portal. We cannot accept paper or emailed bids.

Questions

If you are experiencing issues using the portal which cannot be resolved by reading the user guides, Proactis Technical Support Team can be contacted on:

- By Tel: 0330 0050352 (lines open from 08:30am to 17:00pm Monday to Friday, excluding English public holidays).
- By Email: ProContractSuppliers@proactis.com

If the question relates to a specific tender or existing contract then this needs to be answered by the contract owner, details of which can be found within the published opportunity.